

# [The popular belief, the protesting residents are](https://assignbuster.com/the-popular-belief-the-protesting-residents-are/)

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The1949 Housing Act was passed in an effort to spur urban redevelopment in thefifties and sixties. Public housing has long been considered a failed attemptat helping low income individuals who require affordable rents, yet there hasbeen dispute over who is to blame for this lack of success.  One of these housing facilities, Pruitt-Igoe, represent one of the most well-known examples of how this governmental efforthas failed to fulfill its original purpose and has in fact led to the firstresident protest in the history of public housing.  “ The Pruitt-Igoe Myth” by Chad Freidrichs discussesthe true reason public housing has failed and that, against popular belief, theprotesting residents are not to blame but rather their unfair social andeconomic conditions and the unforeseen impact of such efforts that led them torevolt in the first place.

The myth behind Pruitt-Igoe is onebased upon the belief that poor citizens are involved in violence, crime, anddrugs, and that they could not adapt to a certain standard of living.  This is because of the propaganda includingpictures of vandalized hallways and broken windows that are juxtaposed with thehopeful and idealistic images of what Pruitt-Igoe was supposed to be like.  Moreover, this made people believe that theimpoverished individuals refused to take advantage of what was given to themand could not transcend their so called “ culture of poverty,” as described byOscar Lewis.  Yet these people are disillusioned, because they ignored the many structural issues that perpetuate poverty and believedthat this housing alone could solve the long-standing and deeply-rooted problemof class division.

This documentary is interesting inthat it puts names to those who were victims of this discriminatory system, providing both sides of the public housing story and further elucidating who isactually to blame. One factor that was not accounted for by those who blamedthe poor residents was the decline of urban areas already taking place. The1949 Housing Act was intended to help in urban renewal, but actually stimulatedsuburbanization and emptied cities and the resources they once had.  Therefore, these residents did not have themeans to climb the social ladder even if they did have housing.  Additionally, public housing was inherently aform of racial segregation, as the individuals who were left behind werevictims of white flight and were oppressed by the culture of uniformity inneighborhood composition and domestic life.

Moreover, those who inhabited the Pruitt homes were minorities whilethose who resided in the Igoe homes were only white.  Those who blamed the poor residents also didnot account for the failing public governmental policies and the profit-driven focusof the housing authority.  An issue that was discussed in the filmthat is unknown to the general citizen is that the main purpose of the housingact was not to provide affordable housing but to improve slum clearance, construction, and overall economic stimulation. This is, arguably, one of the greatest contributors to the failing ofpublic housing legislation. Resources were not being put into maintaining andsupervising these buildings in the long term which allowed vandalism and crimeto prevail in these facilities.

This iswhy the pipes burst, the incinerators weren’t working, and a mother was evenforced to put her son’s stomach back inside his body after he was hit by achainsaw.   On top of the unfair welfare requirements andconditions that the residents had to abide by, the deterioration of their homescaused by a lack of resources and the failure of the government to make changesled to the revolts and represent the true reasons why public housing failed. Overall, the Pruitt-Igoe myth that blamespoor residents for the failure of public housing is an inaccurate demonstrationof reality that does not account for structural issues such as discriminationand the government’s non-involvement in improving these buildings.  This failure is representative of not onlythe failure of public housing, but the welfare system as a whole and any effortto help the impoverished.

“ The Pruitt-Igoe Myth” helps viewers understand thetrue reasons policies have failed to make a positive difference, and why thesereasons need to be acknowledged for any valuable change to be made.