

A Neighborhood Slams the Door

Racist Acts Drive Philadelphia Family Out of White Area

By Michael A. Fletcher
Washington Post Staff Writer

PHILADELPHIA—Bridget Ward moved to the white working-class neighborhood of Bridesburg hoping she had finally found a safe place to raise her kids, with ample room at home and easy access to a babysitter.

But Ward's hopeful vision began to unravel the very night she arrived. Vandals smeared racist graffiti outside her door and toughs harangued her with anti-black taunts. Two days later, a neighbor defiantly flew a Confederate flag. The final blow came when she received a letter threatening her family.

Now, seven weeks after moving into Bridesburg, Ward is moving out. "If I had known this would happen," said the 32-year-old woman, "I would never have moved my family over here." Yesterday she and her two daughters moved again, to a mostly black and Hispanic section of North Philadelphia.

Ward's treatment has become a major cause in Philadelphia, where the city government quickly intervened with police protection and other help in an effort to dispel the notion that the attitudes she has faced are typical of the City of Brotherly Love. The incident prompted a wave of unwanted publicity for Ward, outrage from some civil rights leaders and resentment from some in Bridesburg who are happy to see Ward go.

But more than providing a stark reminder of the racist views many African Americans still confront, and the housing segregation that still persists in most cities, Ward's situation demonstrates the difficulty poor blacks face when they attempt to move out of the increasingly segregated communities of the inner city to areas that are safer and better integrated, both economically and racially.

"The housing options for poor, black Americans are probably more limited than

See PHILADELPHIA, A12, Col. 1



BY PETER TOBIA—PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

Bridget Ward, center, and her two daughters had lived in Philadelphia's Bridesburg section less than a day when racist graffiti was smeared on their house. They moved out yesterday.

INSIDE

ValuJet Cuts Flights

■ ValuJet, in the aftermath of its Florida Everglades crash, said it would reduce its flights.

Ind. Driver Dies

■ An Indiana driver had won

Midwife Charged in Death

Prosecutors Allege 'Callous'

By Robert C.

After Seven Weeks, Black Family Quits White Philadelphia Neighborhood

PHILADELPHIA, From A1

they are for any other group in America and the situation is growing worse," said Douglas S. Massey, a professor of sociology at the University of Pennsylvania, who has written extensively on the impact of housing segregation. "It is difficult for them to find welcoming environments among whites. And the black communities they can afford are often beset by multiple problems."

That isolation often conspires to keep poor blacks outside of America's mainstream, Massey said. Poor blacks, far more than other racial groups, end up in impoverished neighborhoods that inevitably have the worst schools, fewest job opportunities and highest crime rates, all of which makes the climb from poverty all the more difficult.

That was the case for Ward, an office custodian and welfare recipient, who left a tough, predominantly black section of North Philadelphia for Bridesburg, an isolated jumble of 16-foot-wide row houses with room-sized back yards, bordered in by a highway, a cemetery and the industrial businesses lining the Delaware River. Bridesburg may not be elegant, but when Ward spotted the three-bedroom house on a list of Section 8 subsidized properties provided by city housing officials, she took it. After several visits to inspect it she met with the property agent, signed a lease and moved in.

But Ward could not even get all of her things out of the car before the trouble began.

As she was moving into her house, children in tow, Ward said she was greeted by a next-door neighbor who told her that she did not belong in the neighborhood because of her race. Ward ignored the comment, but later that evening she said she heard racist chants coming from outside her home.

When Ward awoke the next morning, there were racial epithets scrawled in black ink on her windows, doors and front porch. Ketchup, looking like a trail of blood, was on both the front and back porches. And an oily substance was splattered outside her back door.

She was further jolted when an initial wave of public sympathy from people elsewhere in the city for her predicament sharpened into pointed questions in news stories about her background after neighbors discovered that she was on welfare, received a Section 8 housing subsidy, and had been in a rent dispute with her ex-landlord.

Those facts became the subject of media interest and are a recurring theme among the people who wanted her out of Bridesburg. "People harass me, and all of a sudden I become the problem," Ward said. "I'm the problem because I receive welfare and I am on Section 8. Now, everybody wants to know if I've been a bad tenant, if I pay my rent."

But, as Ward and city human relations officials point out, her troubles began long before the neighbors knew anything about her other than that she is black.

The incidents brought a swift response from City Hall.

A 24-hour police guard was stationed outside her house and a human relations official began driving her children to school. Mayor Edward G. Rendell (D) called a meeting where he chastised Bridesburg civic leaders for not doing more to drown out the voices of the racist "jerks" in the neighborhood. The mayoral upbraiding prompted a statement from a coalition of Bridesburg leaders who said they "strongly condemn the cowardly vandalism" directed at Ward.

There was some peace after that. Ward's daughters played on the block with other neighborhood children. She was swamped with a flood



BY PETER TOBIA—PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

In Bridesburg, resident Dan Coughlin criticizes media coverage of Ward's move.

of sympathetic cards and letters from people around the city. Others sent Easter baskets to her children. And the city's Human Relations Commission had even begun laying plans for a Memorial Day barbecue for the neighborhood to try to bring some reconciliation.

"I thought it would pass," said Ward, who at first was determined to ride out the trouble. "But, as it turned out, it did nothing but get worse."

But then came the letter threatening her family. The missive was taken seriously by police and human relations officials, who said it referred to another unsolved hate crime that had occurred in the city.

This is not the first time blacks and other minorities have had problems when they moved in to white communities in Philadelphia.

Last year, an Arab pizza shop owner in Bridesburg was harassed by hoodlums who tried to extort money from him. When he resisted, he was taunted with chants of "sand nigger." When his business was burned down soon after that, he moved.

A black woman who moved to Bridesburg last summer, meanwhile, whose living room window was damaged by a powerful, M-80 firecracker, later found a "Die Nigger" note stuck to her front door with an arrow, city officials said.

In 1994, in a mostly white neighborhood near Bridesburg, a 39-year-old deaf woman and her son, who are black, were assaulted in their home by baseball bat-wielding attackers shouting racial slurs. Several neighbors were convicted in the assault.

"These are old settlers who have passed hatred down to their children," said Thornhill Cosby, president of the Philadelphia NAACP. "In 1996, it is a disgrace for Philadelphia to be tabbed with a situation like this."

While some of Bridesburg's 6,000 residents appear chagrined by the negative publicity their neighborhood has garnered, others here are bidding Ward good riddance.

"The fact is that you see other neighborhoods change and you see that minorities are the ones in them," said Dan Collins, 45, a dock worker who lives just down the block from the house Ward occupied. "We have a good thing here. Crime is low. There are no murders around here. We want to keep it that way. This is a tight little neighborhood. If this woman doesn't feel welcome, let her move."

City officials say that while racism is a factor, the treatment of Ward, and the hostility to out-

siders, in part reflect the economic certainties people here feel. Many of the good jobs in vast industrial area that surrounds the neighborhood have been disappearing, leaving residents frustrated.

"There are a whole lot of forces at work in this, besides ignorance," said John H. McNeil, a human relations representative, whose territory includes Bridesburg.

In interviews, residents also made it clear beyond the racial issue, they disapproved Ward because she is a single mother on welfare who lives in subsidized housing and whose stay they felt would bring down the neighborhood. Many pointed to the reports that emerged after Ward moved in of a rent dispute with previous landlord that ended in an angry confrontation as cause for the community's hostility.

And many residents are also now bitter at treatment Ward has gotten from city authorities: the police protection, meetings with the media and the assistance in moving.

"There is a girl down the block, a lesbian, [residents] did the same thing to her. How could she wasn't given the same thing?" Collins, the woman who was initially harassed but since settled into the neighborhood. "They bending over backward to accommodate a woman because of her race. If I moved to [a predominantly black] North Philly, I wouldn't get that protection."

But the neighbors showed no similar interest in the tenant who preceded Ward, although also benefited from a rent subsidy program for a year, according to the property's landlord, who asked not to be identified. Because she is white, he said, everyone assumed she would be a good neighbor. But, he added, "she wrecked the place."

PUBLIC NOTICE
MENTAL RUGS

Housing

U.S. Housing Act of 1995: Last week, Congressman Jerry Weller (R-IL) introduced an amendment to the U.S. Housing Act of 1995 (public housing reform legislation) to prohibit most public housing residents in Chicago from using vouchers to relocate to suburbs in his district, Cook County. The Weller amendment failed last week. Today, a somewhat innocuous version of the Weller amendment passed by voice vote. The amendment requires HUD to study how to ensure that certificate holders do not increase the concentration of poor people in already "concentrated" areas -- concentrated areas was defined as having at least 15% assisted housing or at least 15% households below the poverty level.

ACLU Housing Discrimination Suit: This "NIMBY"/racist attitude has also cropped up in the settlement of an ACLU housing discrimination suit against the city of Baltimore. As part of the proposed settlement, 1,342 families would be given federal rent-subsidy certificates to move from inner-city public housing. Rep. Bob Erlich (R-MD) is attempting to scuttle the settlement by inserting new language in the appropriations bill that would block the use of federal funds to move city public housing tenants to Baltimore County and other suburban counties. Recent reports indicate that it is unlikely that Erlich's proposal will make it into the appropriations bill.

Brooke Amendment: Also during this week's markup of the U.S. Housing Act, several Democratic attempts to retain the Brooke amendment failed (the Brooke amendment requires that rents in public or assisted housing cannot be greater than 30% of income). An amendment to retain the Brooke amendment just for seniors and disabled failed by one vote.

Housing for People with Disabilities: Diana Fortuna and Molly Brostrom met with representatives of a coalition supporting disability rights in housing. Coalition members met with Secretary Cisneros the previous day. They oppose HUD policies that require tenants to accept services in exchange for housing or that segregate people according to disability. Secretary Cisneros told the group he would establish an Office on Disability within HUD, revisit HUD's policies, look into the claim that HUD is building new housing that is inaccessible, and step up enforcement of fair housing and other civil rights laws. The coalition was very pleased with his actions.

Urban Policy

Paul Weinstein is co-chairing the reinvention and economic development subgroups. They made a report to the NEC deputies on November 7.

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SUN 11.3.95

Bid to move poor hits GOP snag

**Ehrlich would cut
money for relocating
high-rise residents**

'Spreading poverty?'

**Plan seeks to defund
settlement of suit
over housing bias**

By JOHN B. O'DONNELL
AND JOANNA D. MORRIS
SUN NATIONAL STAFF

WASHINGTON — House Republican leaders have agreed to bar the use of federal money to move public housing tenants from Baltimore City to the suburbs as part of the settlement of a lawsuit against the city. Rep. Robert L. Ehrlich Jr. said yesterday.

The proposed settlement of the housing discrimination suit, announced last month, calls for giving 1,324 families federal rent-subsidy certificates to move from inner-city housing projects to mostly suburban neighborhoods.

The settlement is intended to break up the nearly all-black concentrations of poor people in Baltimore's public housing.

Mr. Ehrlich, a Baltimore County Republican, said the House leadership had agreed "to make sure that whatever terms are agreed to (in the settlement), they can't implement it."

Under the agreement, language will be inserted into the (Department of Housing and Urban Development

appropriations) bill that will defund the settlement," he said.

The House Republican leaders he named could not be reached for comment, but several Republican aides said that while the issue has been discussed, no "final decision" has been made.

House and Senate negotiators are scheduled to meet next week to work out differences between their versions of the spending bill, which also includes money for the Department of Veterans Affairs and some independent agencies, including the Environmental Protection Agency.

Senate negotiators must agree to the language for it to become. [See Housing, 9A]

Ehrlich takes aim at suit settlement

(Housing, from Page 1A)

part of the bill.

Mr. Ehrlich said he was "cautiously optimistic" that his proposal would survive in the final measure sent to the president.

He released proposed legislative language that would block the use of federal money to move public housing tenants from the city to Baltimore County as part of the settlement.

Asked why other counties were not included in his proposal, he said, "It's our plan, our hope, our request" that they be included in the final language.

"It's a bad policy to cure poverty by spreading poverty," Mr. Ehrlich said.

"I was sent to Washington to stop this stuff."

The American Civil Liberties Union of Maryland filed suit on behalf of six public housing residents in January.

The lawsuit sought a court-ordered remedy to a 60-year history of Baltimore housing policies that experts call among the most discriminatory in the nation.

Under the agreement, the city could demolish and redevelop its four high-rise projects.

Half the 2,700 residences are to be replaced with specialized rental certificates.

The certificates could be used only in neighborhoods in which no more than 16 percent of the residents live below the poverty line, no more than 25.9 percent are mi-

norities, and there is little subsidized housing.

Mayor Kurt L. Schmoke said last night that he had expected a move to block the necessary funding for the plan.

But he noted that the court could still require the federal government to pay for rental certificates in the future to remedy the pattern of segregation documented by the ACLU.

"Baltimore, unfortunately, still has a lot of segregated neighborhoods, and to find integrated neighborhoods or neighborhoods that are overwhelmingly white, you have to go outside the city limits," he said.

Stuart Comstock-Gay, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union in Maryland, warned last night that the consequences of blocking the settlement could be more dire.

The ACLU is prepared to press its lawsuit and ask the court to order that public housing be built throughout the metropolitan area.

"This type of program is needed to redress historical segregation and the needs of a growing urban area. Killing it would be sad for the Baltimore region," Mr. Comstock-Gay said.

"We continue to hold out hope that this isn't what happens."

Earlier yesterday, Mr. Schmoke said fair-housing laws leave the city with little choice but to use rental certificates to replace some of the 2,700 residences in the four

public high-rise projects that are being torn down.

The city plans to redevelop Lafayette Courts, Lexington Terrace, Flag House and Murphy Homes, all of which have been dominated by deteriorating high-rise towers, on a much smaller scale with rowhouses.

"We can't take families out of public housing and put them into impacted areas with high racial concentration or high poverty," Mr. Schmoke said.

As a result, he said, the city simply cannot replace the high-rise residences by renovating its abandoned, boarded-up homes — a strategy advocated by some county political leaders.

Mr. Schmoke said he made the same suggestion in the past, but it was rejected by HUD officials because most of the vacant homes in the city are in older, generally poor and predominantly black neighborhoods.

Mr. Schmoke and Housing Commissioner Daniel P. Henson III are heading to Washington today for a national summit on rental subsidies for poor people, which the mayor acknowledged are unpopular in many neighborhoods.

Admitting that the federal Section 8 rental certificates are a "curse word" in many neighborhoods, Mr. Schmoke called tenant counseling the key to the plan to shift families from inner-city housing projects to the suburbs.

"People view it as being a disruptive influence and are not distinguishing between families for

whom it has been a help, and those families who have taken it and simply have not worked well in the neighborhoods," he said.

Neighborhood leaders have complained about crime, litter and noise from some families who move in with the Section 8 rental certificates.

But housing advocates say the program, which has been in place for years, generally works well.

The proposed settlement calls for a \$2 million fund to provide counseling to the 1,324 families who receive the rental certificates.

"When you stop to think about it, if you have lived in a high-rise most of your life, there's a pattern of living that's so different than being in a single-family detached house," Mr. Schmoke said, mentioning everything from taking care of a lawn to curbside trash collection.

"It's not patronizing. It's just going to help folks."

GOP seen failing to halt shift of poor

**U.S., Md. officials cite
procedural hurdles
faced by Ehrlich**

'He jumped the gun'

**ACLU vows to pursue
court action over
city housing bias suit**

By PATRICK GILBERT
AND JOHN B. O'DONNELL
SUN STAFF

From Baltimore's suburbs to Capitol Hill, government leaders yesterday raised doubts about Republican efforts to scuttle a plan giving hundreds of poor Baltimore families the chance to move to suburban neighborhoods.

Key congressional leaders

said that a bid by Rep. Robert L. Ehrlich Jr. of Maryland's 2nd District to insert new language in a House and Senate housing appropriation bill would be difficult to pull off. The maneuver "will face significant procedural and parliamentary hurdles," warned Sen. Barbara A. Mikulski, Democrat of Maryland.

And Michael H. Davis, chief aide to the Baltimore County executive, C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger III, said: "We've learned that in the legislative process, nothing is final until a bill is passed and signed into law."

The proposed settlement of a housing discrimination lawsuit in Baltimore would give 1,342 families federal rent-subsidy certificates to move from inner-city public housing. The settlement — bitterly opposed by Baltimore County officials — is designed to break up nearly all-black concentrations of poor people.

Mr. Ehrlich said late Thursday that House GOP leaders would block the use of federal funds to move city public housing tenants to Baltimore County and other suburban counties. He said the provision would be included in an appropriations bill for the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

He said that he was "cautiously optimistic" that his provision will be in the legislation and added yesterday that he had seen "no evidence of backing off" by GOP leaders.

Aides to the key House Republicans whom Mr. Ehrlich said had agreed to block the ACLU settlement would not confirm his statement, though some acknowledged that there had been discussions. And an aide to Sen. Christopher S. Bond of Missouri, a key figure in negotiations over the legislation, said it would be difficult to include a provision that was in neither the House nor the Senate versions.

Harford County Executive Eileen M. Rehrmann said she applauded Mr. Ehrlich's action "if he's successful." The whole plan, she said, is "social engineering that doesn't work."

She and Mr. Ruppersberger are to meet Wednesday with [Sec Housing, 5A]

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GOP given little chance in bid to block relocation of poor

[Housing, from Page 1A]

HUD Secretary Henry G. Cisneros, whose agency is a party to the legal settlement.

The two county executives also plan to meet with Ms. Mikulski, the ranking Democrat on the House-Senate committee considering the HUD legislation, about Mr. Ehrlich's provision.

Ms. Mikulski would not be interviewed yesterday and issued a written statement declining to comment on the ACLU settlement or on Mr. Ehrlich's efforts.

Last year, Ms. Mikulski was instrumental in killing a HUD demonstration program that, like the proposed settlement of the ACLU suit, gave rent subsidies to poor people to move from the inner city to the suburbs. That program, Moving To Opportunity, triggered a storm of protest during the 1994 election in Baltimore County.

Some in county government worried yesterday that Mr. Ehrlich's announcement was premature and might jeopardize its success.

"He jumped the gun," said one Baltimore County official who asked not to be identified. "You don't tell the world about something like this until it's a done deal."

Mr. Davis said that Mr. Ruppersberger and the congressman had discussed using an appropriation bill as a way to thwart the lawsuit settlement.

Mr. Cisneros, the HUD secretary, said yesterday that he didn't know whether Congress could block it.

Asked whether he would try to get Ms. Mikulski to block the Ehrlich move, Baltimore Mayor Kurt L. Schmoke said: "We are going to pursue ... a resolution through HUD and the courts."

"I think it's real clear that there has to be some way to settle this case," said city Housing Commissioner Daniel P. Henson III. "You've heard my settlement agreement. What's [Mr. Ehrlich's]?"

Attorneys for the American Civil Liberties Union Foundation of Maryland, meanwhile, reiterated that if the Ehrlich provision succeeds, the organization would push for a court injunction forbidding the city from building new housing on the site of four high-rises being demolished. It also would prevent the construction of new housing in impoverished and mostly minority neighborhoods.

Under the tentative agreement, the city could demolish and redevelop the four high-rise sites. Half the 2,700 residences are to be replaced with specialized rental certificates. The certificates could be used only in neighborhoods in which no more than 10 percent of the residents live below the poverty line, no more than 25.9 percent are minorities, and there is little subsidized housing.

"I would say the whole plan to demolish the high-rises would be in jeopardy," said ACLU lawyer Barbara Samuels.

Staff writers Joanna Daemrich and Larry Carson contributed to this article.



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HOUSE BANKING COMMITTEE BEGINS WORK ON H.R. 2406

On November 2, the House Committee on Banking and Financial Services, chaired by Congressman Jim Leach (R-IA), began mark-up of the United States Housing Act of 1995, legislation to substantially change the nation's public housing laws, including replacing several existing programs with a system of block grants for local public housing agencies...H.R. 2406 is similar in some ways to a public housing bill passed by the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs, chaired by Senator Alfonse D'Amato (R-NY), but there are significant differences between the two.

The author of H.R. 2406, Housing and Community Opportunity Subcommittee Chairman Rick Lazio (R-NY), had hoped that committee action on his bill could be wrapped up in one day, but the mark up session bogged down over a proposal by Congressman Jerry Weller (R-IL) to prohibit most public housing residents in Chicago from relocating to suburbs in Cook County...The debate over the Weller amendment kept the committee from considering most of the more than 50 amendments scheduled for consideration...Committee action is expected to resume Tuesday, November 7.

In addition to replacing existing programs with block grants, H.R. 2406 requires local housing authorities to issue vouchers to tenants currently living in uninhabitable public housing units (or in public housing that costs more to maintain than the cost of a voucher), allows local agencies to determine how much rent to charge tenants and allows housing agencies to provide housing or housing assistance to tenants with incomes of up to 80 percent of area median...The companion Senate bill restricts local agency discretion in rent setting and requires that 40% of all units be made available to families at or below 30% of area median income.

HOUSE NAMES CONFEREES FOR H.R. 2099

Last week, the House of Representatives named conferees for H.R. 2099, the FY 1996 VA/HUD Appropriations bill. ...Named were House Appropriations Chairman Robert Livingston (R-LA), Committee Ranking Minority Member David Obey (D-WI), VA/HUD Subcommittee Chairman Jerry Lewis (R-CA) and Subcommittee Ranking Minority Member Louis Stokes (D-OH), along with Representatives Tom DeLay (R-TX), Barbara Vucanovich (R-NV), James T. Walsh (R-NY), David L. Hobson (R-OH), Joe Knollenberg (R-MI), Rodney Frelinghuysen (R-NJ), Mark Neumann (R-WI), Alan Mollahan (D-WV), Jim Chapman (D-TX) and Marcy Kaptur (D-OH)...Senate conferees, led by Senators Mark Hatfield (R-OR) and Kit Bond (R-MO), were named shortly after the Senate passed its version of H.R. 2099 on September 27...For several weeks, House and Senate Appropriations Committee staffs have been at work on a compromise between the two versions of H.R. 2099.

HOUSE PASSES BILL TO HELP HOMELESS, RURAL POOR

On October 30, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 1691, legislation to authorize housing grants to groups that help the homeless...Under the legislation, \$50 million in previously appropriated but unauthorized funds would be available to organizations such as Habitat for Humanity, a Georgia-based nonprofit that helps poor families to build their own homes. Additional funds were authorized by the bill for construction of rental properties for low income families in rural areas.