

Housing Discrimination: The War Is Not Won

PAUL DAVIDOFFJANET HANSON, LEE PORTER

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Letters

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To the Editor:

Recent court judgments against two realty companies found to have discriminated against minority applicants for housing (news story March 19) are of great importance to the movement for fair housing practices.

One judgment was for \$38,000, the other for \$50,000. These two Federal court decisions serve notice on landlords and real estate agents that discrimination can be expensive.

We write, however, to protest George Sternlieb's conclusion, quoted in the story, that the war against housing discrimination has been won and that all that remains is a "need for mopping-up action." This is not borne out by Federal, state, local and private studies of the issue, which demonstrate that discrimination is alive and well throughout the housing market.

Further, zoning often acts, indirectly but effectively, to bar minorities from a community. So do landlord rejections of housing applications of welfare recipients and Federal housing certificate holders. Fair-housing laws do not bar these forms of rejection, which most often work against minorities.

At a time of severe housing shortage, particularly for lower-income and minority households, discriminat-

ing blockage of housing choice is especially painful. We who daily respond to the frustration of those denied housing want public and private policy makers to know that a vastly enlarged effort is needed now to protect the legal rights of minorities to fair housing choices.

PAUL DAVIDOFF
JANET HANSON, LEE PORTER

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The writers are, respectively, directors of the Metropolitan Action Institute, Suffolk Housing Services, Fair Housing Council of North New Jersey.