

EVALUATIONS OF THE FAIR HOUSING PRACTICES LAW  
BY LANDLORDS AND BROKERS THREE YEARS  
AFTER PASSAGE OF THE LAW

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CITY COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS  
OF NEW YORK

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TO: The following Real Estate Boards which undertook to mail out the postcard-questionnaires to their members:

The Bronx Real Estate Board  
The Brooklyn Real Estate Board  
The Jamaica Real Estate Board  
The Manhattan Real Estate Board  
The Queens Real Estate Board

TO: The Univac Service Center of Remington Rand Corporation which processed the data as a public service.

## Introduction

The Fair Housing Practices Law was passed by the City Council in December, 1957 to take effect the following April 1, 1958. It aimed, in effect, to control the business policies and practices of landlords and real estate brokers dealing in the rental of privately owned multiple dwellings. It was admitted by its supporters as well as by its opponents to set a new precedent in the regulation of the rights of private property (specifically real property). The New York Real Estate Board opposed its passage. It was generally believed to have widespread opposition from the landlords of the city as well as if not more so than the real estate brokers.

In August of 1961, a letter was sent by the Chairman of the New York City Commission on Intergroup Relations to approximately 25,000 landlords and real estate brokers in the boroughs of the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan and Queens to acquaint them with amendments to the Fair Housing Practices Law and with the type of assistance this city agency was prepared to render them in connection with the law. At the same time a self-addressed return-postcard-questionnaire was included in the mailing, asking the recipients to "please check these 3 short questions," as a means of informing the Commission on Intergroup Relations of the extent and nature of the impact of the law upon the opinions, business economics, and business policies or practices of the recipients.

## The Returns

Returns were received from 1,776 of the 25,000 recipients. This is a 7% return. Equally as important as the size of the return is the representativeness of the sample. These returns appear to have been mailed in disproportionate numbers in New York City postal zones (62% Manhattan and the Bronx) and in underproportionate numbers from Brooklyn- 15%, and Queens - 10%. A substantial proportion (13%) were mailed by landlords resident or vacationing in out-of-the-city postal zones.

Landlords and real estate brokers constituted the bulk of the returns: 82% and 12% respectively. A separate count was made of landlords and real estate brokers known to the Commission as former respondents to complaints of discrimination in housing. They constituted 5% of the sample. Eight returns came from financial institutions.

### The Replies

The first question was worded thus: "Since the passage of the Fair Housing Practices Law has your opinion of this law become better; worse; (or) not changed?" The distribution of answers to this question was as follows:

20%	better
51	no change
26	worse
3	no answer

The second question read thus: "In your opinion has the Fair Housing Practices Law affected your business for better; worse; (or) not affected it?" The replies:

7%	for better
63	no change
26	worse
4	no answer

The third question read thus: "Have you changed your business policies or practices as a consequence of the "Fair Housing Practices Law?" The replies:

11%	a great deal
14	somewhat
9	hardly at all
61	not at all
5	no answer

### A Measure of Impact

Inspection of the replies to the three questions described above indicates that of those who returned the postcards, a majority reported in answer to each of the questions that the Law had not had an impact upon their opinion of it, nor had it affected their business, nor had they changed their policies or practices because of it. Of those who reported that their opinion of the law had indeed changed, slightly fewer reported a change for the better than reported a change for the worse. Of those who reported an effect on their business, substantially fewer reported improvement than reported a worsening.

The following tabulation consolidates replies to all the three questions to ascertain what proportion reported that the law had affected them in all three areas, or any two, or any one, or none at all. The quickest way to grasp the general evaluation by the total number of replies is to compare the polar extremes: twice as many businessmen said the law had no effect on them in any of the three areas as said that it affected them in all three: 38% against 19%.

Affected all three	19%
Affected any two	27
Affected any one	16
Affected none	38
Total cases	(1657)

Whether the landlord or broker's opinion of the law became better or worse was, of course, strongly related to his estimate of the effect of the law on his business. More than four out of five (87%) of those who reported that the Law affected their business for the better also improved their opinion of it while this was true of only 21% of those who did not change their opinion of the law and of but 2% of those who said the law actually had made business worse for them. (Table 1).

Table 1

Estimate of Effect of Law on His Business  
and Opinion of the Fair Housing Practices Law

Opinion of Law has Become	Affected his business for		
	<u>Better</u>	<u>No Change</u>	<u>Worse</u>
Better	87%	21%	2%
No Change	11	71	18
Worse	2	8	80
	(122)	(1101)	(434)

The interesting finding in this table, however, is to be found in the middle column for these are the landlords and brokers who said that the Law had not affected their business. Among these businessmen 21% improved their opinion of the Law as against 8% who worsened it, a ratio of about 2½ to 1. In other words the calamitous effect of the Law on their business not having occurred after all, they were willing to change their minds about it for the better.

The Voluntary Comments

While the majority who returned postcards offered more information than was asked for, some 226 persons volunteered written comments in addition to or instead of the check marks to the questions. A selection of these comments is presented below classified as favorable to the Fair Housing Practices Law or unfavorable toward it.

1. Opinion of the law has become better.

All expressions of attitude were favorable.

The existence of the law on the books gave me courage to rent to Negro people. Before that I was afraid.

I am for the law but would like to see even further rulings in favor of narrowing barriers.

This is a very wonderful law.

Opinion of the law has become worse.

All expressions of attitude were unfavorable.

To impose on peoples to live with others not of his (sic) own choosing is not democracy but...dictatorship.

People feel that they should have the right to select neighbors.

It creates favored classes.

The law is in direct violation of owner's private property rights-- and is illegal.

Destroy and abuse property and cause fear among tenants.

Just read the papers -- stabbings, muggings, murder, rape -- only since your "wonderful law."

You can't legislate harmony.

No matter how you preach it, white people do not want to live in the same apartment house with col.

These laws affect the white race especially and we are all running away and have no place to go.

No more freedom of choice?

I think it is wrong for government to force a person to live and have neighbors, people uncongenial to him.

Those who make these laws are in a financial position to run away from the territory affected. Give them equal quarters but keep them in their own territory.

Will merely accelerate the depopulation of the cities.

Once integrated the house becomes a colored house and you can then only rent or sell to colored which lowers your value.

If you leave the people live their own lives I think we would live in a better world and be more happy.

Why force others to intergrate (sic) when you or I would not.

You cannot change humane (sic) nature by Law or politics.

Because do not believe law as effective as should be.

Since I moved negroes in, whites moved out, it has defeated integration and caused segregation!

Intergroup living by law is deteriorating N. Y. City. Middle class white families are moving away from Negroes leaving only poor people and Negroes. I do not believe in block busting.

New York City will suffer 5 or 10 years from now as a result of this law.

You cannot force people to change the bias in their hearts -- it takes education and time.

Law completely unpracticable and subversive.

You could as usefully legislate the color of people's eyes or their appetite or their dreams.

Your law is illegal.

You can't legislate social problems.

Has made some people too aggressive (sic) and overbearing.

My property has been reduced in value.

I believe in the rights of private ownership.

Unconstitutional. We want to choose our neighbors.

Opinion of the law has not changed

Expressions of favorable attitude

I have always supported this law.

I highly approve of the law.

Since we have always approved of it.

Law good, practice bad.

We always believed in the Law.

I helped fight for it. Now it needs some teeth.

Expressions of Unfavorable Attitude

It was always poor.

Still against it.

You cannot legislate good will or legislate men's mind or subjective attitudes.

I consider this law an infringement on my civil rights and my personal liberty.

I find myself in a very difficult situation. I agree wholeheartedly with the principle behind the law but I am unalterably opposed to the public regulation of private housing since housing does not enjoy the advantages of a public utility.

2. Affected business for the better

No comments were volunteered.

Affected business for the worse.

All expressions of attitude were unfavorable.

Isn't it strange that all those who preach it, do not themselves own property affected? Am compelled to keep apartments vacant and lose money in order to keep other tenants.

Takes away freedom from landlord in a democracy to rent to whomever he wishes.

Re: obtaining mortgages in integrated areas.

Reason: banking interest won't lend mortgage loans.

No bank will give a mor. on A (sic) building which has nigros (sic).

Since I moved negroes in, whites moved out, it has defeated integration and caused segregation! Bad rent payers -- dispossess cases. Neighborhood has deteriorated. Hard to get nice tenants.

Caused trouble. The tenants complain when law upheld, not landlord.

Destroy and abuse property and cause fear among tenants.

Losing good tenants.

Tenants do not want integration.

The influx of those of lower social and moral status will eventually ruin my business.

I sold the business and ran.

My property has been reduced in value.

Not conscious of change but very difficult to evaluate.

Business not affected by it

Underlying attitude indeterminate

Why are the banks still opposed to the granting of mortgages in such localities where it is predominantly Latin-American or colored? These questions and answers do not strike at the heart of the problem.

Why doesn't the Savings Lend in N.Y.C.? Nail them down to an answer. We are fearful of our future in residential property. We fear the lending policies of the lending institutions. There's your problem.

Why do banks (mortgages) discriminate against mixed property in disguise?

The reason landlords don't like to rent to colored people because it is hard to renew a mortgage with colored as tenants. I think the Commission should try to convince the banks to be fair.

You should get banks to lend mortgage money on good multi-racial apartment houses.

Does not affect my business which is apartment rentals in mixed neighborhoods.

Our building is interracial.

Not affected it as yet.

But it will--if we are forced to rent to colored.

### 3. A Great Deal of Change in Business Practices

#### Only unfavorable expressions of attitude

Beginning to deal outside N. Y. C.

Sold our residential properties.

A great deal for the worse.

What's your hurry?

More careful not to intergate (sic).

#### Some change in Business Practices

#### Favorable expression of attitude

The existence of the law on the books gave me the courage to rent to Negro people. Before that I was afraid.

Unfavorable expression of attitude

I avoid possible contact with your beaurocracy (sic) by never advertising a vacancy. Loss of control thru rent control is bad enuf!

Hardly any or no change in Business Practices

Favorable expressions of attitude

Even without the law, we would not discriminate.

The F.H.P.L. does not at all affect my aspect of the real estate business. I highly approve of the law.

We never did discriminate.

They were in accord with FHP before the law.

Since our practices agreed with the law even before it was.

Unfavorable expressions of attitude

In the light of good business sense, we ignore this law and continue to rent only to middle-aged Anglo-Saxon type tenants. This is the only way to keep our property values up and guard against bad elements. Let the city put the inferior peoples in the public projects. Most private landlords avoid them. We do not discriminate because of race, religion or creed but because of the general habits and behavior of the races not in the Anglo-Saxon catagory. (sic)

There are always ways of getting around it. We still don't like Puerto-Rican tenants and won't take them.

I am more careful to keep out the undesirables and if it gets too bad I will liquidate properties and let the city run them.

I did not rent to Negroes(sic) before the law.

I do not " " " now.

I will not rent to Negroes in the future.

Reason: A "white" house - 6 x rent.

A "col." " - 4 x "

When big shot officials practice what they preach. Let Wagner send his children to integreted (sic) school, & W. 84 St.

I will not.

COIR Res. 12761

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