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About the Fair Housing Justice Center

The FHJC is a nonprofit civil rights organization dedicated to eliminating housing discrimination, strengthening enforcement of fair housing laws, and promoting policies that foster open, inclusive, and accessible communities. We serve all five boroughs of New York City and the seven surrounding New York counties of Dutchess, Nassau, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Suffolk, and Westchester.
The Fair Housing Justice Center:
• Assists individuals and organizations with housing discrimination complaints and to exercise their fair housing rights.
• Initiates investigations to identify, document, and eliminate systemic housing discrimination.
• Advocates for policies and programs that foster more open, accessible, and inclusive communities.

• Engages in education, outreach, and training activities to increase public awareness about fair housing rights and strengthen fair housing law enforcement.
• Provides assistance for housing accessibility modifications through the Adele Friedman Housing Accessibility Fund.

The FHJC’s counseling and investigative services are provided to the general public free of charge and without regard to household income.
Some Depressing Stats

More than half of metropolitan regions in the United States have become more segregated in recent decades. The New York City region is ranked second, only behind Chicago.
Some Depressing Stats

In the Mott Hall neighborhood in the Bronx, asthma hospitalizations are five times higher than the national average and 21 times higher than other NYC neighborhoods, earning it the nickname “Asthma Alley.”
Segregation has also created huge disparities a family’s ability to accumulate wealth over generations. The net worth of a typical white family is nearly ten times greater than that of a Black family.
Understanding Fair Housing History
Segregation didn’t “just happen.” It’s the result of a massive, coordinated, and costly effort by government and private industry.
Creating Rules to Exclude by Race

In response to the Great Migration, towns and cities in the late 1800’s began passing Racial Zoning Ordinances and other discriminatory laws excluding people of color from selected neighborhoods in order to create and sustain white status and privilege. Those laws were eventually overturned, but by then the developing real estate industry had created its own barriers in the form of race-restrictive covenants for the purchase of individual homes and eventually for entire neighborhoods.
Exclusion from Financing

The Great Depression and the New Deal brought a new twist. “Redline” maps, created by the federal government, deemed all-white areas safe and desirable, while Black neighborhoods – which had originated largely as a result of those earlier racist policies – were now cut off from access to investment. Predictably, that lack of investment eventually led to a decline in those redlined areas.
Exclusion from Federal Programs

Following WWII, white middle class people returning from service were given support from opportunities created by the GI bill. But the same opportunities were not given to Black veterans. The explosive post-war suburban growth was mostly a whites-only phenomenon, while housing choices and opportunities for people of color remained restricted.
A Breakthrough (Sort Of)

Housing equality was a central focus of the civil rights movement. As the movement’s peaceful demonstrations gave way to riots in cities across the US, the government was finally forced into action. In the immediate aftermath of Dr. King’s assassination in 1968, congress passed the Fair Housing Act, outlawing discrimination based on race, color, religion, and nationality. The stated purpose of the law was “to replace the ghettos with truly integrated and balanced living patterns.”
New York State, NYC, and Regional Laws

Additional protections have been added over the years for familial status, disability, and sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity.) New York State has additional protections, as do New York City and various counties and municipalities in our area.
SO – WHY HAVEN’T ALL THOSE LAWS MADE MORE OF A DIFFERENCE?
Lots of reasons. Loopholes and carveouts have made the laws weaker, and they’ve never been adequately funded or vigorously enforced by the government. And although nonprofit fair housing groups like the FHJC try to make up the slack, the problem is growing. There were 31,216 housing discrimination complaints in 2021, an 8.7 percent increase over the number of complaints filed in 2020.
But the biggest reason is that landlords, real estate agents and other housing providers have simply become more subtle in the ways they discriminate.
If you’re politely told that there’s nothing available, or that the rent is more than you can afford, or that you should try looking in a different neighborhood, you’re likely to take them at their word.

Without knowing if people who are different from you are being treated differently, there’s no evidence of discrimination to report, no complaint to file. So the discrimination continues, and segregation is perpetuated.
Direct Religious Discrimination

But more often, it’s **subtle and hidden**. Providers might reference their dislike for a certain religious group or practice. Some providers may attempt to steer people away from their building by emphasizing perceived differences, saying things like “There isn’t a mosque (or synagogue or church) nearby” or “You know, this is a Jewish neighborhood.”
WHICH BRINGS US TO YOU
Young people entering the housing market for the first time are especially at risk. For discriminating housing providers, young adults who may not be fully aware of their fair housing rights are easy prey.

The goal of this campaign is to arm you with the detailed information and awareness you need in order to spot discriminatory conduct, protect yourself against discrimination, educate others about their rights, and help break the discrimination-segregation cycle that continues to plague our region as well as the nation.

Your generation can play a key role in making fair housing a living reality for EVERYONE.
THANK YOU!