

**GOOD NEIGHBORS COME IN ALL COLORS:
THE SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND LEGAL HISTORY OF
THE FAIR HOUSING FOUNDATION OF LONG BEACH**

History 499

Ethnic L.A. in the 20th Century

Professor Quam-Wickham

Julie Saunders

May 18, 2005

In the early 1960s, homes and apartments in Belmont Shore, Belmont Heights or Bixby Knolls were desirable places to live. Imagine a college professor walking or driving down the street observing numerous well-built, nice looking homes in search of an apartment for rent. The professor approaches an apartment building with a “For Rent” sign welcoming prospective new tenants and knocks on the door. The manager answers and the professor inquires about the apartment. The manager replies, “I’m sorry we don’t rent to Negroes.” The door shuts and the professor stands on the porch humiliated and angry, having just been discriminated against. Before 1964, the professor had no alternative but to settle for housing in a less desirable neighborhood and no recourse against the landlord for racial discrimination. During the early 1960s, racial discrimination in housing was widely practiced and institutionalized by the California Real Estate Association, the California Committee for House Protection and the California Apartment House Owners Association. These organizations endorsed and supported property owners’ right to discriminate against racial minorities. Despite the passage of anti-discrimination housing laws, landlords and homeowners continued to discriminate against minorities based on race. Following the passage of Proposition 14 in 1964, which repealed the state’s fair housing laws, and continuing after the courts declared it unconstitutional, one group in Los Angeles County organized to successfully promote open-housing policies and equality in the sale and rental of property. That group was the Long Beach Fair Housing Foundation.

THE CASE FOR FAIR HOUSING

California legislators proposed and passed fair employment and housing legislation that laid the groundwork for the Fair Housing Foundation to emerge. The road to equality was not one frequently traveled. According to Lawrence P. Crouchett, “Experience had taught the anti-discrimination coalition that legislation on housing was the most controversial kind. Attempts to ensure equal access to housing by forbidding property owners to discriminate on racial grounds in selling houses – in effect limiting their right to choose to whom to sell – were guaranteed to stir up widespread and strongly held racist feelings.”¹ Assemblyman W. Byron Rumford headed the campaign for anti-discriminatory legislation in California. In 1959, Rumford proposed the creation of the Fair Employment Practices Commission, along with a civil rights bill known as the Unruh Civil Rights Act. The Act declared, “all persons within the jurisdiction of the state are free and equal, and entitled to the full and equal accommodation, advantages, facilities and privileges or services in all business establishments of any kind whatsoever.”² Four years later, Assemblyman Rumford proposed another civil rights bill aimed at fair housing. After extensive debate in the Assembly and the Senate, the Fair Housing Act of 1963 made it illegal for anyone selling, renting, or leasing a residence to discriminate based on race, creed, color or national origin.³ This bill sent the State of California into an uproar as opposition to fair housing legislation, lead by the California Real Estate Association, became the focal point in the 1964 elections. The California

¹ Lawrence P. Crouchett, “Assembly W. Byron Rumford: A Symbol for an Era” California History 66, no. 1 (1987): 19.

² Ibid, 19.

Real Estate Association gathered its resources and the necessary signatures to put Proposition 14 on the 1964 ballot. Proposition 14, in effect, would repeal the Fair Housing Act of 1963 and establish the right of property owners to sell or rent to whomever he or she wanted to, whether it was discriminatory or not.

PROPOSITION 14 AND THE POLITICAL BATTLE TO REPEAL FAIR HOUSING

The 1964 election in California manifested into a political and social struggle over fair housing. Proposition 14 was placed on the ballot as an initiative constitutional amendment that “sought to prohibit the state, its agencies and local governments from denying, limiting or abridging the right of an individual to decline to sell or rent his residential property to anyone as he chooses.”⁴ During the months leading to the election, the underlining issue was civil rights of the minority renter verses the civil rights of the property owner. Proponents of Proposition 14 argued that the Rumford Fair Housing Act forced integration and stripped the owners of property rights. Property owners feared that integration would force their white tenants to move out and cause economic losses. Those who voted against Proposition 14 socially supported the end of racism, and embraced the battle for civil rights and equality. On the political front, Democrats and Republicans drew to opposite corners of the ring. Democrats were likely to vote against Proposition 14 and Republicans for the proposition. According to Totten J. Anderson, “Democratic Party leaders and the official party platform denounced the measure, while Republican spokesmen were split and often remained silent.”⁵ The Unruh Act of 1959 and the Rumford Fair Housing Act of 1963 also passed the State Assembly

³ Ibid, 21.

⁴ Totton J. Anderson and Eugene C. Lee, “The 1964 Election in California” The Western Political Quarterly Vol. 18, no. 2 (1965): 470.

and Senate because of the democratic vote. The Republicans had very little interest in passing Rumford's legislation and overwhelmingly voted for Proposition 14. According to an analysis of referendum voting, 41% of the Democratic respondents were opposed to the proposition, compared to 22% of the Republicans.⁶ These numbers, as explained by Raymond E. Wolfinger and Fred I. Greenstein "demonstrate the strong relationships between party identification and attitudes towards the proposition."⁷ In addition, the majority of Asians and Mexican-Americans minorities planned to vote against the proposition, as did the majority of the Jewish communities in California.⁸ After the votes were counted, 4,526,460 people voted in favor of the proposition and 2,395,747 voted against the measure.⁹ Proposition 14 was later deemed unconstitutional by the State of California Supreme Court and by the United States Supreme Court. But the City of Long Beach's residential neighborhoods remained geographically segregated. The Long Beach Fair Housing Foundation emerged as the primary advocate to end the institutionalization of racial discrimination in the City of Long Beach.

LONG BEACH FAIR HOUSING FOUNDATION EMERGES

In the aftermath of Proposition 14, the founders of the Long Beach Fair Housing Foundation developed a voluntary organization to promote equality in housing. The first

⁵ Ibid, 471.

⁶ Of the 25 cities that voted against the Proposition, only three were in Southern California. The three cities were the largest Jewish communities of Beverly Hills and Lake Elsinore. Compton's population, of which 40% were black, also voted against the measure. Suffice it to say that Southern California overwhelmingly promoted and contributed to the passage of Proposition 14.

⁷ Raymond E. Wolfinger and Fred I. Greenstein, "The Repeal of Fair Housing in California: An Analysis of Referendum Voting" The American Political Science Review Vol. 62, no. 3 (1968): 760.

⁸ Ibid, 759.

⁹ Anderson and Lee, "The 1964 Election in California," 471.

newsletter, dated November 30, 1964, states, “This will be a non-profit, educational organization devoted entirely to the promotion of fair and open housing practices in our community. Those who worked so hard against Proposition 14 now have an opportunity to be for a positive solution to the housing problem.”¹⁰ The direction of the Long Beach Fair Housing Foundation was to “act as a clearing house and work with all persons interested in fair housing, to carry on a continuing educational campaign, to function as a fact-finding agency, and to maintain a working committee of volunteers available.”¹¹ The Foundation began with a group of women who strictly volunteered their time, as the Foundation had no funds available to pay for office space or employees. The women devoted collectively 30 hours per week to the organization. The Foundation was initially funded by private donations and the newsletter subscriptions cost \$2.00 per year. The funding went towards office space and equipment but no salary was paid in the early years of the Foundation. The Foundation developed a “listing service” where those interested in renting or selling on an equal basis could list their rentals and houses for sale. The service showed houses available for any person qualified to rent or buy. The areas on the list included Signal Hill, Los Altos, Lakewood, Country Club Estates, Belmont Heights, Belmont Shore and Naples to name a few. By September 1965, the Foundation’s listing service “handled a total of 180 open occupancy listings (129 for sale and 33 rentals) and requests from 80 minority group applicants.”¹² Within the first ten months of the Foundation’s operation, the number of minority families living in non-

¹⁰ The Planning Committee for the Fair Housing Foundation of Long Beach, “No On 14 Becomes Yes on Voluntary Fair Housing” Fair Housing Foundation News-Letter No. 1 (1964): 1.

¹¹ Ibid, 1.

¹² Fair Housing Foundation Newsletter No. 7 (1965): 2.

segregated areas jumped from 8 to 33. Progress? Absolutely, but the Foundation knew these numbers only scratched the surface.

WAS LONG BEACH A FAIR CITY?

The Fair Housing Foundation devoted several issues of their newsletters to promoting awareness of housing discrimination in the City of Long Beach. The question was asked, “What freedom of choice in housing [was] available to the increasing number of foreign students [and professionals], and especially those from Africa and Asia, in the ‘International City’?”¹³ The Chamber of Commerce for the City of Long Beach promoted it as a “fair city” and encouraged people to visit and reside in the area. The reality was that any minority person whether college educated, financially stable or otherwise qualified to rent property, was forced to live in a secluded area of Long Beach. If a minority relocated to the city, that person could not obtain housing in the desirable all-white neighborhoods. One foreign student commented,

“If I were among the Bushmen of Africa, they would show me how to make a mat out of grass, and how to light a fire from the dried branches. The Aborigines of Australia would help me search out the most proper plants which, when their roots are consumed, would quench my thirst. America with all its claims of democracy—its constitution, its laws and its religions—couldn’t accommodate and house a single foreign student. Perhaps this seems honorable to some, but to me it’s a national disgrace.”¹⁴

¹³ “Advice to the Local Press: Take A Look At Long Beach” Fair Housing Foundation Newsletter No. 11 (1966): 1.

¹⁴ Abdirahman Timir Ali, Letters to the Editor, “USA: Land of Hypocrisy” Fair Housing Foundation Newsletter No. 9 (1965): 2.

One Professor wrote, “I can sympathize and empathize with the frustration, dismay and disappointment experienced in unsuccessful attempts to acquire housing in the bigoted ‘International City’ of Long Beach. I have not been able to rent an apartment after searching for almost three months – indubitably due to the fact that I am a Negro.”¹⁵ The Foundation also reported that black California Angels baseball players could not find adequate housing in the city of Anaheim, forcing them to find housing in places like Compton.

The City of Long Beach in the 1960s was far from being a “fair city.” Prominent businesses employing people of all races found difficulty in locating suitable housing for its employees. The Fair Housing Foundation worked in conjunction with the Long Beach Naval Shipyard, McDonnell-Douglas, the Veteran’s Administration Hospital and California State College of Long Beach to assist employees who could afford housing in white neighborhoods.¹⁶ The Brooklyn, New York Naval Shipyard was de-commissioned in 1966 and began transferring many highly skilled naval officers to the Long Beach Naval Shipyard. Each transferee received a “Welcome to our Fair City” packet from the Chamber of Commerce. The material suggested that, “good housing, reasonably priced, [was] abundantly available;” however, according to the Fair Housing Foundation, “nothing was said about the problems and evasions likely to be encountered by minority-group persons. The transferees were, therefore, utterly unprepared for the realities of the housing situation in [Long Beach].”¹⁷ The Fair Housing Foundation fought for minorities

¹⁵ Ibid, 2.

¹⁶ California State University of Long Beach is referenced as California State College of Long Beach throughout the Fair Housing Foundation’s newsletters.

¹⁷ “Welcome to Our Fair City,” Fair Housing Foundation Newsletter No. 12 (1966): 2.

to have equal access to housing outside of the sub-standard and over priced areas in the Central and Westside of Long Beach.

TESTING AND TACTICS OF THE FAIR HOUSING FOUNDATION

The successfulness of the Long Beach Fair Housing Foundation depended upon its ability to compile evidence of racial discrimination. The Foundation developed tactics to uncover discriminatory practices. In the early years, Myron and Shirley Blumberg, both co-founders of the Foundation, engaged in one tactic referred to as a “double escrow.” According to Shirley Blumberg, “Myron would enter into escrow to buy a house in an exclusive area. The sellers believed the buyers were white, but Myron would open another escrow to sell the house to a qualified, professional Black person. It was one way to break the racial barriers in Long Beach.”¹⁸ Another method developed by the Long Beach Fair Housing Foundation to combat discrimination was called “testing.” Recall the example of the professor in the beginning, but change the setting to 1966. The professor that was discriminated against would contact the Foundation, which would send a “tester” to the same property. The tester, a white person with similar qualifications, income and marital status would apply to the same place. If the residence suddenly became available, the tester would return to the Fair Housing office and write a report.¹⁹ The Foundation would also send aides to act as the “middle man” or “go between” the Black tenant and the White landlord. With the assistance aides, the Foundation was able to help more minority people obtain housing. Other methods of “persuasion” included speaking with a landlord about the discriminatory acts. If the landlord continued to

¹⁸ Shirley Blumberg, interviewed by Julie Saunders, (November 27, 2004).

¹⁹ Ibid.

refuse tenancy and enough evidence of discrimination was collected, the Foundation would turn the matter over to its legal counsel.

The Foundation developed other methods to spread the word on equality in housing. The Foundation created a “Speakers’ Bureau” that was “ready, willing and unquestionably able to carry the voluntary fair housing message to civic service clubs, church groups, and other organizations throughout the community.”²⁰ The Speakers’ Bureau promoted speaking engagements to provide information and answers to the housing discrimination problem. In 1967, the Foundation created “Housing Aides” to assist “people recently arrived in Long Beach [who were] unfamiliar with the area and [had] trouble locating addresses...[had] no idea whether prices or rents quoted to them are reasonable or outrageous.”²¹ Furthermore, the Foundation acknowledged, “The presence of a housing volunteer with a client often [helped] to prevent or minimize the kinds of hypocritical evasions or downright indignities to which minority-group home-seekers [were] so often subjected.”²² The Foundation also encouraged neighborhood meetings in a continued effort to spread the word for equal fair housing.

THE POLITICAL BATTLE FOR FUNDING

The Fair Housing Foundation survived on private contributions by the community and its future survival depended upon gaining financial support from other sources. The Fair Housing Foundation turned to the Long Beach City Council to request an annual grant of \$24,000.00. On July 9, 1968, Shirley Blumberg prepared a proposal to the City

²⁰ Fair Housing Foundation Newsletter No. 11, (March, 1966): 3.

²¹ “FHF Report: Some Progress, Some Problems,” Fair Housing Foundation Newsletter No. 21 (1967): 1.

²² *Ibid*, 1.

Council and appeared in front of its members to deliver the request. Mrs. Blumberg argued,

“On the basis of the important community services which FHF has performed and will continue to perform, we ask that the City of Long Beach join in partnership with the Fair Housing Foundation to put Long Beach in the vanguard of American cities working to solve this serious urban problem of today.”²³

Mrs. Blumberg’s statement to the City Council further argued that the effectiveness of an open-housing solution depended on city government support. Mrs. Blumberg pointed to the success of the Fair Housing Foundation, which at the time assisted over 160 qualified families in obtaining desirable housing and worked in conjunction with some of Long Beach’s major employers. Several community organizations had rallied behind the Fair Housing Foundation prior to Mrs. Blumberg’s proposal. The Advisory Board of California State College at Long Beach, the Citizens Advisory Committee for Community Improvement, the Jewish Community Federation, the Independent, Press-Telegram and the Human Relations Committee were several organizations that endorsed open housing services.²⁴ Despite obvious support from community organizations, the City Council refused to recognize the need for immediate funding. The proposal was “denied even a brief consideration or discussion by the City Council.”²⁵ The only

²³ “FHF Proposal: Statement to the Long Beach City Council (July 9, 1968)” Fair Housing Foundation Newsletter No. 26 (1968): B1.

²⁴“FHF and the City Funds: A Chronology,” Fair Housing Foundation Newsletter No. 28 (1969). Other supporters were the League of Women Voters of Long Beach, the Long Beach Area Council of Churches, and the Long Beach Naval Shipyard.

²⁵ Ibid.

councilmember to motion for approval of Fair Housing Foundation's request came from Tom Clark.²⁶

Newspapers reporting extensively on the issue of fair housing contributed to Long Beach's awareness that discrimination could have serious consequences. In 1965, George Weeks, column writer for the Press-Telegram, reported that fifty of Long Beach's west side residents stood before the Human Relations Committee to ask for help against the realtor's tactics of "blockbusting."²⁷ The residents accused the realtors of "reserving the west side of Long Beach for the Negroes" and "talking [the] area down to discourage Caucasians from viewing and buying homes in [the] area."²⁸ The Press-Telegram articles gave a voice to those speaking out against discrimination and continued to cover issues involving fair housing. By 1967, the newspaper reported on civil lawsuits filed by victims of discrimination. The press coverage of these lawsuits reached a significant amount of property owners at the time. The articles served as warning for those who discriminated, as they could end up in court. The Independent reported, "Fair housing advocates say a number of Long Beach Negroes may have started an important state-wide trend in their use of an eight-year-old law [the Unruh Act] to combat racial discrimination in housing. They also note that a significant number of apartment owners in the city have begun to rent to Negroes in recent months."²⁹ The newspaper articles helped pressure the city of Long Beach to provide funding to the Foundation. According

²⁶ Tom Clark served as Mayor of the City of Long Beach 1975 to 1978, 1978 to 1980 and 1982 to 1984. www.ci.long-beach.ca.us/mayor (May 13, 2005).

²⁷ George Weeks, "West Side Blockbusting Ghetto Planning Alleged" Press-Telegram April 16, 1965, sec. B, p. B-1.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Charles Sutton, "Suits Setting Trend in Open Housing?" Independent (September 19, 1967), p. B-2.

to the editorial page editor in 1969, “[the Independent Press-Telegram] was prepared to support city funding for the FHF.”³⁰

The City Council was pressured by community organizations through the wide coverage by the newspapers, because in the summer of 1969 the Fair Housing Foundation it awarded funding to the Fair Housing Foundation. The agreement allotted \$25,000.00 for one year.³¹ The City of Long Beach not only granted the Fair Housing Foundation enough funds to remain operational but it also recognized the severe housing problem in Long Beach. The contract stated, “The city is interested in the elimination of discrimination with regard to race, religion, national origin or cultural background, in the sale or rental of residential housing. It is in the public interest and to particular benefit of the City at this time to support and expedite the work of the Foundation in the Long Beach area through the furnishing of funds needed.”³² By 1969, five years after the Fair Housing Foundation’s inception, the City of Long Beach finally agreed to support a fair housing market.

THE LEGAL BATTLE

If the Fair Housing Foundation could not persuade a particular landlord to rent to a minority person, the Foundation would refer the client to its legal counsel to prosecute a lawsuit. The Foundation gathered evidence of discrimination through “testing” and turned the information over to Myron Blumberg, legal counsel for the Foundation. The Foundation commented,

³⁰ “Fair Housing and the Power of the Press” p. 7.

³¹ “Council Votes FHF Funds,” Fair Housing Foundation Newsletter No. 29 (1969).

³² City Attorney’s Office, “Agreement between the City of Long Beach and Fair Housing Foundation.”

“It has always been the position of the Fair Housing Foundation that property owners have every right to establish whatever standards they please with respect to prospective tenants – so long as they do not change these standards in order to exclude otherwise qualified persons solely because of race or color. We regret that the Fair Housing Foundation and other concerned groups in the community have so far failed to persuade the apartment house owners of Long Beach, by and large, to adopt voluntary open occupancy standards. We regret that anyone would find it necessary to go to court over such an elementary need as a place to live.”³³

The lawsuits were filed in the state courts. As reported in November of 1966, Mr. Blumberg had two lawsuits pending against corporate-owned apartment complexes under the Unruh Civil Rights Act. Proposition 14 repealed only the Rumford Fair Housing Act of 1963. The Unruh Civil Rights Act, making it illegal for a “business establishment” to discriminate, continued to apply to residential apartment-owned businesses.³⁴ By 1967, Mr. Blumberg prosecuted six cases involving racial discrimination in apartment rental practices and obtained six judgments in favor of the plaintiff. The Foundation reported, “No other city in California has had anything approaching this amount of court action on housing.”³⁵

The anti-discrimination lawsuits produced a winning record against large company-owned apartment complexes despite the unpopularity of equal housing. With the repeal of the Rumford Fair Housing Act of 1963, the majority of Californians had

³³ “Lawsuits Charge Illegal Discrimination By L.B. Apartments,” Fair Housing Foundation Newsletter No. 16 (1966): 1.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ “Long Beach Leads State In Anti-Discrimination Lawsuits,” Fair Housing Foundation Newsletter No. 22 (1967): 1.

expressed their desire to keep the cities and neighborhoods segregated. According to authors Raymond E. Woflinger and Fred I. Greenstein, southern Californians were more hostile to fair housing legislation than northern Californians.³⁶ Mr. Blumberg filed the lawsuits despite an all white jury pool and the possibility that the jurors would be unfavorable to equal housing. Mr. Blumberg was successful in these lawsuits because the evidence revealed blatant discrimination and his passion for fair housing and anti-discrimination attitude persuaded the juries to award damages. At a fair housing seminar in April of 1976, Mr. Blumberg stated, “The most important thing a trial lawyer brings to a discrimination case is a sense of outrage. A lawyer handling discrimination cases without it doesn’t have a chance to win.”³⁷ Mr. Blumberg commented harshly on the actions of the apartment owners calling them “liars” and “pip-squeak apartment managers.”³⁸ It was this passion that Mr. Blumberg brought to the courtroom when he called on the jurors to “set the standard of conduct that the community lives by” and to “change the terrible things that [were] happening in society.”³⁹ The cases Mr. Blumberg prosecuted under the Unruh Act either ended in stipulated judgment or with a plaintiff’s jury verdict, and he never lost a case.

The Fair Housing Foundation provided the Department of Justice with evidence of racial discrimination in an effort to take the battle for equal housing to the federal level. In June of 1970, the Fair Housing Foundation compiled information of discriminatory practices by advance-fee rental agencies in Long Beach. The information was handed over to the Office of the Attorney General, which had already initiated a

³⁶ Woflinger and Greenstein, 761-762.

³⁷ Bruce Gothelf, “Fair Housing Seminar” Advocate Vol. 5, no 3 (1976): 1.

³⁸ Ibid.

federal lawsuit against 8,000 rental agencies in Los Angeles County. Richard Green, an attorney at with the U.S. Department of Justice, encouraged the Foundation to provide evidence of discrimination in Long Beach. The Foundation agreed to provide Attorney Green with the information in an effort to promote a large-scale legal action to enforce the state and federal housing laws in Long Beach. Curt Moody, the Executive Director of the Fair Housing Foundation at the time directed “75 volunteers to undertake an intensive investigation of actual rental practices in 243 apartment buildings.”⁴⁰ The results of the investigation were remarkable:

“Out of 243 buildings covered in the investigation, fully-documented evidence of racially discriminatory practices emerged from 114 buildings. These represented a total of 1,450 units; and the owners of these properties also owned an additional 875 units not included in the investigation. There was a grand total, then, of 2,325 units directly or indirectly involved in the reports sent to the Justice Department – all in the immediate Long Beach area. The last reports went to the Housing Section, Civil Rights Division on September 15, 1970. FHF was assured that prompt action would follow.”⁴¹

The Foundation compiled, organized and provided the Department of Justice with ample evidence to warrant federal action; however, the Department of Justice filed no such lawsuit. The Justice Department merely sent FBI investigators to the accused property owners, and did not question any of the 75 witnesses of the discriminatory acts. When approached by Shirley Blumberg, U.S. Attorney Robert Meyer claimed the Foundation’s

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ A Special Report from the Fair Housing Foundation of Long Beach, “With All Deliberate Delay?” (June 1971): 1.

evidence had “lots of problems” including “the involvement of many owners of various apartment buildings rather than one owner of a huge apartment holding or a large subdivision, [which] lacked community impact.”⁴² Attorney General Meyer also claimed that if the Justice Department filed such a suit, “[they] could have the mayor, the City Council, and the Realty Board on [their] necks.”⁴³ The Department of Justice chose to ignore the housing problem in Long Beach and gave insufficient excuses for not prosecuting a federal lawsuit.

In 1971, the Fair Housing Foundation dedicated several newsletters to the political battle for fair housing in Washington, D.C. The Fair Housing Act of 1968 empowered the Attorney General and the Department of Housing and Urban Development with the responsibility to create an open housing market in both the public and private spheres.⁴⁴ The Attorney General’s office commented that the “department would not initiate legal action to help Negroes move into white suburban neighborhoods. The responsibility for uncovering discrimination in suburban housing lies with the Department of Housing, not the Justice Department.”⁴⁵ Furthermore, President Nixon claimed that the laws of the government did not include forced integration into the suburbs.⁴⁶ For the Fair Housing Foundation, this meant the federal government was unlikely going to support its cause. Attorney General John Mitchell claimed that civil rights groups used housing issues “to beat up on [the Republican] administration because

⁴¹ Ibid, 2.

⁴² Ibid, 4.

⁴³ Ibid, 4.

⁴⁴ “NCDH Urges Enforcement of Housing Laws,” Fair Housing Foundation Newsletter No. 37 (1971): 5.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

of the fact that they were aligned with the other political party.”⁴⁷ Clearly the Attorney General’s office wanted nothing more than for the housing problem to go away. The irony is that the Attorney General had the power to end the political housing problems in the United States, yet Attorney General Mitchell chose to lash out at the Democratic Party. Fair housing turned into a political issue at the hands of the Justice Department, when it should have remained a matter of enforcing the law.

Despite the lack of cooperation by the Department of Justice, The Fair Housing Foundation continued to prosecute lawsuits in the state courts. In 1972, Mr. Blumberg represented a black-couple, Mr. and Mrs. Nathaniel Johnson, in a discrimination suit. The Johnsons had contacted the Fair Housing Foundation after they believed a landlord discriminated against them because of their color. Fair Housing Foundation investigators gathered evidence of discrimination and handed the information to Mr. Blumberg who filed a lawsuit based on the Unruh Civil Rights Act of 1959. The all-white jury awarded damages in excess of \$10,000.00 to the plaintiffs. Included in the judgment were punitive damages for emotional distress for the Johnson’s inconvenience and humiliation.⁴⁸ The case received the largest jury verdict at the time and the Press-Telegram reported the jury’s findings. The article caused one property owner to send “hate mail” to Mr. Blumberg. The property owner wrote, “What about the civil rights of the man who owns this property? Where, oh where have they gone? Look at what has happened around 20th and Orange. Can you blame the man?”⁴⁹ This dissenting voice was one of many who believed in property rights over civil rights. According to Faith

⁴⁷ Fair Housing Foundation Newsletter No. 39 (1971).

⁴⁸ Fair Housing Foundation Newsletter No. 43 (1972).

⁴⁹ Hate mail received by the Blumbergs (ca. 1972)

Kortheuer, Executive Director of the Fair Housing Foundation at the time, “This [was] an important decision. As far as we [knew] it [was] the biggest award of its kind yet anywhere in the country, and certainly in the Long Beach area.”⁵⁰ This case marked a significant victory for the Fair Housing Foundation and the juries continued to award large damages to the plaintiffs. In the following year, Mr. Blumberg obtained a jury verdict of \$13,500.00 including attorneys fees.⁵¹ The Foundation was making excellent progress in the early 1970s and it still operates today to protect prospective tenants.

FAIR HOUSING FOUNDATION TODAY

The Fair Housing Foundation continues to operate today, as discrimination trends remain persistent; however, the times have changed since the 1960s and so has the Foundation. Funding is received through Community Development Block Grant Funds (CDBG) and the Foundation is fully compensated through these funds. The CDBG funds are federal grants given to cities that work to affirmatively approve fair housing. In order for a city in Los Angeles County to receive funds it must contract with one of the three Fair Housing Councils in the area to assist low to extremely low-income families. Currently 90% of the Fair Housing Foundations clientele are low-income families, unlike the Fair Housing Foundation of the 1960s, which assisted minorities qualified to rent or buy houses. The Foundation now works with the cities of Bell, Compton, Downey, Gardena, Huntington Park, Long Beach, Lynwood, Norwalk, Paramount and South Gate. The Foundation covers roughly two-thirds of Los Angeles County, which consists of more areas than the Foundation reached in the 1960s and 1970s. In the past, the

⁵⁰ Larry Lynch, “How Black Paraplegic Made History in Court” The Independent, Press Telegram ca. March 1972.

⁵¹ Fair Housing Foundation Newsletter No. 52 (1973).

Foundation worked in conjunction with prominent companies in Long Beach. Today, the Foundation has no such working relationship with private companies and only works with the contracted cities.

The Foundation continues to promote a fair housing market for all nationalities and races, as racism is still vibrant in Los Angeles County today. In an interview with Barbara Shull, current Executive Director of the Foundation, she commented that Black people are still the most discriminated against race.

“African Americans just are discriminated against on a higher percentage than any other race and it is getting a little worse because of the extreme change in population that Southern California has experienced. There are pockets within Los Angeles County that were predominately African American ten years ago, and are predominately Latino now; therefore, large percentages of apartment complexes have onsite managers that are Spanish speaking only, so African Americans are moving out of places that they have historically resided in. So now they are being discriminated against in areas they previously felt comfortable in and accepted.”⁵²

The Foundation also deals with discrimination trends against national origin, which involves large immigrant communities. For example, a Japanese property owner may discriminate against a Chinese or Cambodian tenant; therefore, groups of minorities attempt to exclude other nationalities from their heavily populated areas.

⁵² Barbara Shull, interviewed by Julie Saunders, (April 22, 2005).

The combination of the Fair Housing Foundation, the lawsuits and press coverage by Long Beach's local papers brought down the institution of racial discrimination. The Fair Housing Foundation was the premier organization that initiated a legal, social and political change in Long Beach that one can see today. A college professor in 2005 can walk down virtually any street in Long Beach's desirable neighborhoods, knock on a door with a "For Rent" sign, receive a warm welcome and an application. The words, "We don't rent to Negroes" is no longer spoken. Myron Blumberg offered in the 1960s and 1970s an undesirable alternative to landlords who continued to discriminate, as their names would appear in newspaper articles as a defendant in a lawsuit. Discrimination was de-institutionalized by the efforts of the Foundation, Myron Blumberg and the Independent, Press Telegram, making Long Beach a "Fair City" today. Once landlords began to obey fair housing laws, many realized that the minority tenants did not cause their white tenants to leave and they suffered no economic losses. Residents and property owners began to realize that in fact, good neighbors did come in all colors.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Newspapers

Los Angeles Times Sources August 7, 1964 – October 4, 1964.

Lynch, Larry. “How Black Paraplegic Made History in Court.” The Independent, Press Telegram ca. March 1972.

Robeson, George. “Referendum on Housing Law Believed Just.” Independent September 12, 1963, B, 1.

Sutton, Charles. “Suits Setting Trend in Open Housing?” Independent (September 19, 1967), p. B-2.

Weeks, George. “West Side Blockbusting Ghetto Planning Alleged.” Press-Telegram April 16, 1965, sec. B, p. B-1.

Court Cases

Reitman et al. v. Mulkey et al. Supreme Court of the United States 387US369; 87 S.Ct.1627; 18L.Ed.2D 830; 1967 U.S. Lexis 1324.

Newsletters

Long Beach Fair Housing Foundation. Newsletters Nos. 1-52. (1964 – 1973).

Oral Interviews

Blumberg, Shirley. Interviewed by Julie Saunders. November 27, 2004.

Shull, Barbara. Interviewed by Julie Saunders. April 22, 2005.

Secondary Sources

Books

Bullough, Bonnie. Social-Psychological Barriers to Housing Desegregation. California: Regents of the University of California, 1969.

Casstevens, Thomas W. Politics, Housing and Race Relations: California’s Rumford Act and Proposition 14. California: Institute of Governmental Studies, 1967.

Ellen, Ingrid Gould. Sharing America's Neighborhoods: The Prospects for Stable Racial Integration. USA: Harvard University Press, 2000.

Momeni, Jamshid A., ed. Race, Ethnicity, and Minority Housing in the United States. New York: Greenwood Press, 1986.

Articles

Anderson, Totton J. "The 1964 Election in California." The Western Political Quarterly 18, no. 2 (1965): 451-474.

Aronow, Ina. "Long Beach: Citizens Take Action," League of Women Voters of the Long Beach Area, (1981): 7-8.

Crouchett, Lawrence Paul. "Assemblyman W. Byron Rumford: A Symbol for an Era." California History 66, no.1 (1987): 12-23.

Feins, Judith D. and Rachael G. Bratt. "Barred in Boston: Racial Discrimination in Housing." Journal of the American Planning Association 49, no. 3 (1983): 344-357.

Fine, Sydney. "Michigan and Housing Discrimination, 1949-1968." Michigan Historical Review 23, no.2 (1997): 81-114.

Goldzwig, Steven R. "LBJ, the Rhetoric of Transcendence, and the Civil Rights Act of 1968." Rhetoric & Public Affairs 6, no. 1 (2003): 25-53.

Gothelf, Bruce. "Fair Housing Seminar." Advocate Vol. 5, no 3 (1976): 1.

Jensen, Joan M. "Apartheid: Pacific Coast Style." Pacific Historical Review 38, no. 3 (1969): 335-340.

Wolfinger, Raymond E. and Fred I. Greenstein. "The Repeal of Fair Housing in California: An Analysis of Referendum Voting." The American Political Science Review 62, no.3 (1968): 753-769.