

LAW 7218: Fair Housing

The federal Fair Housing Act (FHA) marked a major milestone in an ongoing movement to resist racial restrictions in access to housing that can be traced back at least to the middle of the twentieth century. Indeed, Congress passed the Act in the immediate aftermath of the assassination of Dr. Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. and in the midst of a host of uprisings that had subsequently engulfed the nation. Moreover, in response to over a hundred racial rebellions just one year prior during the Long Hot Summer of 1967, President Lyndon B. Johnson's Kerner Commission had just released a study urging unprecedented federal intervention in order to prevent the United States from becoming "two societies, one black, one white - separate and unequal."

Today, this prophecy still looms over the horizon. While the legislation has profoundly reshaped the landscape for equal access to housing opportunities, there is no doubt that its aspirations remain unrealized. Through this course, students will investigate the historical and legal developments that have operated to create and perpetuate several spatial dimensions of inequality including racial segregation, poverty concentration, and displacement. The associated materials will provide entries into an examination of the consequences of these inequalities for individuals, communities, and American society as a whole, as well as how these seemingly-intractable problems were established and continue because of public policy decisions.

Moreover, though an acute focus on the particular plight of people of color animated passage of the statute, the modern incarnation bans discrimination on race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status and national origin. Further still, recent federal court decisions have construed the ban on sex discrimination as having implications for sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. Accordingly, the plight of other protected populations will be taken up.

Credits: 2.0