

Housing bias charged

A Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)-financed national survey shows that discrimination in housing against blacks is routine nationwide.

"The director of the local group which surveyed the Detroit area, meanwhile, says testing criteria used in the survey were slanted against finding such discrimination.

"Every concession made in the survey was made toward minimizing the amount of discrimination. It really had to be there for it to come out. It's kind of amazing that they found any discrimination," said Clifford Shrupp, director of the Fair Housing Center of Detroit.

The survey polled 1,656 home sales and 1,609 apartments for rent last summer in 40 cities. In most of the surveyed cities, including the Detroit area, combined totals of about 80 sales and rentals culled from daily newspaper classified advertising were surveyed.

In five "in-depth" test cities, some 200 sales and rentals were polled. Shrupp said two factors influenced the poll against finding discrimination, including the use of only daily newspaper classified as a source.

"If you look at the houses (one real estate firm) lists in your newspaper and the houses they list in the Michigan Chronicle (a black-oriented weekly), you'll find two different sets of houses," said Shrupp, who added that most people who intend to practice discrimination wouldn't advertise in newspapers with large numbers of black readers.

Shrupp also claims the survey failed to include incidents of "steering," a practice involving real estate agents' recommendations that people purchase houses in neighborhoods where others of their own race already live.

However, on the national survey, HUD reports most criteria includes a confidence level of 99 per cent or more. That means that odds are high test results would be nearly identical 99 times if the survey were done 100 times.

Survey results conclude that 29.1 per cent of rental agents and 21.5 per cent of real estate agents selling houses practiced some kind of discrimination. Such discrimination, however, wasn't limited to outright refusal to rent or sell to blacks.

Since HUD maintains most people visit more than one agent searching for a place to live, it included data that shows blacks who visit rental agents will likely find discrimination practiced against them 75 per cent of the time. Blacks who visit four real estate agents will encounter discrimination 62 per cent of the time.

HUD's definition of discrimination is broad. It includes, said Fred Eggers, director of HUD's

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— Clifford Shrupp
Fair Housing Center

office of policy development and research evaluating division, such influences as whether blacks were offered business cards or not when their white counterparts were.

The survey was compiled by using teams of black and white pollsters who visited the same agent within a short period of time. Rental agents were always visited by each no more than one hour apart. Real estate agents were visited no more than 32 hours apart.

Pollsters had "cover stories," which included income levels, marital status, numbers of children and length of time on their present job. Such criteria were identical among the black and white pollsters.

While pollsters ranged in age from 24 to 60, those assigned to visit the same agent were of roughly the same age. Younger pollsters were assigned to visit apartment complexes, for instance, specializing in young tenants, while older surveyors went to areas with high numbers of older residents.

Pollsters, who weren't told what the job was until the second interview, were paid on a floating rate ranging from \$10 to \$19 per audit. The more vacant homes or apartments visited by the auditors, the more money they got.

HUD subcontracted the survey work to the National Committee Against Discrimination in Housing. The survey's procedures were conducted in secret in an attempt to avoid real estate and rental agents altering policies.

Shrupp said the Detroit group was formed especially to conduct the audit. He said the group received \$13,000 for the survey.

Although HUD won't release city-by-city breakdowns of the survey until late this summer, Shrupp provided the newspaper with some suburban results.

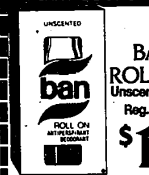
Shrupp said eight separate areas were used in making judgements about the existence of discrimination.



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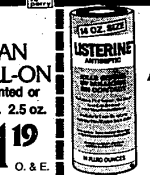
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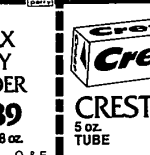
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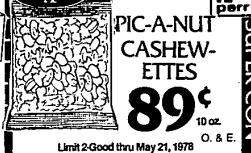


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