

Let's ALL JOIN HANDS and Announce to the World
with Proud Heart and Clear Conscience that
America Really Stands for FREEDOM and EQUALITY
-----FOR EVERYONE ----- NOW

CORE HOUSING COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER

When President Johnson signed the Voting Rights Bill on Friday, August 6, another important milestone was passed in extending Federal legal backing to the Negro's efforts to achieve his rightful place in the mainstream of American society. His efforts are now backed with legislation in the fields of education, public accomodation, employment, voting and the War on Poverty. CORE has been one of the leading civil rights groups whose activities in each of these areas have finally produced these important legislative actions.

Housing is the one remaining field that has barely been touched by federal, state or local legislation, yet it will almost certainly be the most difficult field in which to establish equal opportunity without legislation. It is far more complex in structure than most of the others--involving financial institutions, builders, owner syndicates, realtors, real estate managers, politicians and other vested interests. But whatever guise it hides behind, it is still SEGREGATION. It's up to us to penetrate those guises. -- TO OPEN THAT DOOR -- NOW.

Housing, of course, touches all of our personal lives more closely than the other areas--it literally brings the problem "home" and forces each of us to examine deeply his own values and beliefs. Housing represents far more than a mere physical shelter--it represents our very status in society. The neighborhood and the home form the hub of our world where we can unbend and be ourselves--"the locale of family life and of informal, intimate social relations". It creates an intimacy of relationship with one's surroundings not necessitated by contacts at work, at school or in more formal organizational groups. IS THIS WHY HOUSING IS PROVING THE MOST RESISTANT OF ALL FIELDS TO DEMANDS FOR EQUAL RIGHTS?

For the Negro, this same coin has another side. As Davis McEntire points out in RESIDENCE AND RACE, "Imposed segregation connotes not merely difference but inferiority of the segregated group. When individuals or groups are excluded from a neighborhood, the inescapable implication is that they are considered not fit to live there. Since the character of neighborhoods carries corresponding implications about the character and worth of the residents, the minority groups are further stigmatized by the obvious inferiority of their residence areas. Compulsory segregation is, therefore, an unceasing public announcement of the separateness and inferior status of the minority groups." I could put it no more aptly than my son did at four years old when he asked, "Why do Negroes live all bunched up together? It's just like they were all caught in a lasso." And now the builders are trying to make that lasso even more secure by circling the old ghetto with a new, "quality", middle-class ghetto--but still a ghetto--still in the lasso. It cannot be allowed to continue.

If we don't suddenly want to discover that Watts is not 3000 miles away in Los Angeles but right outside our door in Baltimore, we must start to disentangle--no, to cut--that lasso --NOW. The Future health and vitality of our cities depend on effective desegregation. We can never really solve the problems of segregated schools, recreational facilities, public accomodations, etc. or resolve the differential treatment in the supply of innumerable community services until large-scale progress is made in the field of an open housing market. The Negro must be free to bid in this market according to his needs and ability to pay, unhampered by all the artificial restrictions he faces today.

CORE thus accepts that the Negro can never be truly free so long as he is denied the traditional freedom taken for granted by all others in America, excepting only criminals and aliens, to move when he likes and to choose freely his preferred place of residence according only to his needs, tastes and pocketbook. As a consequence, this summer, CORE has followed many months of intensive study of segregated housing, in all its guises, with direct action in the field. We'll try to summarize briefly some of these activities.

Efforts have been made and are continuing to get both the Real Estate Boards of Maryland and Greater Baltimore to clarify their positions regarding "open occupancy" legislation and the real meaning behind their defense of the seller's "property rights" in this connection. Despite their oft-repeated support of this right, there seem to be only two realtors in Baltimore who genuinely will sell to whomever the seller wishes, without regard to race. All the other realtors refuse to sell to Negro's in areas that are now all white whatever the wishes of the seller may be. Is this protecting the seller's rights, or arbitrarily imposing upon the seller what the realtor regards as right?

Pressure has been put on the Mayor, so far unsuccessfully, to make a Negro appointment to the City Zoning and Appeals Board. CORE believes this to be most essential because of the effect zoning decisions can have on the character of a neighborhood. In the past, the Negro's interests have not been represented and rarely even considered in decisions affecting where he lives--hence his very life. At the same time, great effort and expense are going into poverty programs designed to change conditions at least partly of our own creation. Closely connected with this problem of the deteriorating neighborhood, a CORE housing sub-committee is making an effort to form active Neighborhood Associations which can speak with some authority for their area and prevent some of the more blatant violations of their neighborhoods--e.g., zoning exceptions permitting bars and taverns, conversions of unsuitable houses to multi-dwellings, over-building of new apartments which add to over-crowding as well as further intensifying segregation and so forth.

Efforts also are currently being made to force the Mayor to clarify the position of Morton Macht, director of the whole Baltimore Poverty Program, on segregation. Macht is closely connected with two large organizations, Welsh Construction Co. and Regional Management, both of which consistently discriminate in all their sales and rental in housing throughout the Baltimore area. (And, incidentally, his son Philip, another important member of these same organizations is on the City School Board.) It is difficult to believe that he is the appropriate person to direct a major program aimed at changing a whole set of values and circumstances in the large segment of our population now forced to live in ghettos which are at least partly of his creation. Another CORE housing sub-committee is trying to establish some liason with the leaders of the poverty program to enable CORE to determine what, if any, policy they have regarding housing in particular within the total program. A positive plan that will not only better housing conditions but reverse the trend toward more intensive segregation that has been taking place in the last two decades is of vital importance at this time if we are to prevent a widespread racial explosion in Baltimore.

CORE's prime attack on the evils of segregated housing in the outer city and metropolitan area has been directed at the Apartment House Owners Association of Maryland. As long ago as June 1964, CORE made its first of many attempts to contact both individual apartment owners and managers and representatives of the Apartment House Owners Association. They had hoped to obtain co-operation from these individuals in determining the nature and extent of discrimination against Negroes in the Baltimore metropolitan area and possible ways of amicably achieving more integration. With rare exception, all these letters were completely ignored--not even the courtesy of a reply--until July of this year.

At that time a group from CORE, together with representatives from a number of other human rights groups, presented the Association with a list of seven proposals regarding the adoption and implementation of a policy of voluntary open occupancy now in the rental of all their apartment units.

Following this presentation, a meeting was held with representatives from the Apartment House Owners Association on July 29 to discuss the proposals. After this meeting the Association publicly announced their support for metropolitan or state open occupancy legislation and the members expressed their willingness to help win the support of the public for such legislation. (These points had been a part of two of the proposals.) The Association spokesmen made it clear, however, that they were "afraid" to support city legislation until after at least Baltimore County had passed open occupancy legislation there--a sequence that is obviously out of the question. CORE appreciated this slight change of policy on their part but obviously cannot sit back now and wait for this unlikely occurrence or we might be waiting until doomsday. We must continue to press for voluntary adoption of open occupancy policies now. (See article in the Sunday Sun, August 8.)

A second meeting was held with the same group on August 10. No further progress was made. Despite an admission by the delegation that leaders of the organization could probably influence their owners to voluntarily desegregate if approached personally, they declared they "didn't have the time" and "it wouldn't work anyway". They repeatedly emphasized how scared they were about the future of Baltimore. They expressed a wish to continue talking at future meetings but CORE rejected this unless they could produce an agenda with new ideas that were worth discussing. They left saying they would do so but have not yet contacted CORE again.

Hence, the negotiations having obviously broken down, CORE is proceeding with a stepped-up program to desegregate housing now. Having been requested by the association to help "educate the public", we enter this next, and probably most vital, stage of our efforts with this in mind. Together with numerous other interested organizations who are endorsing our efforts--NAACP, National Alliance of Postal Employees, Baltimore County League for Human Rights, American Labor Council, and the Anti-Poverty Action Commission--CORE now proceeds with its own methods of "active education" and "creative tension". Following two Sundays of planning and minor skirmishes, the real kick-off in this new phase will begin at 1 p.m., Saturday, August 28, from Lafayette Square at Carrollton and Lanvale Street. From there we will proceed to our pre-designated target. Keep in touch with our housing committee if you wish to be kept abreast of this campaign. We can use your encouragement and active support now more than ever before. If you have friends or any other contacts who might be interested in this report, please be sure to pass this newsletter on to them.

Baltimore CORE
2316 W. North Ave.
Baltimore 16, Md.

Walter Carter
Housing Chairman
Barbara Mills
Housing Committee Member

AN APPEAL FOR SUPPORT

CORE has made an effort to outline briefly for you our efforts so far in the field of housing because we know that you have in the past shown some interest in integrated housing and expressed a willingness yourself to live in a mixed neighborhood. Because we are now at a stage in our activities when we can constructively use the assistance of every individual who is willing to come forward, we wish to appeal to you personally to take that next step forward and join us in our efforts. There are a number of different ways you can help and your choice can depend upon the depth of your own commitment, the time you have available, and your own evaluation of how you can make the greatest contribution.

Firstly, you may wish to become an active CORE member and help to plan and participate in all our efforts or in those which interest you most. Our general membership meetings are generally held on the 2nd Wednesday of every month at 8:30 p.m. at the YWCA, 1927 Madison Avenue, and on the 4th Wednesday at Knox Presbyterian Church at Broadway and Gay. You are also invited to attend these meetings even as a non-member. Contact one of the housing committee members to confirm these meeting dates and also to learn the dates of our housing committee meetings if you would like to join us at these.

Secondly, you could be of great assistance to us by sending personal letters to builders, realtors, and apartment house managers declaring your support for open occupancy now and encouraging them to adopt such a policy in their business practices even without the compulsion of legislation.

Thirdly, you could visit new housing and apartment developments. If white, you could ask those who show you around whether they would accept a Negro applicant and notify us regarding the various reactions you encounter and at which developments. If Negro, your very presence at new developments will help the builders and managers realize that there are Negroes actively interested in housing outside the ghettos. Visiting developments can be fun too and help acquaint you with the kinds of houses and apartments now being built. We would like to hear from you regarding the kind of reception you experience at these developments. Drop us a note at Baltimore CORE, 2316 W. North Ave., Baltimore, Maryland 21216.

Fourthly, you may wish to make a financial contribution. As our activities are increasing, so, of course, are our needs for funds. Your contribution is needed now and would be greatly appreciated.

Lastly, if you would just take a moment to express to us again, in writing, your continued interest in and desire for open occupancy in housing throughout metropolitan Baltimore, this would itself lend support and encouragement to us as we press forward in this area.

If you have friends or other contacts that you feel would join you in supporting CORE in any way, please pass this appeal on to them on our behalf. If you should receive this Appeal and are already a member or have made a contribution, we should appreciate a note reminding us of this fact. CORE is currently revising and trying to up-date its membership, active participant, and mailing lists. We shall look forward to hearing from you soon.

Contributions, memberships, expressions of support, and requests for additional information can be sent to the CORE office, 2316 W. North Ave., Baltimore 21216 or c/o Mrs. Edwin S. Mills, 2307 Crest Road, Baltimore 21209.

Walter Carter
Housing Chairman