

A Home Knows No Distance For All

By Eric Chen

A gentle breeze blew across my back easing the summer's heat. I walked back to the car and picked up the last box. After marching into the house, I set the box onto the floor with several others. I had probably carried over twenty heavy boxes. I stretched my arms to relax the soreness in my aching biceps. While stretching, I let my eyes adjust to the surroundings and breathed in the fresh scent of a newly-renovated house. I soon pushed my discomfort aside and brought my attention towards the spacious living room. I began looking over at the row of shelves on the wall. Then, I turned around curiously inspecting the room from each corner. On that day, I remember spending a great deal of time adventuring through the whole house and exploring its many features.

Seven years ago, my family and I had moved from our old house into a new one. I specifically remember the excitement streaming through me after hearing about our plans to move, especially after learning that we would now have a backyard. Over these past seven years, I transformed our new house and its environment into a home—a home surrounded with emotional and physical comfort—through many unforgettable experiences and nostalgic memories.

Everybody deserves the right of finding and living in their desired home. However, in the past, discriminatory housing practices have made it difficult for this to occur. Since the early 1930s, housing discrimination was used systemically by targeting people of color, immigrants, and other minority groups. At that time, a common practice used by the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) and Federal Housing Administration (FHA) known as "redlining" helped popularize housing segregation by refusing immigrants, people of color, and people of certain religions housing services/goods. More specifically, an economic policy article on the Washington Post revealed that "the 'redlined' areas were the one local lenders discounted as credit risks, in large part because of the residents' racial and ethnic demographics". The overt racism within these policies blocked minority groups from enjoying the comfort of their own homes, which reveals the far-reaching influence of racism and bigotry at that time.

Housing discrimination continued to segregate people based on prejudiced biases until 1968, when the Fair Housing Act was passed. The Fair Housing Act outlawed discriminatory practices against race, origins, religion, sex, familial status, and disability. However, the impact of redlining and other previous discriminatory policies continues to take its toll on urban communities. The city of Chicago acts as a prime example of housing discrimination's lingering impact. Chicago divides into three main regions: North Side, South Side, and West Side. In the Statistical Atlas website (which draws data from the US Census Bureau), black communities and low-income neighborhoods are largely concentrated in the South Side of Chicago while the concentration of white communities lay in the North Side. In a 2017 Forbes article on Chicago crime, it explains that violent crime spikes in Chicago are attributed to the housing segregation structure of the 1900s where separation tools, like the previously mentioned "redlining", were implemented to separate blacks from whites; this

segregated atmosphere obstructed the social and economic development of many black communities. The culmination of impoverished areas led to the cultivation of gangs and organized crime increasing the numbers on violence and illegal activity. Ultimately, Chicago's segregation history planted a reputation of high crime rates and notorious gang culture.

Understanding the history and impact of housing discrimination is important in reversing its effects and advancing fair housing. Segregated cities and other communities, like Chicago, should offer more services and implement stronger policies regarding the integration of fair housing. Everybody deserves to receive equal housing rights and services; it not only benefits the people but it also advances the economy and development of society.

A home represents a person/family's haven of comfort, safety, and privacy making it a crucial necessity. So, the option of living in one's desired home should never be restricted or limited, especially when the restrictions are justified with prejudiced biases. A "home knows no distance"; thus, the satisfaction and appreciation of a home should be shared by all people.