
Engaged Universities Are Central to Strong Communities

The Fair Housing Act's 30th Anniversary
**Housing Discrimination Is Still Common—
Though It Now May Wear a Smile**

Thirty years after the passage of the Fair Housing Act, some tough challenges remain. The most overt forms of residential segregation—such as neighborhood covenants that forbid the sale of homes to minorities—have largely disappeared. Yet, many Americans continue to face subtle forms of discouragement to open housing choice, such as steering minority homebuyers to “minority” neighborhoods, asking minority applicants for more credit information than whites of equal background, or leaving them waiting for appointments that are never kept.

“America has changed dramatically for the better in these past 30 years,” Housing Secretary Andrew Cuomo commented. “Although minorities in America have more opportunity than ever, the stain of bigotry is still with us. Overt discrimination has declined, replaced by a more subtle, but just as hateful *discrimination with a smile*.”

Mortgage discrimination is an area of particular concern for HUD. “The home-ownership gap remains far too wide,” Cuomo said. The

Secretary has vowed to crack down on all forms of housing discrimination. HUD has pledged to double the number of fair housing enforcement actions, is forming partnerships with 67 non-profit housing groups to reduce discrimination, and has entered into more than 100 best-practice agreements with key lenders. This year, HUD will issue a community-by-community report on mortgage discrimination and the presence of redlining.

“There will continue to be a role for the federal government in the enforcement of the Fair Housing Act over the next 30 years,” noted Eva M. Plaza, Assistant Secretary of HUD’s Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHEO). “The Fair Housing Act, like many other civil rights and consumer protection laws, is best enforced from the ground up.” Such an approach requires active collaboration with community entities: housing industry groups, fair housing advocates, academics, and individual citizens who encounter discrimination.

“I hope in the next 30 years we will see an

increase in voluntary compliance on the part of lenders, real estate professionals, and others,” Plaza commented. “I can’t emphasize how important it is—this sometimes-overlooked part of the Fair Housing Act. If a mortgage lender can, for example, self-check for possible mortgage lending discrimination and take prompt and appropriate corrective action, the instances of possible discrimination are likely to decrease. We are happy to be partners with industry in this regard.”

Colleges and universities play an important role in fair housing enforcement, Plaza said, carrying out testing and working in fair housing coalitions. Academic institutions also contribute analyses at such forums as the HUD-

funded conference, “Racial and Ethnic Discrimination in American Economic Life,” held at The Urban Institute in Washington, D.C., earlier this year.

HUD began its official commemoration of three decades of fair housing enforcement in April, which is traditionally Fair Housing Month. During the next year, HUD will work with a different city each month to highlight fair housing issues. A nationally broadcast public service announcement will “showcase blatant discrimination, but also give the message that discrimination can take more subtle forms,” explained Plaza. A major summit, with academic papers and

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**CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF
FAIR HOUSING**

Passed as Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, the Fair Housing Act was intended to halt residential segregation and provide access to housing opportunities for all Americans—regardless of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. It was amended in 1988 to broaden the scope of protected classes to include persons with disabilities, households with children, and the elderly. Throughout its 30-year history, the Fair Housing Act has come to be recognized as one of the most successful civil rights laws in history and a model of collaboration among public, nonprofit, and industry groups. HUD works with state and local government agencies and industry groups, community organizations, and academic institutions through the Fair Housing Initiatives Program and the Fair Housing Assistance Program.

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Discrimination

workshops, will be held in April 1999. The year's activities are summarized in the 30th anniversary theme, "Many Neighborhoods, One America." ■

To find out about events in your area celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Fair Housing Act, visit the **HUD Fair Housing Page** (<http://www.hud.gov/fhe/ftheo.html>) or call the **Fair Housing Information Clearinghouse**, 1-800-343-3442.

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Alleviating Discrimination in Lending

As an active partner of the city's Fair Lending Coalition, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee is helping to reverse the pattern of disinvestment that constricts the flow of credit to Milwaukee's inner-city and minority communities. Lack of access to credit is historically one of the most destructive economic trends in inner cities—a trend that

discourages small businesses and homeownership alike.

The Fair Lending Coalition has negotiated reinvestment agreements with approximately one dozen banks in the Milwaukee metropolitan area according to Gregory Squires, Professor of Sociology at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. These agreements have increased the availability of home mortgage, small business credit, and life-line banking services for inner-city and minority residents.

Milwaukee's Fair Lending Coalition is made up of representatives from churches, community-based groups, civil rights organizations, and labor unions. University students conduct research, organizational, and public education activities concerning discrimination in lending and the need for fair credit to promote community revitalization.

Each year a team of faculty and graduate students researches and reports on the lending practices of all local financial institutions—more than 200 in the Milwaukee area. Institutions are required to provide information on the race, gender, and income level of mortgage applicants under the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act. The team then analyzes mortgage patterns in different areas of the city. The university researchers rank local

lenders on several measures of reinvestment. Armed with this information, the Fair Lending Coalition engages lenders in voluntary discussions of possible community reinvestment initiatives or, if need be, challenges them under the federal Community Reinvestment Act (CRA).

"The information is used primarily at the beginning of a process" said Squires. "This process has resulted in more loans to Milwaukee's inner city, more branch banks being opened, and commitments from lenders to hire more minorities and contract with more minority-owned businesses," he adds.

"We are also examining the small business lending data that just became available under CRA," explained Squires. "We'll be looking at 1996 data for Milwaukee-area lenders in terms of their distribution of loans for businesses in low-income neighborhoods, compared to that distribution at the national level. And we will be comparing local lenders with each other." ■

For more information, contact: Gregory Squires, Professor of Sociology, **University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee**, (414) 229-4388.

1998 DOCTORAL DISSERTATION GRANTEES

The Office of University Partnerships has awarded its 1998 Doctoral Dissertation Grants. Awardees will receive \$15,000 each to develop and conduct applied research in the fields of housing and community development.

Mahyar Arefi	"Jump Starting Main Street"
Karen J. Baehler	"One Person, One Grant: Equity, Efficiency and the Distribution of Federal Anti-Poverty Grants"
John W. Edwards	"Building the Open City? Residential Mobility and Urban Policy Innovation in the 1970s"
Laura E. Harris	"A Home is More Than Just a House: A Spatial Analysis of Housing for the Poor in Metropolitan America"
Edward J. Jepson, Jr.	"The Application of Sustainability as a Framework for Community Development Planning"
Rachel Garshick Kleit	"Housing, Social Networks, and Access to Opportunity: The Impact of Living in Scattered-Site and Clustered Public Housing"
Nicole Marwell	"Social Networks and Social Capital as a Resource in Community Building"
Ellen A. Merry	"The Tax Treatment of Owner-Occupied Housing: Effects on Demands for Housing, Mortgage Debt, and Nonhousing Assets"
Gabriella Modan	"The Struggle for Neighborhood Identity: Class, Ethnicity, and the Discursive Construction of Place"
Kristopher M. Rengert	"The Effect of Minority Ownership of Financial Institutions on Mortgage Lending to Minority and Lower-Income Home Seekers: A Cross-Sectional and Time-Series Analysis"
Julia S. Rubin	"Community Development Venture Capital: A Study of Cross-Sector Organizations"
Brian Schmitt	"Do Community Reinvestment Act Agreements Work?"
Mara S. Sidney	"The Effects of National Policy Designs on Local Housing Politics: A Comparison of Fair Housing and Community Reinvestment Policies"
Theresa Y. Singleton	"Reinvesting in Community: The Organizational Impacts of Community Reinvestment"
Lois A. Stanley	"How Context Influences Local Economic Development: Strategies for Military Base Redevelopment in the 1990s"

COPC Central is a free quarterly publication prepared by the University Partnerships Clearinghouse, the information service sponsored by HUD's Office of University Partnerships (OUP). **COPC Central** highlights the contributions of universities and colleges to local community revitalization efforts. You may contact the University Partnerships Clearinghouse at P.O. Box 6091, Rockville, MD 20849, (800) 245-2691, (fax) (301) 519-5767. See the Office of University Partnerships on the World Wide Web at <http://www.oup.org>.

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Fair Housing Becomes Part of Community Building

Fair housing will become an important part of broad community-building efforts in Durham, North Carolina, thanks to a partnership among the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-CH) and several universities, community groups, and public agencies. The work will focus on several neighborhoods in southwest central Durham, a low-income area with predominantly black and Hispanic residents.

The fair housing project, headed by William M. Rohe, director of UNC-CH's Center for Urban and Regional Studies, will provide public education on rights when renting or buying a home. The university will link residents to local groups with expertise in resolving housing discrimination complaints, such as the Durham Human Relations Commission, the Durham Affordable Housing Coalition, and the North Carolina Fair Housing Center. The COPC storefront office, which will be located in the southwest central area, is currently being rehabilitated by the Durham Community Land Trust.

To investigate the prevalence of discrimination, UNC-CH and its community partners will conduct a demographically representative survey of 250 households in southwest central Durham. In addition, university staff will work with nonprofit organizations and city agencies to provide workshops, technical

assistance, and educational materials about fair housing.

Charles Daye, of the UNC-CH School of Law faculty and chair of the Durham Human Relations Commission, will oversee the participation of Chapel Hill law students in the fair housing project. There are also plans to include law students from Duke University and North Carolina Central University, a historically black college in Durham. In addition, discussions have begun with a local attorney who has offered to expand COPC efforts by seeking outside funding for a comprehensive public interest legal clinic to serve the southwest central neighborhoods, which would assist residents with fair housing and other issues.

"This project, which brings university resources to the community, aims to build solidarity," said Mary Beth Powell, associate director of the Center for Urban and Regional Studies, UNC-CH. In March, just three months after the initiation of the project, 65 area residents representing 12 churches and other nonprofits, including six neighborhood associations turned out for a community meeting sponsored by UNC-CH that addressed fair housing and other pressing community issues.

A local community advisory committee has been established to provide a formal community voice to advise the project. "We don't

Howard University

Measuring Mortgage Discrimination

Howard University's Center for Urban Progress (CUP) has teamed with Community First, Incorporated (CFI), a Washington, D.C.-based community development organization, to devise and test new methods for measuring mortgage lending disparities. The goal is to give D.C. grassroots organizations more rigorous tools to discover whether they have grounds for charging discrimination in lending practices. Howard University will make these economic tools available to such partner community groups as Manna, Inc., Peoples Involvement Corporation, and other local organizations concerned with fair housing.

"The idea is to strengthen what we have available," emphasized CUP director Rodney Green, "so that people can then make arguments that are not just grounded on rhetoric or superficial data, but on rigorous analysis—something that's not quite so easily tossed aside."

The project matches Home Mortgage Disclosure Act information with neighborhood-level census data to analyze the extent to which mortgage funds are made available in differ-

ent neighborhoods. The analysis uses a dissimilarity index approach which, according to Green, enables researchers to "look at what we would expect compared to what is actually there and then compare areas to find out where any gross unfairness occurs."

One technical challenge in this work is to determine a standard for fairness, in the context of the customary criteria financial institutions use in the approval process, such as personal credit history, income, or neighborhood characteristics that could affect property value.

Soon the team expects to have completed the basic analysis and modeling process. The research team will then share the new tools in a community meeting with local organizations concerned with fair housing issues. It will also introduce these new tools to local financial institutions, which could enable them to more accurately detect possible problems in their own lending patterns. ■

For more information, contact Rodney Green, Director, Center for Urban Progress, **Howard University, (202) 806-9558.**

do anything without getting the community's endorsement," said Powell. ■

For more information, contact Mary Beth Powell, Associate Director, Center

for Urban and Regional Studies, **University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, (919) 962-3076.**

Fair Housing Resources on the Internet

The Internet supplies a wealth of information, how-to guides, and net-working opportunities on fair housing issues. Many sites are linked. Here are a few places to begin an exploration.

- **Fair Housing Information Clearinghouse**
(<http://www.circsol.com/fairhousing/>) supplies national and local information and links to fair housing resources inside and outside of government. The Clearinghouse

can also be reached by calling 1-800-343-3442 or 1-800-290-1617 (TTY).

- **HUD Fair Housing Web Page**
(<http://www.hud.gov/fhe/fheo.html>) provides information about the programs of the Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity, including the Fair Housing Technology Forum.
- **The Fair Housing Council**
(<http://www.fairhousing.com>), a national, private

fair housing organization based in Louisville, Kentucky, offers an on-line newsletter, a searchable website, and networking links.

- **The John Marshall Law School's Fair Housing Legal Support Center**
(<http://jmls.edu/housing/fhcenter.html>) provides public education on fair housing law and legal assistance to public and private organizations combating housing discrimination.

- **The Fair Housing Act (Cornell Law School: U.S. Codes)**
(<http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode>). From this homepage, a search for U.S. Code 42, Chapter 45 takes you to the text of 1968 fair housing legislation.
- **The Coalition To Preserve the Fair Housing Act**
(<http://www.bazelon.org>), found on the homepage of the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, tracks upcoming legislative action.

Pardon Our Error

A publication describing the joint HUD-ED forum, "Connecting Community Building and Education Reform: Effective School/Community/University Partnerships," will be available in August. Transcripts are NOT available. Beginning in August, you can contact Melody Andrews at (202) 219-2032 for details.

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