

Fair Housing Enforcement Benefits Everyone

Housing discrimination has a long history. From Jim Crow laws in the South, allowing for “separate but equal accommodations,” to sundown towns, restrictive covenants, and redlining, there have been institutional racism and segregation as well as individual discrimination in housing. The effects of these discriminatory practices were seen in recent news items such as the murder of an unarmed African American teenager in Ferguson, Missouri; and the “poor door” of the New York Towers, an affordable housing residential development in Manhattan. This country continues to struggle with race and civil rights for all of its people.

The Fair Housing Act (Title VIII of Civil Rights Act of 1968) outlawed discrimination in the sale, rental, insurance, and mortgage lending services in housing based on someone’s protected class status of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, family status, or disability. Since that time, states, counties, and local municipalities have added additional protected classes such as sexual orientation, source of income, and military status, among others. It is the role of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Department of Justice (DOJ), and private nonprofit Fair Housing Organizations (FHOs) to educate the public and enforce those laws.

Fair Housing Organizations engage

in activities that promote housing choice, advocate for anti-discriminatory policies, work to build inclusive communities, and provide fair housing training and education. FHOs are the foot soldiers on the ground. They know and understand their communities and the issues affecting access to housing.

One of the ways Fair Housing Organizations such as the Housing Research & Advocacy Center promote housing choice is to conduct fair housing testing, proven as the most effective means to uncover discrimination in housing. Testers are trained objective reporters who keep detailed records of their experience applying for housing. Matched pairs are dispatched with similar characteristics except for one, the protected class basis for which they are (unknowingly) testing. Courts have long recognized the validity of testing as a method of gathering litigation-worthy evidence in legal proceedings. The information gathered from the tests may reveal differential treatment, which can be the basis for a complaint. The majority of fair housing complaints (66%) are investigated by private fair housing organizations.

Fair housing organizations also conduct important research on housing patterns and trends to identify barriers to housing choice. This research can serve as the foundation of policy recommendations for local governments to affirmatively further fair housing.

FHOs have also been instrumental in confronting systemic discrimination, such as the recent complaints against real estate owned properties (REOs). The National Fair Housing Alliance, with help from several local fair housing agencies like the Housing Center, initiated complaints against several banks that owned properties in various locations nationwide, but discriminated in the maintenance of those properties based on the racial demographics of the neighborhoods where they were located.

Fair Housing Organizations provide educational trainings to housing professionals, such as real estate agents, landlords, and property managers as well as consumers and their advocates regarding their civil right to fair housing. Diverse and inclusive communities benefit everyone and the Housing Center is one of many FHOs nationwide honored to promote this civil right.

- **33,000+** instances of housing discrimination estimated to occur in Northeast Ohio annually.
- Most fair housing complaints are made on the basis of race, familial status, or disability.
- The Cleveland-Lorain-Elyria MSA is ranked the **5th** most segregated region in the United States for African Americans.

Equality Ohio Grant

The Housing Center is excited to further promote fair housing to the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) community through a mini-grant from our newest partner, Equality Ohio. The mini-grant allows the Housing Center to expand its education and outreach to raise awareness in the LGBT community about their fair housing rights. Sexual orientation and gender identity are

protected classes in a number of cities in Northeast Ohio under local fair housing ordinances even though they are not yet covered by the federal law. The Housing Center will develop a fair housing rights brochure specifically for the LGBT community through this partnership.

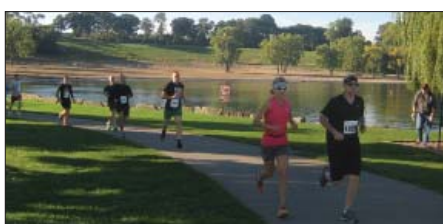
Equality Ohio advocates and educates to achieve fair treatment and equal



opportunity for all Ohioans regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Learn more about Equality Ohio by visiting their website at www.equalityohio.org.

Third Annual Rock The Block 5K

The Housing Center's 3rd Annual Rock the Block 5K and 1-Mile Walk was a great family-friendly fundraiser. The event kicked off with Ohio State Representative Nickie Antonio ringing the ceremonial bell to begin the festivities. Families and friends of the Housing Center, new and old, enjoyed the tropical sounds of Ken Greene's steel drums; balloon animals from Fingerprint the Clown; chair massages from Gary Boska, LMT; face-painting by the George Washington Carver School's National Honor Society; juggling act by the St. Ignatius Circus Company; fresh brewed coffee from Rising Star Coffee Roasters; and yoga demonstrations from Julie Brown of Studio 11. Participants also stopped by the resource tables to get helpful info about voting rights from the ACLU, marriage equality from Equality Ohio, issues relating to Muslims living in Northeast Ohio from CAIR Ohio (Council on American-Islamic Relations), and fair housing rights from the Housing Center. The event was sponsored by Dick's Sporting Goods, Hermes, Earth Fare, and Third Federal Savings Bank. The Housing Center would like to thank everyone who contributed and all of the many volunteers for the event!





The Housing Center
Housing Research & Advocacy Center

1983-2013

30TH Anniversary

Annual Report 2013

HOUSING RESEARCH & ADVOCACY CENTER MISSION

We promote fair housing and diverse communities, and work to eliminate housing discrimination in Northeast Ohio, by providing effective research, education and advocacy.

Housing Research & Advocacy Center

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Cleveland, Ohio 44115
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www.thehousingcenter.org

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Thank you for making the Housing Center's 30th Anniversary year it's strongest yet! With a record number of grants and our largest staff to date, your support allowed us to strengthen fair housing in Northeast Ohio in a variety of ways. Guided by year two of our strategic plan, we created more awareness of fair housing laws with targeted advertising, produced user-friendly research publications, and increased our presence in the community. To further our mission of providing effective research, education and advocacy, we revised our testing methodology and updated our complaint process to provide better customer service. We trained more than 1,400 individuals on their fair housing rights. We reached out to new partners to educate consumers on universal accessibility and fair lending practices. And our strengthened Northeast Ohio Fair Housing Collaborative, whose members include representatives from fair housing organizations, municipalities, attorneys, civil rights advocates, disability rights advocates, service providers, and real estate professionals, has grown to address emerging issues such as reentry and source of income discrimination.



We are so grateful for your support! Your contributions initiated the following new programs:

- Development and distribution of the comprehensive, *Best Practices for Landlords* manual,
- Creation of the new fair lending education program,
- Partnership with Environmental Health Watch to improve aging in place through accessibility,
- Creation and distribution of the popular *Fair Housing Know Your Rights! Consumer Manual*, and
- Development of web training videos showing common discrimination scenarios.



Looking ahead to 2014, the Housing Center is committed to empowering individuals to exercise their fair housing rights, and strengthen communities and encouraging residential integration. We will further promote the rights of the lesbian, gay, bisexual & transgender (LGBT) community; the visitability movement; and explore the ongoing fair housing issues associated with real estate owned properties (REOs). With your continued support, we can eliminate housing discrimination and ultimately live and thrive in healthy, diverse communities!

What you can do to advance fair housing in Northeast Ohio:

DONATE

Every dollar you contribute enables us to advocate on behalf of more people to ensure their fair housing rights are protected and they receive the necessary services to meet their needs.

VOLUNTEER

Your volunteer efforts allow us to reach a broader audience in Northeast Ohio, empowering individuals with knowledge of their fair housing rights.

SUPPORT FAIR HOUSING MONTH

April is Fair Housing Month in Northeast Ohio. Fair housing organizations celebrate with special events and fundraisers. Commit to attending our annual Fair Housing Celebration in 2015!

Annual Report 2013



Research

The Housing Center's research publications serve as a resource for the community and are used by housing providers, local municipalities, academics and other non profits.

In 2013 we were one of only a few organizations to serve as a test coordinating agency for a nationwide research study conducted by the Urban Institute. The focus of this important study was housing discrimination in rental markets against people who use wheelchairs.

We partnered with the City of Shaker Heights in 2013 to study accessibility issues in older multi-family buildings. This project helped identify accessible rental housing while building a better understanding of the common barriers people encounter in older multi-family housing.

Our research team published Racial & Ethnic Disparities in Ohio Mortgage Lending. This report examined lending disparities in cities across the state of Ohio and was completed using the most current Home Mortgage Disclosure Act (HMDA) data.

We released The Annual State of Fair Housing in Northeast Ohio, which reports on local fair housing ordinances and updated protections that cities have added. This year was a special commemorative edition that included stories from the storytelling project.

To aid consumers and housing providers in understanding occupancy regulations in local municipalities, we published an Occupancy Code Report that is widely used throughout Cuyahoga and surrounding counties.

We published The Geauga County Rental Factbook, a report that analyzes rental demographics and rental opportunities available throughout Geauga County.

Efforts to promote diverse communities continued with the completion of the Akron Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing. This report examined barriers to fair housing and made recommendations on necessary steps to make the city more welcoming for all who want to live there regardless of their protected class.

The Housing Center's research informs the community about the current state of fair housing and enables us to hone in on current issues affecting individuals' right to live where they choose free from discrimination and take action.

Enforcement & Advocacy

Working diligently to eliminate housing discrimination, our agency filed 57 fair housing complaints in 2013 and conducted intakes for an additional 199 victims of housing discrimination. This represents an increase of 26% in agency charges and 82% of client complaints over 2012.

This year we shifted our enforcement work to a more client-focused model. We enhanced our service to the region in the forms of education, advocacy, direct intervention, and ongoing assistance throughout the administrative complaint process provided to a number of victims of housing discrimination when appropriate. To meet the increased demands for assistance, our enforcement department expanded to include two full-time staff members and a part-time intern.

In one example of our advocacy, we intervened on behalf of a single mother of two who was struggling every day in her rented townhouse. Her disability prevented her from using stairs. She was at a loss when she contacted the Housing Center for assistance. Her landlord refused to release her from her lease which would allow her to seek housing that met her accessibility needs. Through intervention and advocacy, we were able to obtain a release from her lease. Her landlord agreed to participate in fair housing training and will make a donation to the Housing Center to assist in developing a fund to pay for minor home modifications for tenants with disabilities. The single mother is now enjoying life with her family in an accessible single-family home.

Our enforcement and advocacy ensures people are free to enjoy their housing regardless of their protected class status.

Education & Outreach

To expand our outreach, this year we launched an advertising campaign focused on each protected class, and made our brochures more accessible by translating them into Korean and Urdu. We also initiated an elementary school fair housing educational training, which allowed us to present fair housing information to 3rd graders using an interactive game on equality and fairness. They enjoyed it so much, they asked us to come back!

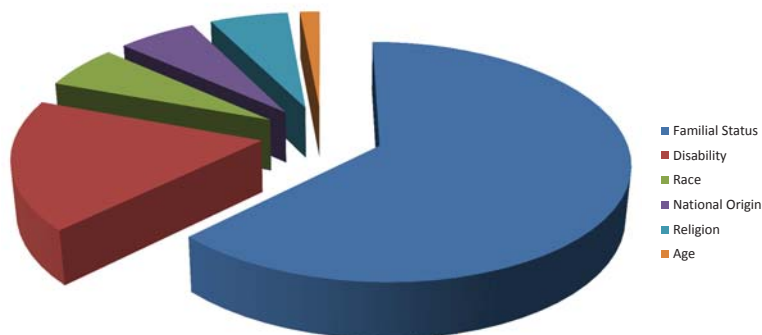
We engaged the community through our storytelling project. Many shared their experiences of housing discrimination. These were transformed into an awareness raising photography exhibit, *Opening Doors through the Art of Storytelling*. Thank you for celebrating with us success in overcoming housing discrimination at the 30th Anniversary Celebration and Fair Housing Art Exhibit.

We hosted a County-wide Accessibility event with U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Deputy Assistant Secretary, Sara Pratt as the keynote speaker. This program gave municipalities guidance on affirmatively furthering fair housing in their cities.

The Housing Center worked with municipalities to affirmatively further fair housing with a number of seminars and programs, including *Achieving Inclusive Communities*, *Keys to a Successful Housing Search*, *REO & Financial Institutions-Practices that Affect Our Neighborhoods*, as well as the continuing education trainings for real estate agents, social workers, attorneys and other housing professionals. We participated in 54 trainings and educated 1,484 people about fair housing laws and interacted with many more at 22 of neighborhood festivals and outreach events.

Our education and outreach efforts advance fair housing throughout the region by making fair housing rights understood by more people.

Administrative Complaints Filed by the Housing Center in 2013





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A VERY SPECIAL THANK YOU TO OUR 30 FOR 30 CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTORS!

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 The Cleveland Indians
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 Trolley Tours of Cleveland, Inc.
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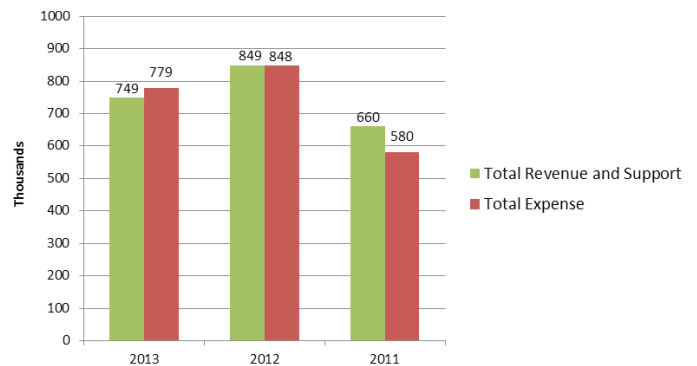
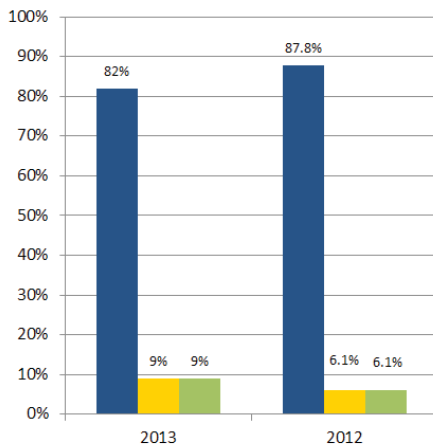
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Khalid Ali, Fair Housing Intern

Mission:

We promote fair housing and diverse communities, and work to eliminate housing discrimination in Northeast Ohio by providing effective research, education, and advocacy.

Values:

Equality, Respect, Honesty, Attention,
Acceptance, Commitment, Dedication,
Knowledge, and Understanding

Housing Center Staff

Michael Floreth

Mike Floreth joined the Housing Center as the Fair Housing Investigator in August. He conducts intakes and investigates fair housing complaints and coordinates fair housing testing. Additionally, he engages in outreach activities such as assisting people at drop-in events and conducting fair housing presentations. Previously, Mike performed medical case management for the HIV population in Arizona and housing case management for Nueva Luz in Cleveland. Mike is proficient in Spanish and has a special interest in the Latino community as a result of his missionary work in Haiti and time spent in Nicaragua. Mike earned his Bachelor of Theology and Master of Divinity from the University of Notre Dame and his Master of Economics from Cleveland State University, where he served as a Teaching Assistant in that department. Prior to joining the Housing Research & Advocacy Center, his most recent position included qualitative and quantitative research and forecasting for various industries in the private sector.



Civil Rights Groups Expand Discrimination Complaint Against Bank of America

Civil Rights Organizations Add Cleveland, Kansas City, New Orleans, and Vallejo to Federal Complaint over Neglected Foreclosures

The National Fair Housing Alliance and three of its member organizations including the Housing Center announced new evidence of housing discrimination by Bank of America in a press release dated September 30th. The civil rights groups allege that Bank of America continues to maintain and market bank-owned foreclosures (also known as real estate owned or REO properties) in white neighborhoods better than in African-American and Latino neighborhoods, a practice that violates the federal Fair Housing Act.

This announcement marks the second anniversary of the initial filing of a complaint with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in September 2012. Evidence gathered from 2011 through September 29, 2014, documents an ongoing pattern and practice of discrimination. NFHA and its partners continue to amend the complaint as new evidence of discrimination comes to light. Currently, NFHA and its partners, including the Housing Center, have investigated 868 REOs in 41 cities across the United States. To read more about the complaint, visit www.thehousingcenter.org, and to read specific data and see photos, visit www.nationalfairhousingalliance.org.

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Fair Housing Hotline: (216) 361-9861
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ATTENTION!!

In 2015, the Housing Center will transition to a **digital newsletter only**. Please reaffirm your subscription to Connect newsletter by signing up via our website, **www.thehousingcenter.org**. Printed versions will be available by request only.



FAIR HOUSING EVENTS

Senior Day Event
Shaker Heights Fair Housing Review Board & Home Repair Resource Center
Thursday, December 18, 2014
Time: 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Stephanie Tubbs Jones
Community Center
3450 Lee Road
Shaker Heights, OH 44120

Fair Housing Law for Service Providers
Monday, January 26, 2015
10:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon
ADAMHS Board
2012 W. 25th 6th Floor
Cleveland, OH 44113
Free CEUs for Social Workers

Fair Housing Law for Real Estate Professionals
Thursday, February 12, 2015
1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Cuyahoga County Library
Independence Branch
6361 Selig Drive
Independence, OH 44131
3 Free CEUs for Realtors

The Housing Center needs your help!

The Housing Research & Advocacy Center is recruiting testers to help detect and investigate discriminatory housing practices in the Cleveland area. Testing is a means of gathering evidence to show where housing discrimination is taking place and where it is not. A tester training will be held in the spring, but now is the time to indicate your interest.

Fair housing testers typically simulate the apartment-hunting or home buying experience. They may call and/or go in person to see about a vacancy, detailing the experience with written documentation. Tester reports can serve as evidence for victims of housing discrimination, and most importantly, it helps people live wherever they choose, free of discrimination and hatred. Testers receive a small stipend for each completed test.

A successful testing program requires diversity. We need people comprising the full spectrum of humanity including, but not limited to: race, color, national origin, ability, age and gender. The Housing Center is recruiting individuals who are interested in conducting testing. If you are interested in becoming a tester or would like more information, please contact Kris Keniray, Director of Enforcement at 216-361-9240 or kkeniray@thehousingcenter.org.