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Public Housing

Capsule by Jonathan Rosenbaum

From the Chicago Reader

This in-depth 1997 look at everyday life in Chicago's Ida B. Wells housing project, running 195 minutes, is one of Frederick Wiseman's greatest documentaries to date. Few of the points in its epic analysis are obvious ones; though it gives the overall impression that public housing is like living in a concentration camp, the film favors exploration and understanding over finger-pointing and polemicizing. Wiseman presents a wide array of materials, and because you have to reflect on the film to realize how the various pieces of its design hang together, you're liable to be thinking about it for months afterward.