

Want to Stop Hate Incidents? The Fair Housing Act can help!

In 1968, The United States of America took stand against housing discrimination and for nationwide housing integration by passing the Fair Housing Act.¹ For almost 50 years, the Fair Housing Act has been a resource for many to protect civil rights. Since the 2017 presidential election, there has been an influx of hate incidents nationwide.² The National Fair Housing Alliance is coordinating efforts to expand the use of the act as a valuable tool with which to prosecute those who commit housing-related hate activities.



A home is a place where people feel safe, but when a home is attacked, that safety is replaced with distress. From 2005 to 2015, the number one location where hate crimes occurred was either in or near a home.⁴ The Southern Poverty Law Center indicated that there are 917 active hate groups in the United States.⁵ The Fair Housing Act provides a way to counter this escalation. Hate incidents cannot survive in the face of active reporting and vigorous enforcement.

Fair Housing Act Protections

Under the Act, it is unlawful to coerce, threaten, intimidate, or interfere with a person engaging in an activity protected under the Fair Housing Act.⁶ For the act to be unlawful, the person who commits the act must have done it in part due to the victim being a member of a protected class.⁷ It is also unlawful for someone to injure, intimidate, or interfere with any person in the exercise or enjoyment of his or her fair housing rights.⁸

¹ *The Case for Fair Housing 2017 Fair Housing Trends Report*, pg. 48 available online at: nationalfairhousing.org/2017-fair-housing-trends-report/

² Reuters. "U.S. Hate Crimes Up 20 Percent in 2016, Fueled by Election Campaign: Report." *NBCNews.com*. NBC Universal News Group, 14 Mar. 2017. Web. 17 July 2017.

³ Koerting, Katrina. "Connecticut sees spike in hate speech, but bucks national hate crime trend." *NewsTimes*. N.p., n.d. Web. 17 July 2017.

⁴ "Hate Crime." *FBI*. FBI, 15 July 2010. Web. 17 July 2017. 2005-2015 report

⁵ "Hate Map." *Southern Poverty Law Center*. N.p., n.d. Web. 17 July 2017.

⁶ 42 U.S.C. § 3617

⁷ 42 U.S.C. § 3617

⁸ 42 U.S.C § 3631



Examples of Hate Incidents

- Neighbor graffiti racial slurs on a home.
- Landlord harassing a tenant because of their national origin.
- Landlord harassing a tenant's friend because of the friend's sexual orientation.
- Neighbor sending a threatening letter because of the resident's religion.

Why Use the Protections?

For example, in a 2016 case, *Howe v. Calliari*, the victim was being called racial slurs and entered into a settlement agreement for a substantial sum of momentary relief and in-court apology for their injury.⁹ There are other types of relief that can be achieved through fair housing advocacy as well. For example, being able to break one's lease to move without penalty because of racially-motivated harassment.

Communities Against Hate

Communities Against Hate is a coalition of 18 national civil rights organizations working together to document hate incidents and provide a network of rapid response for all types of hate activity. NFHA and many local fair housing groups are a part of this coordinated effort.

To Report an Incident

Reporting hate activity is important for a number of reasons. Most importantly, reporting is the first step in getting help and relief for a victim of hate. There are a number of resources beyond just law enforcement that can help those in need. Moreover, advocates looking to combat hate in their communities need data to better understand and fight hate activity. Sometimes, understandably, victims are reticent to pursue enforcement for various reasons. It is still important that they report what happened in order to add their voice to the chorus that is working to end discriminatory hate activities. Reporting a hate incident, even without disclosing personal information, is still important. To report a hate incident:

- Visit <http://nationalfairhousing.org/report-hate/>.
- Contact the National Fair Housing Alliance by phone at **202-898-1661** or by e-mail at nfha@nationalfairhousing.org.
- Find your local Fair Housing office and ask them for assistance <http://nationalfairhousing.org/get-local-help/>.

⁹ *The Case for Fair Housing 2017 Fair Housing Trends Report*, pg. 97