



Question: Are there any resources or laws that protect renters or home buyers from discrimination?

April is Fair Housing Month, a good time to focus on the persistent problem of discrimination in housing rentals and purchases, and to work towards a time when renting or buying a house is equally accessible to all Americans.

Did you know that it was not that long ago that some neighborhoods openly discriminated as to who could purchase real estate in that area? Here are two examples of language found in the covenants of two different neighborhoods in the United States.

*“None of the said lots shall be conveyed to, used, owned nor occupied by Negroes as owners or tenants.”*

*“The XYZ Company policies require that only the right sort of people be welcome in the community. Therefore, Jews and Negroes are not acceptable.”*

Today such overtly racist and discriminatory language seems almost laughable and would certainly not be permitted under the law. But housing discrimination, unfortunately, is still a problem.

The National Fair Housing Coalition estimates that there are between three and four million instances of housing discrimination in this country every year. People trying to rent property constitute the largest category of victims according to federal, state and local organizations who receive such complaints.

The Fair Housing Act, passed by Congress in 1968, makes it illegal for any person or business to discriminate in the sale, lease, advertising, or financing of housing because of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status or national origin. Some state and local laws also prohibit discrimination based on such other factors as age, sexual orientation and source of income.

Under today’s laws, home sellers or landlords are required not to discriminate in the sale, rental or financing of property based on any of the categories mentioned above. Real estate professionals are prohibited from discriminating, as well, and cannot legally comply with a request from a seller or a landlord to discriminate. REALTORS® sign a Code of Ethics which binds them to non-discrimination.

As a home seeker, you have the right to expect that housing will be available to you without discrimination. This means that landlords cannot refuse to rent to you because you have children, are a minority or come from a foreign country. A mortgage company cannot impose different conditions on a loan because you are a woman, have a disability or speak another language as your first language.

It is illegal for a real estate agent to steer minority families to lower priced properties while showing white families higher priced dwellings when both families have the same financial resources and credit worthiness.

Your landlord cannot refuse to let you make reasonable modifications to a dwelling at your own expense if these are needed to make the property handicap accessible.

If you have been trying to buy or rent and you believe your rights have been violated you should contact:

- ❖ Colorado Civil Rights Division at 303-894-2997,
- ❖ The National Fair Housing Alliance at 202-898-1661, or
- ❖ The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development at 800-669-9777

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