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New Civil Rights Project Research Shines Light on Stark Racial Inequalities in Housing

Recommendations urge full funding of universal empowered vouchers to assist renters

Los Angeles – As the nation’s policymakers consider significant new legislation to address the housing crisis, recently passed by the U.S. Senate and pending in the House of Representatives, a new research brief published by the Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles at UCLA underscores longstanding discrimination, inequality and segregation in housing and its implications for affordability, opportunity and full participation in American life, particularly for Black and Latino people in the United States.

The research, “[Housing in the 21st Century: Taking Stock and Seeking Equality](#),” provides an analysis of the current state of housing inequality in the United States within the broader historical and social context.

“More than half a century after the Civil Rights Movement and the introduction of federal fair housing policies, essentially every aspect of housing in America is marked by stark racial inequalities,” says report author Jacob Faber, an associate professor of sociology and public service at NYU. “This research offers us a distressing glimpse of how, absent significant intervention, housing inequality and instability will exacerbate future crises.”

The research brief highlights inequities in home ownership, with less than half of Black and Latino families owning homes, compared to more than 70 percent of White and 60 percent of Asian homeowners. Black and Latino homeowners were also likely to have less equity in their homes, be targeted for predatory subprime lending practices and experience foreclosure.

The research also illuminates high levels of rent stress, with people of color paying a larger share of their income toward rent while living in lower quality and crowded rental units. Access to rental housing is also limited by affordability, discriminatory practices and gaps in

information. Unaffordable rents, foreclosures, and other housing stressors have also fueled an unparalleled rise in homelessness, which has fallen disproportionately on people of color.

“Segregated and unequal housing is one of the root causes of racial and economic inequality in American society and is the driver of segregation in our schools and communities,” says Gary Orfield, co-director of the Civil Rights Project/*Proyecto Derechos Civiles*. “It is unambiguously clear that existing policies have been a massive failure for poor people and people of color. Clearly, we need a new starting point and new laws both for rental and ownership housing.”

To begin, the brief’s author recommends the establishment and full funding of a universal, empowered voucher program. The Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCV), sometimes referred to as Section 8, is the largest federal rental housing assistance program. Strong evidence suggests this program has a wide range of positive effects on families, yet, unfortunately, fewer than 1 in 4 eligible households receive a housing voucher, and the average family spends 2.5 years on the waitlist.

“The first thing that must be done is to fully fund the program,” says Faber. “Such a program could represent a pivot in national housing politics, away from the prioritization of housing as a tool for wealth generation and towards the prioritization of housing as a method for achieving neighborhood stability and affordability.”

“As we invest many billions in foreign wars,” Orfield commented, “we should begin to seriously finance the kinds of programs available in many peer nations.”

The brief offers additional policy recommendations, including steps to address discrimination, strengthen landlord and voucher recipient education and boost the supply of housing. The research also includes an analysis of the historical processes and resulting policies at the root of today’s housing inequalities.

“[Housing in the 21st Century: Taking Stock and Seeking Equality](#),” is researched and written by Jacob W. Faber, an associate professor of sociology and public service at NYU’s Wagner School. The paper is published by the UCLA Civil Rights Project/*Proyecto Derechos Civiles* as part of their research series, [A Civil Rights Agenda for the Next Quarter Century](#). The research brief is available on the Civil Rights Project [website](#).

The Civil Rights Project/*Proyecto Derechos Civiles* is co-directed by Research Professors [Gary Orfield](#) and [Patricia Gándara](#) and housed in the UCLA School of Education & Information

Studies. CRP's purpose is to create a new generation of research in social science and law, on the critical issues of civil rights and equal opportunity for racial and ethnic groups in the United States. The Civil Rights Project is a trusted source of segregation statistics, has commissioned more than 400 studies, published more than 25 books and issued numerous reports monitoring the success of American schools in equalizing opportunity. The U.S. Supreme Court cited the Civil Rights Project's research, in its 2003 Grutter v. Bollinger decision upholding affirmative action, in Justice Breyer's dissent (joined by three other Justices) to its 2007 Parents Involved decision, and in Justice Sotomayor's dissent to the court's June 2023 decision banning affirmative action in *SFFA v Harvard College*.

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