



# **Purging the Poorest: Public Housing and the Design Politics of Twice-Cleared Communities (Historical Studies of Urban America)**

*Lawrence J. Vale*

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The building and management of public housing is often seen as a signal failure of American public policy, but this is a vastly oversimplified view. In *Purging the Poorest*, Lawrence J. Vale offers a new narrative of the seventy-five-year struggle to house the “deserving poor.”

In the 1930s, two iconic American cities, Atlanta and Chicago, demolished their slums and established some of this country’s first public housing. Six decades later, these same cities also led the way in clearing public housing itself. Vale’s groundbreaking history of these “twice-cleared” communities provides unprecedented detail about the development, decline, and redevelopment of two of America’s most famous housing projects: Chicago’s Cabrini-Green and Atlanta’s Techwood /Clark Howell Homes. Vale offers the novel concept of *design politics* to show how issues of architecture and urbanism are intimately bound up in thinking about policy. Drawing from extensive archival research and in-depth interviews, Vale recalibrates the larger cultural role of public housing, revalues the contributions of public housing residents, and reconsiders the role of design and designers.

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