

A History of Fair Housing

The 1960s was a decade marked by great turmoil and great achievement, and it was during this era that the Fair Housing movement was born. In the fight for racial equality, the movement for fair housing aimed to eradicate discrimination in rental, home-purchase, lending and other housing-related transactions. Though the path to housing equality has not been fully realized, it has come a long way since the days of sundown towns, racial zoning, restrictive covenants, segregated classified ads and other tactics and techniques employed to keep communities racially and ethnically segregated.

To address many of the discriminatory actions impeding access to housing, the federal Fair Housing Act was passed in April of 1968 under President Lyndon B. Johnson's administration. The purpose of the Act is to protect buyers and renters in their housing transactions, expressly prohibiting the refusal to sell, rent or negotiate with any person due to their membership in a protected class. Today, the federally-protected classes include race, national origin, color, religion, disability, sex and familial status; however, many states have expanded upon this and include the additional protected classes of age, source of income, marital status, sexual orientation, etc.

Though discrimination is not as blatant and obvious as it once was, it still persists, and it is for this reason that fair housing and fair lending advocates across the country partner with the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development to combat housing discrimination and to ensure that America's communities celebrate diversity, inclusivity and equality.