

# 70 ACRES IN CHICAGO: CABRINI GREEN

## Cracking the Code: Understanding the Consequences of Stereotypes Educator Guide

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### **OVERVIEW**

**Grade Level:** 7-12

**Subject Areas:**

Social Studies, Civics, English Language Arts

**Class Time:** Film is 55 minutes and the discussion activities below can be formatted to fit your class.

***70 Acres in Chicago: Cabrini Green Lesson Summary:***

*For 70 years, there stood a Chicago public housing community known as Cabrini Green...*

Home to thousands, misunderstood by millions, the Cabrini Green public housing development, located a few miles north of Chicago's downtown core, once towered over the city's most valuable neighborhoods. A reminder of inequality and poverty, Cabrini's high-rises were demolished and an African-American community displaced to make room for another social experiment: mixed-income neighborhoods.

*70 Acres in Chicago: Cabrini Green* follows the story of the Cabrini Green public housing development over the course of 20 years, from the razing of the first buildings in 1995, to the clashes in the mixed-income neighborhoods replacing them a decade later. The film documents the huge impact of Chicago's 1.5 billion dollar '*Plan for Transformation*' through the stories of long-time residents and new arrivals to this hotly contested patch of land located on the edge of Chicago's prosperous Gold Coast and Old Town neighborhoods. In the process, we get a look at the complex and contentious history of race, class, and housing in an already highly segregated American city and are challenged to consider: "Who do our cities belong to?" and "What makes a community?"

Through the film *70 Acres in Chicago*, students will examine how stereotypes influence residents' lives, relationships and opportunities and how social and political bias informs everything from who can come to a neighborhood block party to where and how people are allowed to live. Students will also consider all these factors in order to identify the effect of bias in the lives of the people in the film and also to apply this awareness to their own lives.

## Lesson Objectives:

Students will:

- Define the term “Stereotype” and understand what the term encompasses
- Identify stereotyping language and behavior in the film *70 Acres in Chicago* in order to discuss/decide why we use stereotypes and how they can lead to biased attitudes and behavior
- Recognize “coded language” and examine how it can be used to camouflage bias

## Activity Resources/Materials:

- Pens and writing paper
- Computers with Internet access
- LCD projector
- Audio speakers
- Student Handouts
  - *Student Handout A: Mixing It Up in Cabrini Green*
  - *Student Handout B: Coded Language*

\*Relevant vocabulary and extra resources are defined and listed after the activities.

## ACTIVITIES

### ACTIVITY 1 (Before you screen film): WHAT ARE STEREOTYPES?

**Time:** 20+ minutes

**Supplies:** writing paper and pens/pencils

**Activity Goal:** Students will define the term “Stereotype”

1. Write a [dictionary definition](#) of Stereotype on the board and ask students to rewrite the definition in their own words. Example definition:  
*Stereotype (n): a standardized mental picture that is held in common by members of a group and that represents an oversimplified opinion, prejudiced attitude, or uncritical judgment.*
  2. Ask students to share their own definitions.
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## Watch: 70 Acres in Chicago: Cabrini Green

Preface film with: We will watch *70 Acres in Chicago: Cabrini Green* - a film that documents the demolition of a low-income housing development in Chicago and the displacement of a Black community. The area was turned into a mixed-income housing\* neighborhood and the film examines the impact of these changes on the people who lived there. (\*Mixed-income housing developments are neighborhoods that are created to combine people with a range of income levels.)

Ask students to write down when they think they have heard a stereotype.

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### ACTIVITY 2 (After you screen film): EXPLORING STEREOTYPES

**Time:** 30+ minutes

**Supplies:** writing paper and pens/pencils, LCD projector, audio speakers

**Handouts:**

· **Student Handout A: Mixing It Up Discussion** (optional)

**Activity Goal:** Identify stereotyping language and behavior from *70 Acres in Chicago*

1. Distribute **Student Handout A: Mixing It Up Discussion** and ask the class the following questions (can break into small into small groups if you'd like):
  - a. ○ What aspects of the film surprised you most?
  - b. ○ What scenes, quotes or stories stood out for you?
  - c. ○ How does this film connect with our conversation about stereotypes and bias?
2. If time left, dig into these questions that refer to specific instances from the film:
  - What did Abu Ansari mean when he said that he felt like “there was a fear amongst homeowners about seeing former Cabrini Green residents sort of hanging out in groups”?  
What stereotypes about race do we see in this film clip?
  - Jay Duff is a new resident of Cabrini Green. In the film, he refers to other homeowners like himself as “market rate” people – meaning they are paying the full market price for their home in Cabrini Green. He refers to long-time residents as “people on welfare” and says that new residents “have to set an example for people who don't know what it's like to earn a living”.  
What assumptions is Mr. Duff making about the public housing residents of Cabrini Green?

○ Long-time Cabrini Green resident, Deidre Brewster says “There was this whole belief that if so-called 'public housing residents' - remember we were very demonized - if they moved next door to such affluent neighbors that would make them better people, which was very insulting.”

How might that stereotype influence a new resident’s belief about Deidre and people like her?

○ Abu Ansari explains: “Housing sales dropped dramatically ... And when Cabrini Green residents started coming in, I heard that sentiment among homeowners of, 'well, what's the ratio?' ... There's a sentiment of 'we feel like we're being outnumbered'. And, I don't know if it was more of an outnumbered by Black people or if it was more just outnumbered by people who weren't middle class.”

Why do you think the homeowners were anxious about being “outnumbered” by long-time Cabrini Green residents?

Complete the activity by asking students to write a one-sentence claim about a message from the film using the following sentence starter. Have students provide one piece of evidence from your screening notes to backup their claim.

*“One message this film seems to be trying to get viewers to think about is...\_\_\_\_\_”*

## The following is appropriate for 9th-12th grade and Universities.

### ACTIVITY 3: CODED LANGUAGE

**Time:** 30+ minutes

**Supplies:** writing paper and pens/pencils, LCD projector, audio speakers

**Film Clips:** [70 Acres Clip 2](#) (if students struggle to recall moments from screening, show them clip)

**Handouts:**

- **Student Handout B: Coded Language**
- **Activity Goal:** Recognize “coded language” and examine how it can be used to camouflage bias

1. **Explain and discuss:** Stereotypes and bias can sometimes be hidden behind “**coded language**”: words or phrases that are used to disguise a deeper or more controversial meaning.

*For example:* In the film, when a speaker use terms such as “public housing residents” or “homeowner”, they are sending us a message about the race and economic class of the person they are talking about without having to use more

direct language. These are some of the coded languages that are addressed in the film.

Mr. Ansari explains that new residents were feeling uncomfortable about the number of original Cabrini-Green residents who were moving back to the neighborhood:

“...there was a fear, amongst *homeowners* about seeing *former Cabrini Green residents* sort of hanging out in groups.”

2. **Ask the class for feedback:** *What do the terms ‘homeowners and former Cabrini Green residents mean in this context?*

Explain: Mr. Ansari goes on to clarify: “Just because you see a lot of Black people hanging out somewhere doesn't mean they're up to no good.”

3. **If time, distribute Active Viewing Worksheet Student Handout D: Coded Language** and instruct the students to document examples of coded language used by residents to speak to about each other and the communities in Cabrini Green that have not been discussed. Have them also make note of any quotes or scenes that relate back to our discussions about stereotypes and bias or from their own lives.

## TAKE-HOME ACTIVITIES:

### Writing Assignment

Have students respond to the following writing prompt:

- How would the situation at the Cabrini Green Mixed Income development be different if the residents discussed race and class with each other directly?
- Do you think the situation would improve, stay the same, or become worse? Explain your reasoning and use examples from the film to support your argument.

### Journaling

Have students reflect on a situation in their own life when one of their own biases was disproven and write a journal entry about the experience using the following prompts:

- What changed your perspective?
- How did you react?
- How did it change your relationship with other people?
- Did it challenge you to re-think other stereotypes and biases you held?
- Based on your own experience, what advice or insight could you offer to other people who are relying on stereotypes?

## Community Research

Have students research public housing and/or community redevelopment projects in their area and compare/contrast the language used by different stakeholders and the media to describe/report on the project.

Students can work independently and/or in groups and present a multi-media report, including interviews in the style of the documentary *70 Acres in Chicago* if time and resources are available. See the resources section for websites, films, and books that can be used to support their research.

## **VOCABULARY**

- [Bias](#): a tendency to believe that some people, ideas, etc., are better than others that usually results in treating some people unfairly
- [The Chicago Housing Authority \(CHA\)](#): A municipal agency, founded in 1937, that oversees public housing within the city of Chicago.
- [Gentrification](#): The renovation and/or renewal of real estate by affluent or middle-class people that often displaces low-income residents and small businesses.
- [The Great Migration](#): The widespread migration of approximately 6 million African Americans from rural communities in the South to large cities in the North and West between 1910-1970.
- Jim Crow Laws: State and local laws enforcing racial segregation from the late 1800's through 1965.
- [Mixed Income Housing](#): A housing development that has people with a range of income levels. Mixed income communities can evolve organically but are often engineered through city planning and urban development initiatives.
- Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program: A result of the Section 8 of the Housing Act of 1937, the voucher program provides "tenant-based" financial assistance, so a tenant can move from one unit of at least minimum housing quality to another. It also allows individuals to apply their monthly voucher towards the purchase of a home.
- Social Engineering: The act of attempting to influence attitudes and social behaviors on a large scale to produce desired outcomes and characteristics in a target population.
- [Stereotype](#): Something conforming to a fixed or general pattern; especially: a standardized mental picture that is held in common by members of a group and that represents an oversimplified opinion, prejudiced attitude, or uncritical judgment. These thoughts or beliefs may or may not accurately reflect reality. They can, keep people from processing new or unexpected information about each individual, thus biasing the impression formation process.
- [United States Department of Housing and Urban Development \(HUD\)](#): A cabinet level department of the federal government that was founded in 1965 to develop and implement policies on housing and community development.

## EXTENSIONS

### 1. **Discrimination on the Menu:**

The Chicago Tribune article, “Race Gap Seen in Restaurant Hiring,” explores the roles of race and class in staffing and uncovers examples and statistics pertaining to employment-related bias at our nation’s restaurants. According to the article, a recent Chicago-based survey revealed that 80 percent of whites work in the “front” of restaurants as waitstaff and hosts while nearly two-thirds of Hispanics work in the back. “Front” jobs pay more, offer more opportunities for advancement and better working conditions.

This Teaching Tolerance lesson challenges students to reflect on themes of fairness, perception, discrimination and legality with regard to employment and to examine their own biases and related experiences.

<http://www.tolerance.org/discrimination-menu>

### 2. **Going Further - Facing History and Ourselves: Stereotyping**

In this reading activity students will further explore how stereotypes and bias can lead to discriminatory behavior. Joseph H. Suina, a professor of education and a member of the Cochiti Pueblo, recalls the effects stereotyping had on his behavior and experience in the Marines. Students will examine the effects of the ideas of race and ethnicity on human behavior and how they can be the basis for prejudice and discrimination.

<https://www.facinghistory.org/holocaust-human-behavior/stereotyping>

### 3. **What is Environmental Racism?**

While environmental issues such as global warming, water quality, and air pollution are gaining increasing attention, there is less discussion about the communities who are disproportionately affected by the facilities that fill the air, soil, and water with contaminants. Industrial polluters affect the wellbeing of residents, and are more likely to be found in communities of color and low-income neighborhoods that often lack the political and economic power to influence government bodies whose decisions impact their health and wellbeing.

- Have students research the history and impact of environmental racism in the U.S. and investigate how these issues impact their own community
- Using the student research and community action platform Map Your World ([www.mapyourworld.org](http://www.mapyourworld.org)), have students “map the issue” by surveying community members about pollution in their area and interviewing community organizations, civic leaders and business owners involved in this issue.
- Students should also investigate policy proposals and strategic projects that aim to improve or solve the affordable housing problem.
- For the culminating activity, have students compile their data using the Map Your World site and present their findings and strategies at a community meeting or town hall event.

## STANDARDS

### Common Core Standards

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.4](#)

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.4](#)

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1](#)

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1](#)

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.5](#)

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.5](#)

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.2](#)

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2](#)

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.4](#)

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.4](#)

## RELATED RESOURCES

### WEBSITES

- **70 Acres in Chicago: Cabrini Green** - [official website](#)
- **Ronit Films** - Filmmaker Ronit Bezalet's [website](#)
- ***City of Chicago Near North TAX Increment Redevelopment Plan and Project***
- **[Museum of Tolerance Online Multimedia Learning Center](#)** - The Simon Wiesenthal Center provides a wealth of resources examining racial prejudice.
- **[National Initiative on Mixed Income Communities at the Case Western Reserve University](#)** - A resource for research and information about creating and sustaining mixed-income communities:
- **[The New Jim Crow](#)** - The official website for the book *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* by Michelle Alexander. The book and website examines the mass incarceration of African American men in the United States.



- [Place Lab](#) - Part of the University of Chicago's Arts + Public Life initiative, introducing the 9 Principles of Ethical Redevelopment in order to share and refine with other willing urban practitioners who believe in spatial equity for cities.
- [Project Cabrini](#) - a public art installation led by the artist Jan Tichy and developed together with Efrat Appel, was created in collaboration with youth from Chicago, most of them attending educational programs in the Cabrini-Green area and with students from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.
- [Rich Blocks Poor Blocks: Rich Blocks Poor Blocks](#) - maps income, rent and other data in nearly every state, county, zip code and census tract in the United States.
- [Southern Poverty Law Center](#) - An extensive collection of resources for teaching tolerance in the classroom.
- [U.S. Department of Justice: "Hateful Acts Hurt Kids"](#) - Designed for children from the Department of Justice this web site offers great information geared for elementary school children, parents and teachers.

## **FILMS**

- [Changing Face of Harlem](#), Dir. Shawn Batey
- [Flag Wars](#), Dir. Linda Goode Bryant and Laura Poitras
- [Hoop Dreams](#), Dir. Steve James, Kartemquin Films
- [Land of Opportunity](#), Dir. Luisa Dantas
- [My Brooklyn](#), Dir. Kelly Anderson and Allison Liris
- [The Pruitt-Igoe Myth](#), Dir. Chad Freidrichs
- [Voices of Cabrini](#), Dir. Ronit Bezalel

## **BOOKS and ARTICLES**

- Bennett, Larry, Janet L. Smith, and Patricia A. Wright. *Where Are Poor People to Live?: Transforming Public Housing Communities*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2006.
- Bowly, Devereux. *The Poorhouse: Subsidized Housing in Chicago*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2012.
- Chaskin, Robert J., and Mark L. Joseph. *Integrating the Inner City. The Promise and Perils of Mixed-income Housing Transformation*. Chicago: U of Chicago, 2015.

- Hirsch, Arnold R. *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983.
- Hunt, D. Bradford. *Blueprint for Disaster: The Unraveling of Chicago Public Housing*. Chicago, IL: U of Chicago, 2010.
- Moore, Natalie Y. *The South Side: A Portrait of Chicago and American Segregation*. 2016 by St. Martin's Press.
- McGarty, Craig; Yzerbyt, Vincent Y.; Spears, Russel (2002). "[Social, cultural and cognitive factors in stereotype formation](#)" (PDF). *Stereotypes as explanations: The formation of meaningful beliefs about social groups*. Cambridge: [Cambridge University Press](#). pp. 1–15. ISBN 978-0-521-80047-1.
- Pattillo, Mary E. *Black on the Block: The Politics of Race and Class in the City*. Chicago: U of Chicago, 2007.
- Petty, Audrey. *High Rise Stories: Voices from Chicago Public Housing*. San Francisco: Voice of Witness, 2013.
- Vale, Lawrence J. *Reclaiming Public Housing: A Half Century of Struggle in Three Public Neighborhoods*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2002.
- Whitaker, David. *Cabrini Green in Words & Pictures*. Chicago, IL: W3 Chicago, 2000.
- Zorbaugh, Harvey Warren. *The Gold Coast and the Slum: A Sociological Study of Chicago's Near North Side*. Chicago: U of Chicago, 1929.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Allison Milewski developed media education resources for a range of award-winning filmmakers and national media organizations, including PBS LearningMedia, Independent Television Services (ITVS), Latino Public Broadcasting, HBO Documentaries, Tribeca Film Institute, and POV American Documentary, Inc. She is also the founder of the international media education program, [PhotoForward.org](#).

## 70 ACRES IN CHICAGO: CABRINI GREEN Student Handout A: Mixing It Up Discussion

**Instructions: Share your notes from the screening and collaborate with your group to answer the following questions. (Use a separate sheet of paper to record your answers):**

1. What did Abu Ansari mean when he said that he felt like “there was a fear amongst homeowners about seeing former Cabrini Green residents sort of hanging out in groups”? What stereotypes about race do we see in this film clip?
2. Jay Duff is a new resident of Cabrini Green. In the film, he refers to other homeowners like himself as “market rate” people – meaning they are paying the full market price for their home in Cabrini Green. He refers to long-time residents as “people on welfare” and says that new residents “have to set an example for people who don't know what it's like to earn a living”.
  - What assumptions is Mr. Duff making about the public housing residents of Cabrini Green?
3. Long-time Cabrini Green resident, Deidre Brewster says “There was this whole belief that if so-called 'public housing residents' - remember we were very demonized - if they moved next door to such affluent neighbors that would make them better people, which was very insulting.”
  - How do those stereotypes bias the new resident's behavior toward her and people like her? Can you give examples from the film?
4. Mr. Ansari explains: “Housing sales dropped dramatically ... And when Cabrini Green residents started coming in, I heard that sentiment among homeowners of, 'well, what's the ratio?' ... There's a sentiment of 'we feel like we're being outnumbered'. And, I don't know if it was more of an outnumbered by Black people or if it was more just outnumbered by people who weren't middle class.”
  - Why do you think the homeowners were anxious about being “outnumbered” by long-time Cabrini Green residents?

**70 ACRES IN CHICAGO: CABRINI GREEN**  
**Student Handout B: Coded Language**

***Instructions:*** While watching the film *70 Acres in Chicago: Cabrini Green*, document examples of coded language used by residents to speak to about each other and the communities in Cabrini Green.

Examples of coded language in the film clip:

**70 ACRES IN CHICAGO: CABRINI GREEN**  
**Teacher Handout B: Coded Language Discussion**

**Instructions: Share your notes from the screening and collaborate with your group to answer the following questions.**

- What scenes, quotes or stories stood out for you? How does this film connect with our conversation about coded language and stereotypes?
  
- What are some examples of coded language that we heard in that clip? What are some examples of stereotypes?
  
- Abu Ansari explains that when he and his partner decided to move to the new Cabrini Green area his partner “really thought that socially it was a good idea to, mix people from different social economic backgrounds.” Mr. Ansari however had some concerns that “being a black person coming into a neighborhood from which other people were going to be dislocated or relocated, I had concerns about sort of being a gentrifier.”
  - What does being a “gentrifier” mean to Mr. Ansari in this context?
  - Based on his statement, how do you think Mr. Ansari feels about gentrification?
  
- Another new resident, Rick DeMaria, also talks about gentrification in Cabrini Green. He says, “It's really nice to see the neighborhood change, and seeing all the new buildings coming up around here. And the retail, and the commercial, and you know, the gentrification that's happening. It's awesome. It's good for the city.”
  - What does gentrification mean for Mr. DeMaria?
  - In what ways does Mr. DeMaria’s perspective on gentrification differ from Mr. Ansari’s?
  - When Mr. DeMaria says gentrification is good for “the city” what does “the city” signify for him?
  
- Former area resident, Barry Benton, watched Mr. DeMaria from behind the chain-link fence and says “When I grew up, you didn't see this type of, of nationality over here, playing baseball ... I wanna get out there and play.”
  - Why doesn’t Mr. Benton go out and play with Mr. DeMaria?

- What does he mean by “nationality”? Why do you think he uses that term? (Note: By describing Mr. DeMaria as being from a different nationality, Mr. Benton suggests that the boundary between the old and new residents is more than a fence. It’s like they live in completely different countries.)
  
- Later, 'Shaq' McDonald, also encounters some new residents at a baseball field when he was walking his dog. He says: “I was going to ask them Caucasian people over there if I could play baseball with them.”
  - What happens next? What reason does the couple give for asking Shaq to stay away?
  - What assumptions did the couple make about Shaq’s dog? Why do you think they felt that way (was it reasonable)?
  - Do you think they would have the same response if a white resident of Cabrini Green with a dog had come to the park? (What assumptions are we making about this couple? Are they founded in evidence from the film or in stereotypes?)
  
- The new residences at Cabrini Green are referred to as Mixed Income Developments, but residents from different income levels have to fulfill different requirements.
  - What are some of the requirements for residents with lower income levels? Why do you think residents like Ms. Brewster have more restrictions than Mr. Ansari and Mr. Duff?
  - What message are the Chicago Housing Authority and the developers sending about people who have less money?
  
- According to a 2009 report from Human Rights Watch, white Americans are more likely than black Americans to have used most kinds of illegal drugs, including cocaine, marijuana and LSD, yet blacks are arrested for drug possession more than three times as often as whites.
  - At the new Cabrini Green development, the majority of long-time residents are African American whereas the new residents are predominantly white, yet the mandatory drug tests are limited to long-time residents. Why do you think that is?

- What was the most challenging decision Ms. Brewster had to make in order to return to Cabrini Green? Do you think that requirement was fair? (Why/why not?) What would you have done in her position?
  
- Former Cabrini Green resident Mark Pratt and his wife, Kenyatta Ousely-Pratt, could not move into the new Mixed Income Community because there were not enough apartments built for large families. Ms. Ousely-Pratt describes her new neighborhood by saying: “Out here you could be standing outside and Joe Bob got into it with Bobby Sue, and they just drive up shooting. And you have no clue. Directly behind us, on the block behind us, three gentlemen were killed.”
  - What is Ms. Ousely-Pratt telling us about her new neighbors by referring to them as “Joe Bob and Bobby Sue” (race, economic class, etc.)?
  - Why does the couple feel less safe here than in the Cabrini Green projects?
  - How do their new neighbors feel about the influx of former Cabrini Green residents?
  
- What happened at the Cabrini Green block party? How did the residents and police react when children from a different area of the neighborhood came to the party with golf clubs?
  - How did the reaction of the long-time residents compare to the new residents? Why do you think that they reacted that way?
  - Why do you think Mr. Duff referred to the golf clubs as “weapons”?
  - One of the women said, “they’re not from over here so they not supposed to be over here.” What is the meaning of “over here” in this context?
  
- At the end of the clip Professor Mary Pattillo says, “Class prejudice is something I think that we need to address again, explicitly. And start people talking about why they assume the way that they do things is the right way to do it. And the way someone else does things is the wrong way to do it. The way that poor people do things is stigmatized.”
  - What does Professor Pattillo mean by this?
  - Why is difficult for people to speak candidly with each other about issues like race and class?