

How To Be An ★ Anti-★ Racist Real Estate Pro



Dr. Lee
Danielle
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How to Be an Anti-Racist Real Estate Pro



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Contents

Introduction	1
Part 1: How Did We Get Here?	6
‘There goes the neighborhood’: an abridged modern history of race and homeownership in the U.S.	7
Part 2: Where Are We Today?	14
What it’s like for me as a Black millennial female agent	15
‘I didn’t create the system’	18
Why ‘I didn’t know’ can’t be an excuse	23
J.E.D.I. reality check: does it feel safe at your firm or association for people of color?	27
Is RPAC doing right by REALTORS®?	32
Part 3: What’s Next?	35
Canceling housing ‘discrimination’	36
How Dr. King’s dream is not a zero-sum game for one firm	40
Neither fair nor a haven, NAR’s Fairhaven is what we need	44
Additional resources to be an Anti-Racist Real Estate Pro	51
The marathon continues: the J.E.D.I. Defender challenge	56
References	59

Dedication

Dedicated to the wildest dreams of our ancestors.

Introduction

George Floyd's senseless murder, sparked in me the mandate to speak out. After collecting my thoughts, I began writing about race and real estate with the article, *There Goes the Neighborhood*, which is reprinted here on page 5. Inman News picked it up.

I thought certainly I would be 'canceled' for calling out our modern past in the U.S. with real estate racism. But I did not care because I firmly believe that inequity and injustice exist because we do not understand how we got to this moment in time—including the role of governmental policy that cemented a divide—and not enough of us are speaking up and out to hold accountable and challenge the racist remnants from these not so bygone eras.

To my surprise, the story went viral among Inman News readers, which signified to me that many more than I thought were also devastated at watching a man die from a police officer's knee on his neck for 8 minutes and 46 seconds. I received a flood of inquiries asking me to share more on race and real estate by speaking at associations and real estate firms, and even the National Association of REALTORS® asked me to participate in a video documentary they are producing on fair housing with the Fair Housing Justice Center (to be released in 2021). I was relieved to know that other people care too because sometimes it feels like our lives (I am speaking both as a Black person and a woman) do not matter.

A city built on a hill cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and puts it under a bowl; instead he puts it on the lamp-stand, where it gives light for everyone in the house. In the same way your light must shine before people, so that they will see...

Matthew 5:14-16 (GNB)

Each month since then, I have continued to write and teach on the seemingly taboo issues of race and real estate. I have a new fervor and calling to be and train others on **How to Be an Anti-Racist Real Estate Pro**.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE AN ANTI-RACIST REAL ESTATE PRO?

I received what I believe to have been a genuine question from an agent that has been an email subscriber to my content for a few years.

“...how to be an Anti Racist Real Estate Pro... does that mean you are coming from experience as a racist or what? I missed something...”

Charles S., Florida REALTOR®

Although ‘anti-racist’ is not a new term, it has not been widely used in mainstream media until recently so I appreciate this question. Here’s the current dictionary definition of ‘anti-racist’:

anti-racist | adjective

opposing racism and promoting racial tolerance.

[First Known Use of anti-racist 1943](#)

Thus, to be clear, when I say, ‘How to Be an Anti-Racist Real Estate Pro’ please take that to mean ‘How to oppose racism and promote racial tolerance as a Real Estate Pro’. In other words, we as real estate pros not only support fair housing—which we are mandated by law to do—but we are actively opposing anything that falls short of fair housing for those of any and all races.

How to Be an Anti-Racist Real Estate Pro



‘How to Be an Anti-Racist Real Estate Pro’ means ‘How to oppose racism and promote racial tolerance as a Real Estate Pro’. In other words, we as real estate pros not only support fair housing—which we are mandated by law to do—but we are actively opposing anything that falls short of fair housing for those of any and all races. Here are examples of how we live this out.

EXAMPLE 1

	Anti-Racist Work	Fair Housing Compliant	Fair Housing Violation
Only those that represent the lifestyle we want in this neighborhood can make an offer on this home that will be seriously considered.	✗	✗	✓
Everyone is welcomed to view and make an offer on this home and I will present all offers to the seller.	✗	✓	✗
Everyone is welcomed to view and make an offer on this home and I will present all offers to the seller without racially identifying information, like names, email addresses, business cards, or homebuyers' letters.	✓	✗	✗

How to Be an Anti-Racist Real Estate Pro



'How to Be an Anti-Racist Real Estate Pro' means 'How to oppose racism and promote racial tolerance as a Real Estate Pro'. In other words, we as real estate pros not only support fair housing—which we are mandated by law to do—but we are actively opposing anything that falls short of fair housing for those of any and all races. Here are examples of how we live this out.

EXAMPLE 2

	Anti-Racist Work	Fair Housing Compliant	Fair Housing Violation
To Client A: Please provide me a pre-approval letter.	✗	✗	✓
To Client B: You remind me of my daughter/son/relative; let me show you a neighborhood that has people your age that look like you (no letter needed).	✗	✓	✗
To Client A & B: Nice to meet you. I require all clients to provide a pre-approval letter from a lender if financing.	✓ (circled)	✗	✗

I love your new book... As Realtors we need to go beyond fair housing and be active anti-racists.

Randal L. GRI, CRB | Managing Broker in Georgia

Exactly, Randall!

And let's be clear. Opposing racism and promoting racial tolerance (a.k.a. being anti-racist) is not a one-way street as some have alleged. As I mentioned in part three of this book, the goal of being an **Anti-Racist Real Estate Pro** is not for our white real estate friends to lose their businesses and/or become suicidal due to the infamous, damning nature of 'cancel culture'. Eternal shame and banishment are not the crux of our work as **Anti-Racist Real Estate Pros**. Instead of being proverbial 'crabs in a race-based barrel', our goal is expansion and inclusion of all, adding more hearty layers to the 'salad' mix (with salad alluding to my diversity metaphor in part three because seven-layer salads slap). Consequently, it is not white vs. Black vs. Indigenous vs. Asian vs. Latinx. Rather, the aim is everybody vs. racism to ensure fair housing is emphatically realized by all. As research supports, 'when people perceive one another as members of the same in-group, racial bias — and possibly other forms of bias against groups of people — tends to melt away'. So let's review: it's everybody vs racism.

So far, my efforts have been met monthly with responses such as these:

I cannot say enough...what wonderful storytelling you used to drive home important points.

Tessa Hultz, RCE, CAE, CIPS
Long Island Board of REALTORS®, CEO

I can definitely relate... thank you for sharing this. So many little things that add up. It still stings in my memory when a franchise owner said he didn't see "someone like me" being a broker in a top area of town where I desired to expand his franchise. I asked why and he couldn't give a reason. His loss as I went on to grow a firm in that very area.

Christian Ross
International Agent and Managing Broker

I was so pleased to read your words about Fairhaven. This was a labor of passion from a cadre of NAR staff and members.

Marc Gould
SVP, Member Development, National Association of REALTORS®

I reached out to Lee Davenport who was the author [of There Goes the Neighborhood] that Lennox had forwarded to all of us to read. She's an incredible person.

Howard Chung
VP, John L. Scott Real Estate Affiliates

I have never given a dime to The Realtor Party and you captured nearly every reason why [lack of representation] in an exceptionally well-written piece.

BLAIR M.

#1 Agent in Georgia in Closed Transactions as Ranked by The Wall Street Journal and REALTrends

I know that the life of each article is short—a few weeks at best. But for those of us that desire to be **Anti-Racist Real Estate Pros**, it seems something with a longer shelf life is needed for our reference and sharing. Hence, this e-book. This book is a compilation of my musings, workshops and interviews (including published and soon-to-be published) from July 2020 to January 2021 that I hope will not only help you pause and reflect but motivate you to actively being an **Anti-Racist Real Estate Pro**.

Now, more than ever, we have an opportunity to show courage and commitment as an **Anti-Racist Real Estate Pro** at an individual level and to be change-makers in our firms, associations, and communities, along with ensuring fair housing is an integral part of our individual businesses. Because, as history has proven, the journey of being an **Anti-Racist Real Estate Pro** is not a quick sprint but rather a lifelong marathon. May the force of fair housing be with you!



How Did We Get Here?

'There goes the neighborhood': an abridged modern history of race and homeownership in the U.S.

Homeownership is often the single largest factor in wealth-building that creates a generational legacy. But for Black, Indigenous, and other people of color as well as some immigrants, there have always been more than legal hurdles at stake for land and learning.

Friends, imagine hopping in a Delorean and going back to middle school as a student. It's your first day at a new school. The bell rings, flooding the hallway with gangly tweens headed to the cafeteria. You grab a tray of food and head to the first empty table you see.

As you try to sit, you stumble, because the chair is snatched from under you with an abrupt mumble, "This is reserved." You shrug compliantly and head to the next vacant seat. "No! My friend is going to sit there," purrs another student. "Taken." "Get lost." "Keep it moving."

Before long, you notice there's no place left for you to sit in the cafeteria. Eventually, you pull a chair from a classroom up to a lunch table, but everyone at that table is told by the "lunch lady" and then the principal that they will lose lunch privileges if you're allowed to sit with them.

Naturally, everyone at that table scatters like you have the dreaded middle school cooties. You become "Lonely Leslie, the Loser," for which you're teased and bullied the rest of the school year.

Oh, what you wouldn't give to be welcomed at someone's lunch table! You would even share your favorite bag of chips—and that's saying something. You are a student at this school, yet you have been treated as if you don't belong.

How would you feel?

Sadly, we know that such exclusion and bullying have

driven some students to do desperate, harmful acts to themselves or others. Unfortunately, we don't become immune to being ostracized just because we're decades removed from middle school.

Hopefully, this illustration gives insight into the demoralizing nature of invidious, exclusionary treatment (McPherson, 2020a), particularly when it is enforced by the administrative powers that be, no matter our age.

WHEN OUR ‘LIVING’ WAS LABELED ‘INVADING’

Now, let's go back further than your days in middle school and examine a thorny time in our history that has warped Black homeownership (Palmquist, 2020) to this day. Doc, Marty, channel the flux capacitor!

Slavery ended (hi, Juneteenth) (Gates, Jr., 2013), and the former slaves and slave masters lived happily ever after...is the fairy-tale ending we wish were true. But like all relationships, it was and is much more complicated.

Many Black families simply wanted a “seat at the lunch table” by being homeowners in the communities near their jobs. Yet, as you can see in the ad below, they were harshly deemed “invaders.” They were treated like Martians from out of this world rather than human beings who were already contributing members to the community. And, it’s no secret that invasions leave behind ruins.



A 1916 leaflet supporting segregation in St. Louis. (Missouri History Museum Library and Research Center)

Reference: Erenow (*Racial Zoning - The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*, n.d.)

This invidious sentiment of “there goes the neighborhood” in reference to Black families (and at times, to immigrants and their families) living among whites was such a pervasive fear that it was codified by our now-more-inclusive association (Broberg, 2018):

An ethics handbook published in 1924 by the National Association of Real Estate Boards, even codified a realtor's responsibility to keep white neighborhoods white.

ARTICLE 84.

A Realtor should never be instrumental in introducing into a neighborhood a character of property or occupancy, members of any race or nationality, or any individuals whose presence will clearly be detrimental to property values in that neighborhood.

National Association of Real Estate Boards ethics handbook, 1924

Reference: [MinnPost](#) (Kaul, 2019)

Adding fuel to the fire, explicit discrimination against Blacks and others was federally sanctioned (Legal Services of Central New York, 2019) with a heavy hand that penalized not only Blacks but those that dared to live among us.

1934

The newly created Federal Housing Administration (FHA) refused to insure (Gross, 2017) mortgages in communities with even one Black household. Some private and state entities like Bank of America and Prudential Life Insurance Company already practiced discrimination by denying qualified Black clients, but the government upped the ante.

1936

The FHA Underwriting Manual (Federal Housing Authority, 1938) recommended deed restrictions (racial covenants) and red-lined areas to exclude and segregate Blacks.

Envision having a stable, well-paying job with Ford Motor Company (giving you the financial means of your peers) but only having one option for housing. Housing that likely was in the least desirable areas of town due to pollution, toxic waste (due to proximity to factories and other work sites) and overcrowding. Housing that, for you, cost more than the going

rate, which was compounded by being denied mortgage and insurance by both governmental and many private providers.

Regrettably, many Black Americans did live with this in even some of the most progressive American cities (like San Francisco) as the aftermath of these structural decisions (Suggested reading for more on this is Richard Rothstein's [The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America](#)) (Rothstein, 2018).

1944 AND 1956

To add insult to injury, the Federal Highway Act was used to demolish close-knit Black communities, [displacing families](#) (Karas, 2015) that were restricted from living elsewhere.

It was not until the Fair Housing Act of 1968, with its amendments in 1974 and 1988, that the tides began to slowly change. But, it's evident with the [2012 HUD report](#) (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2013) on Housing Discrimination Against Racial and Ethnic Minorities and last year's [Newsday real estate exposé](#) (Choi et al., 2019) plus the examples below, that even today, we still have more work to do.

“There goes the neighborhood” was a fearful prophecy that became self-fulfilling for Black Americans. It’s time to pivot the panic-inducing, discriminatory to a welcoming “there grows the neighborhood!”

Despite legalized discrimination, we tried to ‘pull ourselves up by our bootstraps’

**Out of the huts of history’s shame
I rise
Up from a past that’s rooted in pain
I rise**
— Maya Angelou

Homeownership matters for everyone because it's often the single

largest factor in wealth-building that creates a generational legacy, along with determining the quality of public education for our children.

But for American Blacks (as well as other people of color and some immigrants), there was more than legal hurdles at stake for land and learning. Livelihood and life itself were in jeopardy.

As some of the darkest moments in the 20th century, you may know about the massacres at [Rosewood](#) (History.com Editors, 2018) in 1923 and Tulsa's [Black Wall Street](#) (Clark, 2019) in 1921. But there are similar disheartening instances of industrious "making lemonade out of damaged lemons," of Black real estate communities mangled throughout America like:

- [Manhattan's confiscated land](#) (N-YHS Education Department., 2010) (you know what type of inheritance and generational wealth a Manhattan Central Park address could have offered).
- [Wilmington Race Riot](#) (LaFrance & Newkirk II, 2017) in 1898 to overthrow the Black politicians.
- [Chicago's Hyde Park Bombings](#) (Green, 2019) and "Black Belt" race riot in 1919.
- [Detroit's Black Bottom](#) (Weber-Davis, 2015) decimated for I-75.
- [Levittown Riots](#) over first Black family.
- [Sylvania, Kentucky's](#) (US Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit - 828 F.2d 355 (6th Cir. 1987), 1987) first Black family firebombed in 1985.
- [West Philly's 1985](#) (Bruney, 2020) bombings, where the homes of Black families were allowed to burn.
- [Predatory lending](#) (Carey, 2010) fallout of 2008-2010.
- Ongoing [excessive property taxation](#) (Avenancio-Le' on, 2020).

This is just naming a few. What are mentioned above signify discrimination at its worst with the refusal, dismantling, displacement and confiscation of the land of Black communities, where Black advancement was attempted with the allowed scraps from the table before obstructions.

Basically, the bully (discrimination) even took our boots. As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "It's all right to tell a man to lift himself by his own

bootstraps, but it is cruel jest to say to a bootless man that he ought to lift himself by his own bootstraps.”

Have you ever seen someone throw their best dinnerware at the wall out of frustration? In the heat of the moment, this reaction may feel vindicated, but the person will likely regret the destruction inflicted on that favorite serving dish, which may be irreplaceable.

Likewise, to complicate matters after (inter)national atrocities (like the murders of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. up to the recent killing of George Floyd), we’ve aired our frustrations and pain through the destruction of our own neighborhoods (as seen in the self-inflicted riots of 1968 up to 2020).

But make no mistake, all of this destruction, no matter by whose hands, is an outflow of the egregious de jure and de facto disregard for and discrimination against Black peoples’ pursuit of property, life and happiness. Literally, there went the neighborhoods.

THIS MOMENT FEELS DIFFERENT

Resources at the government and private level have been offered at predatory rates, reneged, pilfered or outright denied for Blacks in pursuit of the touted American dream of homeownership since the Emancipation Proclamation.

It’s like being stuck in a bullying middle school for over 157 years, egad! And like bullying, which is best combated with anti-bullying tactics, we now have a chance as anti-racism is taking center stage (McPherson, 2020b) in an unprecedented movement to change the old prophecy.

At long last, we can invite everyone to our “lunch table” by ensuring that all would-be homebuyers, sellers and tenants (particularly all under-represented) receive standardized education about:

- The tenets of Fair Housing (Kearns, 2020)
- Recognizing and avoiding predatory lending practices
- Recognizing and avoiding deceptive marketing practices
- Legitimate and reputable credit repair
- Ownership rights (e.g. what rights do you have with eminent domain? etc.)

- Taxation (McPherson, 2020c) (benefits of appeals and exemptions)
- Down payment funding and grants
- The long-term effects of various real estate deals for the good of one's family legacy and community

Friends, in the spirit of love for this beautiful land, I hope you, your team, your firm and our associations will add standardized anti-discriminatory practices to educate all communities about what I've mentioned above.

This could include creating regularly scheduled webinars, social media campaigns, printed materials, mailers, email campaigns and video series.

As extra credit, let's build and use more virtual home showings (which the pandemic has helped normalize) to reduce the incidence of discrimination based on visible racial features still prevalent at in-person meetings as of the last HUD Report (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2013), LendingTree Mortgage Study (Kapfidze, 2020) and Newsday's investigation.

Perhaps, we will be able to finally pivot the panic-inducing, discriminatory prophecy "there goes the neighborhood" to an elated and welcoming "there grows the neighborhood!"



Where Are We Today?

What it's like for me as a Black millennial female agent

As an American, experiencing microaggressions over years of working in real estate did more than just sting. Here, I share my own story—and what I hope you can learn from it.

“You should be careful so no one mistakes you for a criminal while door-knocking.” “You would look sooooo good with your hair straight!” “You probably don’t have a college degree.” “This is your property? But you are young, a woman and Black!”

These are just a handful of the invalidating statements I’ve heard over the 16 years that I’ve been a real estate investor, agent, broker, and international trainer and coach. To make matters more convoluted, my first name “Lee,” with its spelling, to many seems like a man’s name for an older person, and “Davenport” does not announce my race as Black.

In this online age (Rowe, 2020), I’ve been privileged to connect with potential buyer and seller clients along with tenants for the properties I’ve owned by email. I’ve been able to build a faceless rapport and establish credibility as a resource leader.

However, when they met me in person, I was—and often still am—greeted with audible gasps. I have even had some audacious prospects follow up their gasps of disbelief with statements like:

“I didn’t know you were a woman by your emails.”

And, “I didn’t expect you to be so young. How can you have enough experience?” And, “I never thought you would be Black.”

In hearing those statements, I felt like I’d hit the holy trinity of what some would consider a losing jackpot, which was probably evident on my face. So as a consolation, they would sometimes quickly and other times grudgingly throw in a statement similar to: “But you are so savvy and resourceful, I *still* want to work with you.”

Shut the front door! This hurts. If it were just once in a blue moon or a blue house, perhaps I would not remember these instances. Unfortunately, these were regular occurrences as I worked in the sales field.

These sentiments haven't gone away (Brambila, 2020a) even now as I work more in the office, away from the field, in training, development and coaching. At times, neither my photo nor bio are included in workshop promotions by different firms and associations, which never bothers me since the topic and the continuing education are what most people care about and need.

The result, however? When seminar attendees get an opportunity to chat with me on breaks, I always hear at least one of the following statements:

“I thought you would be Asian.” “You look too young to have this experience.” “Do you call yourself Dr., like Dr. Dre? You couldn’t possibly have that degree...”

What the fudge! It's like I'm on a never-ending episode of the TV show The Voice, but instead of my singing career, it's my livelihood—and perhaps my life—that's at stake when my face is revealed. I never hide my identity, yet it seems people don't connect the dots either.

In the beginning, I resigned myself to thinking that maybe there was just something about me *individually* that random people from all walks of life will barrage me with comments that attempt to disqualify me. Regardless, I wasn't going to let comments derail my personal ambitions.

That was until I was asked to mentor a new agent to the realty firm where I was then working as a fairly new agent myself. I was scared to mentor. How could I help someone else at the beginning of my career?

That was until the prospective mentee told me her story of how her previous team leader used verbal abuse and fear, telling her she “couldn't do this without him.” At that moment, I realized I wasn't the only one being minimized in pursuit of my real estate dreams. I recognized then—and

am driven by this today—that there have to be voices that inspire us since there are inevitably voices that diminish us.

The book, workshop and coaching series, Profit with Your Personality (Davenport, 2017), (based on my real doctoral research) were birthed from this epiphany. It was a desire to help as many real estate professionals understand that we can grow our business with our innate strengths because ultimately, we are all creative, resourceful and whole people who likely just need strategy development.

We don't have to be cookie-cutter professionals or treated like incompetent buffoons. The nerve of some people! So, I'm determined to have the nerve to encourage and expand others.

This is just my story of micro-aggressions in the real estate industry that over time did more than sting—they have wounded me very deeply. It often feels like “death by a thousand cuts.”

Yet, I know any of you who have been on the receiving end of naysayers—perhaps not because of your race, gender or age but something else—likely have your own involuntary The Voice experiences like my first mentee, who happened to be white.

Let's commit to not standing in the way of others shining. One way is to normalize people showing up (McPherson, 2020d) with whatever external cover they were born with, have aged into or perhaps have chosen. This means we do not start sentences—even if it is meant as a compliment—with “I didn’t know you were...” followed by a physical description.

It often goes off the rails. We will likely find that our businesses and even life will be enhanced and enriched by people we might have disqualified and discounted on the surface who ultimately have “the voice”—as in, interesting and useful insight and perspective.

'I didn't create the system'

Fair housing was an outcry of American real estate's blind spot. Here are a few areas in the industry that still deserve more attention—plus ways to improve our line of sight.

Crunch, pop, snap. That's not the sound of your morning cereal. Instead, the front bumper of your car is now mangled—thanks to the driver next to you who's not maintaining his lane. "That wasn't intentional." "I didn't know you were there." "I just couldn't see you." "You were in my blind spot." These are all things we've heard before.

Some of us are all too familiar with the destruction caused by being in someone's blind spot on the road. But I dare say blind spots in our real estate career can prove more damaging to our reputation and livelihood than what's only (hopefully) a minor fender bender. So, what can we do about it?

I'm so appreciative that after I wrote in Inman News the article, "There goes the neighborhood": The history of race and homeownership," the Long Island Board of REALTORS® (LIBOR) invited me with virtual open arms to share.

This is all at a time when New York is taking a zero-tolerance stance (New York State, 2020) on housing discrimination after the 2019 Newsday expose (Choi et al., 2019) of Long Island housing discrimination. (Agents can have their licenses suspended. Translation: instant loss of income and career.) It was an incredibly humbling honor to be one of the first voices to speak at such a critical time.

Join in on this lively prerecorded talk with the welcoming LIBOR, filled with engaging activities to determine if fair housing is your blind spot and four ways to reset.



Click the image above to watch Dr. Lee's talk on [Youtube](#) (Dr. L. Davenport, 2020)

In case you want the CliffsNotes version of this talk, here are some key takeaways from the video:

TAKEAWAY NO. 1

Fair housing was an outcry of American real estate's "blind spot." By the way, how well do you know fair housing? Take this quick quiz to check your smarts.

FAIR HOUSING QUICKIE

How well do you know fair housing? Take this quick quiz of top violations to check yourself before you wreck yourself.

What happens if you oppose the construction of a wheelchair ramp? *

25 points

- My client (seller or landlord) will be happy.
- We can find the 'right' people without all of the hassle.
- I have broken the law and could be fined, suspended or even face my real estate license being revoked.

What happens if you advertise “Christians preferred”? *

25 points

- My client (seller or landlord) will be happy.
- We can find the ‘right’ people without all of the hassle.
- I have broken the law and could be fined, suspended or even face my real estate license being revoked.

What happens if you disapprove a rental to a person with a mental illness who is not a danger to others? *

25 points

- My client (seller or landlord) will be happy.
- We can find the ‘right’ people without all of the hassle.
- I have broken the law and could be fined, suspended or even face my real estate license being revoked.

What happens if you limit families with children to a particular building? *

25 points

- My client (seller or landlord) will be happy.
- We can find the ‘right’ people without all of the hassle.
- I have broken the law and could be fined, suspended or even face my real estate license being revoked.

TAKEAWAY NO. 2

Blind spots are not an attack on our identity. Rather, they indicate areas that deserve more attention. However, when our “threat mode” is on, we tend to not look for ways to improve our line of sight, but instead, we defend our identity with statements like:

- “I didn’t create the system.”
- “I only see green.”
- “I have (grand) children” (in response to familial status violations, as an example).
- “I show properties that have ramps” (in response to accessibility violations).

- “Chinese investors love me” (in response to nationality violations).
- “I had a Muslim neighbor” (in response to religion violations).
- “My best friend is Black” (in response to race violations).

TAKEAWAY NO. 3

Our blind spots as an industry in fair housing include statements like:

- “This is what the client said/wanted.”
- “If I were you...”
- “Selective fact giving.”
- “This is how other agents do it.”
- “XYZ marketing platform gives the option to select/deselect this protected class so that means I can.”

TAKEAWAY NO. 4

There are a few ways we can reset:

1. ACKNOWLEDGING AND INTENTIONALLY LOOKING FOR OUR BLIND SPOTS

That is what we do in new vehicles that we do not want to damage. How much more should we do it with our livelihood? We can do this by posting and including this [Fair Housing Declaration](#) (National Association of Realtors, n.d.-a) in seller, buyer and leasing presentations. (Bonus brownie points if you make this your daily mantra.)

Plus, we should ask to be—and welcome when we are—called out as needed, since blind spots can impact anyone based on another person’s viewpoint and angle (read: not an attack on your identity).

2. COUNTERING DISCRIMINATORY TALK

We should counter misinformed and discriminatory talk immediately with the language of the law and use these examples anonymously (name dropping is an absolute no) as teachable moments for social media, newsletters, video series, etc.

3. STICKING WITH THE LAW

Other people and various platforms (no matter how popular) are not our standard. Stay current with tech tools like Feed.ly, Mention.com and Google Alerts. Additionally, join the J.E.D.I. challenge. (JEDI stands for Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion as defined by our friends at Compass). Ask yourself, “What class can I sign-up today to take this month to promote the American dream of fair homeownership?”

4. STAYING A CREATURE OF GOOD HABIT

In other words, what you do for one prospect, do for all—every single time. For many, this may mean we need to systematize everything, so make sure to use your firm’s CRM, IFTTT and Zapier to help with automation.

Why ‘I didn’t know’ can’t be an excuse

This moment of heightened awareness about equity is an opportunity for real estate professionals to etch a more complete story on the history of real estate in America. Here’s why the industry could benefit from more diversity training and courses.

A [recent Seattle Times article](#) (Long, 2020) reported that Windermere President OB Jacobi said “he wasn’t aware of the existence of racist covenants until several weeks ago, despite the fact that his brokerage was founded in a formerly whites-only neighborhood.”

“I’m learning every single day about things I probably should have known long ago,” he said, according to the article, adding that he would like Windermere to work with homebuyers in getting rid of racist language.

The above quote made my jaw drop. And that’s no slight to or shame on Mr. Jacobi because, if we’re being honest, many of us can say the same [about the neighborhoods](#) (Boardman, 2020b) in which we work and live.

Real talk: I’ve had to do extensive digging to uncover parts of our less-than-welcoming real estate history. It’s like it has been buried or something, perhaps not intentionally, but the atrocities of our past can’t be “swept under the rug” any longer.

I DIDN’T KNOW

Throughout the history of our very own industry, “I didn’t know” is said so often by real estate professionals that it almost sounds like a chorus to your favorite singer’s latest single.

As a sidebar, the aforementioned *Seattle Times* article was sent by Michael Orbino, managing broker with Compass in Bellevue, to our J.E.D.I. (justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion) think tank group founded by the enterprising Howard Chung.

Our group also includes notable leaders such as Helen Chung, Myra Jolivet, Katie Mooney and Jules Penham. I mention them because I, like

most of us, don't work on an island entirely to ourselves—even with today's social distancing rules (Inman, 2020). (Thank you to the think tank for furthering this conversation during this pivotal moment!)

I know history can, at times, bore even the most astute lifelong learners to sleep. Yet, reading this recent article made me double-down on the need for our American real estate history (the good, bad, indifferent and ugly) to be pushed to the forefront—uncovered, told and dissected to us as industry representatives even more than to the general public.

WHY? DON'T WE ALREADY HAVE ENOUGH CONTINUING EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS?

Well, does anyone else get embarrassed when those outside of our industry (have the audacity to) know more about our day-to-day operations, historical settings, implications, challenges, threats, opportunities and future

I'm convinced that not only do we repeat history when we don't know the full, sordid version of it, but we also unknowingly cement and embed its harmful elements into our future.

Moreover, as representatives of this industry, we simply give consumers another qualification (our historical ignorance) for why misguided thoughts of disrupting and erupting agents are legitimate. (Case in point: the article referenced above.) The public may all too well understand the historical underpinnings that we—the professionals—may have glossed over.

Our J.E.D.I. think tank tossed around the idea of creating a diversity, equity and inclusion certification course for Green Ocean TV. The idea was spearheaded by Chung and Mooney, and I think it's brilliant.

To piggyback off their brainchild, I think we have to do more as an industry. To their point, I would love for us to go further than just offering another one-and-done, trite elective class that allows us to expand our “alphabet-esque” soup credentials.

SO, HOW CAN WE MAKE A LASTING, EDUCATIONAL IMPACT?

Last week, I just took my required ethics and license law classes for this four-year cycle. Honestly, making them mandatory was one of the best ways to force us to sit down and pay attention to the topics that we should, and likely do, care about—ones that often get lost among everyday transactions, operations and life in general.

For instance, I virtually participated in Leigh Brown's annual NAR course, which felt like having tea with a good friend who gave updates on industry ethical dramas instead of a dull CE requirement. Brown can easily be the dictionary definition of an engaging speaker.

Despite all her true fabulousness, when she referenced points from last year to the group, all I heard was crickets. The group couldn't remember what she said.

Sadly, even the content of a more in-depth certification course (Dickerson, 2020) gets forgotten as time passes. (Where are my fellow Short Sales and Foreclosure Resource certification holders? How much do you remember, honestly?) No matter how engaging the instructors are or how well they present the material, we all tend to forget what we're taught over time.

BUT WHAT IF WE LAYER THESE EDUCATIONAL TOOLS?

At the very least, we can and should have a diversity, equity and inclusion sit-down every four-year cycle that tracks alongside our NAR ethics training as a separate three-hour continuing education requirement.

Maybe—just maybe—the “grandfather clause” can also be removed for this particular course. Doing this every four years is not super aggressive. It’s actually palatable for most. Then, adding a J.E.D.I. certification program that takes a more detailed look, would be the icing on the cake.

Pair in-depth training with other opportunities to stay current at least once every four-year cycle—and score! And like Leigh Brown's ethics class, you can take it yearly and rewatch it more often than that.

This moment of heightened awareness about equality (Boardman,

2020a) and equity is an opportunity for us to etch a more complete story of real estate that's fair for all going forward. The momentum that started this summer may fizzle out but hopefully not before some long-lasting stakes have been planted in the ground of American real estate.

J.E.D.I. reality check: does it feel safe at your firm or association for people of color?

How It Started VS. How It's Going

Organizational Goal:	Organizational Reality:
We want more ____ represented here (<i>fill in the blank with an underrepresented group</i>).	We don't understand why there aren't more ____ (<i>fill in the blank with that same underrepresented group</i>).

More representation of underrepresented groups (a.k.a. justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion—J.E.D.I.—at their finest) is a noble assertion and corporate goal. However, sometimes the closer we are to the ‘norm’ (*this is how we have always done it*), the less likely we will see the aspects of our environment that may feel unwelcoming to the very demographics that we want to reach.

In regards specifically to truly opening your organization’s arms to BIPOC, psychological safety is a must! Before you tune me out because you believe your environment is a ‘safe space’ for all, including people of color, please let me explain.

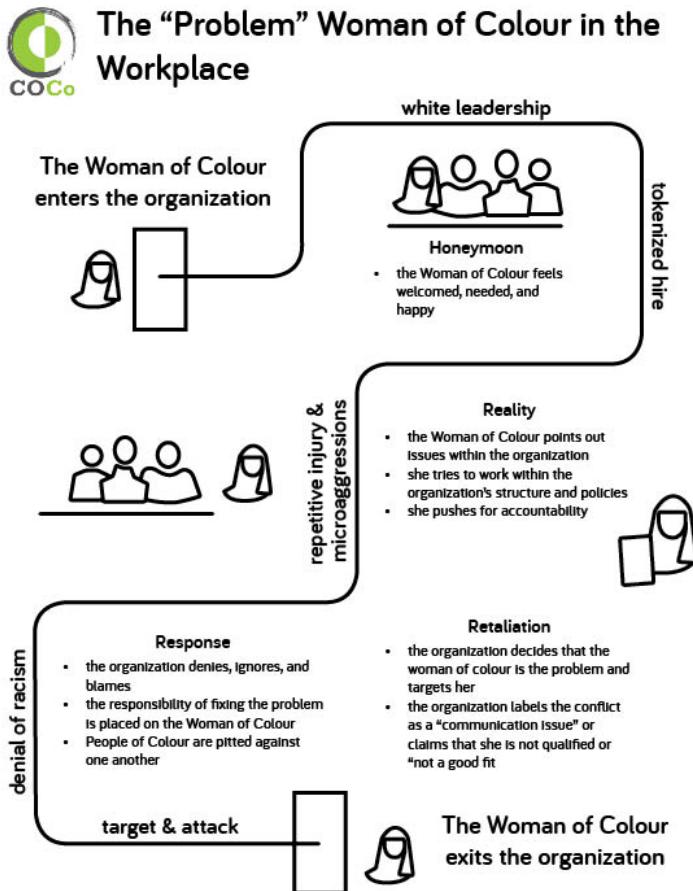
Psychological safety as adapted from [Rory Rowland](#) breaks down to:

1. Do I feel included or are there conversations that I have not been invited to participate? Or, when I do offer input, do I feel like my view is trivialized, mocked, or outright ignored?
2. Do I feel safe to learn (aka not be perfect and allowed to go through iterations of development)?
3. Do I feel safe to contribute or have I been/will I be criticized, embarrassed, or marginalized?
4. Do I feel safe to challenge the status quo or do I get the impression that I need to stay in my lane or that it’s not broken so don’t try to fix it?

If any one of these safe conditions is lacking among your team, firm, or

association, although this is not the movie Apollo 13, I dare say, *Houston, we have a problem.*

Case in point: Among the Black women I know both in and outside the world of real estate, we often notice the opposite of psychological safety when we speak out or up. From *we have to laugh about it so we don't cry* examples late-night host and comedienne Amber Ruffin and her sister Lacey Lamar share in their [book](#) to the following illustration¹, it is understandable that a lack of psychological safety is the straw that breaks the back of J.E.D.I.:



Adapted from "The Chronicle of the Problem Woman of Color in a Non-Profit" by the Safehouse Progressive Alliance for Nonviolence, www.coco-net.org

¹ This illustration is not just a meme based on a hypothetical scenario. It was sent to me by a Black executive about her current, lived experience. Plus, the creator, COCo, also has empirical data to substantiate this graphic, making it based in reality.

You may be thinking, *we are nowhere near as bad as Lacey's infuriating stories or COCo's illustration*. But, if you have not had a neutral third-party interview with your crew, you likely do not know the full story.

If you are truly committed to J.E.D.I. work and more assertively being an **Anti-Racist Real Estate Pro**, I encourage you to have an unaffiliated third-party do the following exercise that I do with organizations that have felt this disconnection between the goals and reality of J.E.D.I. efforts:

As a coach/consultant (a.k.a. an objective third-party not part of the group), I like to first ask **all leaders separately** (to prevent groupthink):

- What does it mean to you for this to be a safe space?
- What have you noticed about this environment?
- Are there any participants that you believe may feel uninvited or unsafe to learn, contribute or challenge the status quo? Why or why not?
- How have you personally contributed to this being a safe space?
- What could be improved upon to promote psychological safety for all participants?
- Do you feel included or are there conversations that you have not been invited to participate? Or, when you do offer input, do you feel like your view is trivialized or outright ignored? If you have felt unincluded, please share at least one instance.
- Do you feel safe to learn (aka not be perfect and allowed to go through iterations of development)? If you have this lack of safety, please share at least one instance.
- Do you feel safe to contribute or have you been/will you be criticized, embarrassed, or marginalized? If you have felt this lack of safety, please share at least one instance.
- Do you feel safe to challenge the status quo or do you get the impression that I need to stay in my lane or that it's not broken so don't try to fix it? If you have this lack of safety, please share at least one instance.

Then, I ask **individual participants**, particularly those with one foot out the door as evidenced by either their silence or physical absence:

- What does it mean to you for this to be a safe space?
- What have you noticed about this environment?
- Of the leadership team, who has personally contributed to this being a safe space? What did that person(s) do to create a safe space?
- Do you feel included or are there conversations that you have not been invited to participate? Or, when you do offer input, do you feel like your view is trivialized or outright ignored? If you have felt unincluded, please share at least one instance.
- Do you feel safe to learn (aka not be perfect and allowed to go through iterations of development)? If you feel unsafe learning, please share at least one instance.
- Do you feel safe to contribute or have you been/will you be criticized, embarrassed, or marginalized? If you feel unsafe contributing, please share at least one instance.
- Do you feel safe to challenge the status quo or do you get the impression that I need to stay in my lane or that it's not broken so don't try to fix it? If you feel unsafe challenging the status quo, please share at least one instance.
- What could be improved upon by the leadership (and even the team as a whole) to promote psychological safety?

Next, without revealing any identities, I share the results with the team in a psychologically safe way (a.k.a. I don't use the answers as weapons). This is usually a revelatory moment for leadership. Typically, in instances when a J.E.D.I.-pursuant firm or association is *inadvertently* repelling people, those in leadership are not aware of how they (and the organization) show up to those they lead (or hope to attract) nor of the psychological needs of those they lead (or hope to attract). Such organizations may desire to do better but may not understand the need to provide an additional non-punitive nor retaliatory space to be heard via humble and appreciative inquiries of ALL from a psychologically safe third party... that is until now.

Houston, we have found the problem!

After unpacking the results, I ask the whole group to brainstorm the

following questions² and I give everyone present an opportunity to be heard:

1. Define|Design|Dream: What initiatives would have us ALL ‘win’ in our quest to demonstrate a just, equitable, diverse, and inclusive environment? As REALTORS®, we understand that the best negotiations are a win-win for all parties (instead of lopsided victories) and that especially applies in matters of J.E.D.I. work.
2. Discovery|Destiny: What can we carry forward that has worked well? By salvaging effective traditions, we limit displacement. Thus, this process should not feel as disruptive and invasive to those that may be tempted to resist a corporate culture expansion.
3. Discovery|Destiny: What is the smallest/simplest/easiest change that could make the biggest impact that we can implement immediately? Tabling something for months or years because it is such a massive undertaking should be avoided at all costs.

By leadership inquisitively, energetically, collaboratively, humbly, and daily working towards a truly ‘safe space’, justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion can more readily become the natural and appealing byproducts.

² Adapted from Dr. Dietra Hawkins, Yale University Professor: <https://www.linkedin.com/public-profile/in/dietra-hawkins-8b847oa/>

Is RPAC doing right by REALTORS®?

The REALTORS® Political Action Committee says its purpose to help elect candidates who support the interests of REALTORS® is clear. But does that truly extend to those in protected classes?

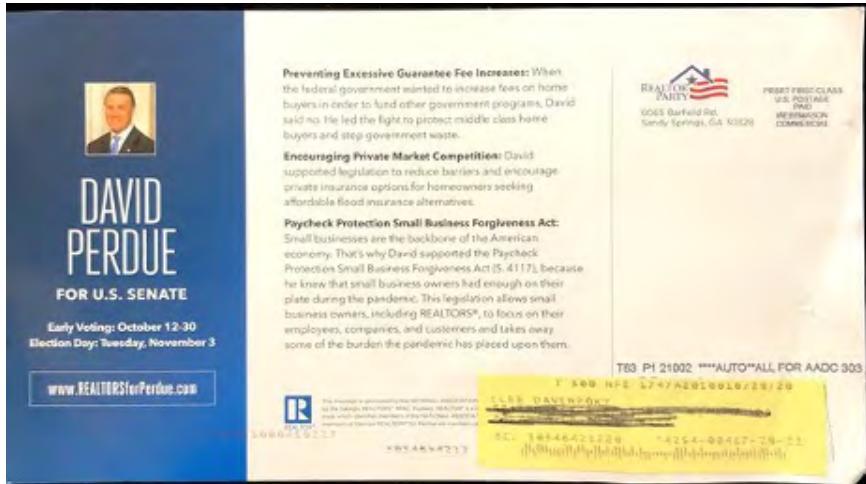
Let's be honest. When we say our country was founded on the belief that "all men are created equal," we know that it has been a constant battle to truly extend this sentiment (Palmquist, 2020) to all men.

When we say American women were allowed the right to vote in 1920 after an arduous movement, we know it has been an uphill battle to realize that for women of color, who faced exclusionary tactics.

When we say the purpose of the REALTORS® Political Action Committee (RPAC) (National Association of Realtors, n.d.-c) "is clear: voluntary contributions made by REALTORS® are used to help elect candidates who understand and support their interests," we also have to question—does "understand and support their interests" truly extend to people of color and those in protected classes?

In my home state of Georgia, (you know, the place that had a contentious run-off election (Broadwater, 2020) on Jan. 5, 2021 that decided the fate of the U.S. Senate), I received a postcard from REALTORS®forPerdue.com. I was excited to read it because this was not skewed marketing propaganda from either the Democratic or Republican party but from my "crew"—REALTORS®.

It outlined that David Perdue is the candidate of choice because of his record on "preventing excessive guarantee fee increases...on homebuyers in order to fund other government programs," and encouraging "private insurance options for homeowners seeking affordable flood insurance alternatives." That's in addition to supporting the Paycheck Protection Small Business Forgiveness Act.



Hear! Hear! Those are commendable and absolutely paramount to homeownership. But RPAC left some vital things off this mailer. Where is information about Perdue's viewpoint on policies that affect fair housing (Davenport, 2020a) and protected classes?

At the very least, there should have been something on Perdue's stance on the suspension of the AFFH process (Azevedo, 2020) (which REALTORS® championed). I flipped over the mailer and even read the fine print. Nada. Zip. Zero. Zilch.

Here's the thing—there is no perfect candidate. Thus, it's imperative for the organization that represents us to give us a whole picture. For example, had this postcard included a quick-glance list or grid (for those who say there was only so much space to print) of current issues relevant to different demographics—like redlining, which is still in the news (TRD Staff, 2020) today, fair housing, discrimination and Perdue's stance on them—I would've respected RPAC's rally cry for us to donate regularly to its efforts to parse out the candidate most aligned with our values.

In other words, RPAC, can you please stop doling out parcels of information that may not truly reflect the varied interests of all REALTORS®, particularly those of us in protected classes? Please show us all candidates and their individual stances on all things real estate, which again, should include fair housing, protected classes and the topics that outflow.

I have contributed to RPAC each year hesitantly (I never could justify in my heart being a big donor)—and this overlooking of issues related to protected classes is precisely why. And here's a secret: Many people I've spoken to who contribute very little or don't contribute at all hold the same sentiment.

Many of us don't care about being on the top of a tantalizing donor list when we can't come to terms with donating to something that does not overtly illuminate homeownership values relevant to every member, including protected classes.

To really include the interests of protected classes, which represents part of the Realtor membership, would go a long way in helping marginalized members feel RPAC is a safe space (truly working for all) that we should substantially support.



What's Next?

Canceling housing 'discrimination'

Discrimination.

Does that word make the hairs on the back of your neck stand up and your brows furrow?

Me too.

Perhaps you do not want to suffer from it. Or, maybe you do not want to be accused of it.

And, as I watched the [New York State Senate hearing](#) (Ford, 2020) that subpoenaed some of the real estate agents named in the [2019 Newsday Long Island housing exposé](#) (Choi et al., 2019), I realized that we need to cancel the use of the word, 'discrimination'.

Stay with me. This is not another 'Cancel Culture' piece in that I am not seeking to cancel *people* (who often need and can be restored). Rather, we can put an end to a word, 'discrimination' that, due to its defensive connotations, actually seeks to divide and further alienate rather than advocate for and support non-discriminatory (a.k.a. FAIR) housing.

Again, think about what the word, 'discrimination' evokes in you. Likely, fight, flight, freeze, and maybe fawn — defense mechanisms — surface for you.

AND, THERE LIES THE PROBLEM.

Our defensives, and maybe also 'our dukes', are up. Most of us that are married or dating know that taking a defensive posture in a moment when someone feels slighted further damages the relationship as opposed to repairing it. And, like most romantic relationships, it is far more effective and conciliatory to speak in the positive of what we desire (even require) than in the negative of what is not happening. Similarly, I believe this philosophy may help to serve more protected classes, really all people, in their pursuit of the American dream of homeownership.

SO WHAT IS THE POSITIVE REPLACEMENT PROPOSED?

Instead of ‘Did you discriminate?’ we may see better progress with ‘How specifically are you treating everyone the same?’ Then, we as real estate professionals can pull back the curtain of our systems, creating deep self-evaluation and reflection. If our systems unveil that we are consistent in doing the same thing, the same way for every single client, kudos — we can pass ‘Go’. However, if we see that our systems are sporadic, at best, and non-existent, at worst, then we have just willingly opened our own eyes to our mishandling of fair housing, whether unintentionally or not.

THAT FEELS BETTER.

The Newsday exposé did bring to light that we still have growing to do when it comes to fair housing. But real (estate) talk, it was despicable how Newsday did it. At the resultant September 2020 hearing, the NY state senators were shocked that no disciplinary actions had been taken against the agents called out in the exposé. Whereas, I was not shocked because Newsday put those agents, their brokers, and their firms on the worst type of defense (public humiliation), which is evident in the circular conversations and verbal gymnastics displayed at the hearing (I thought I was watching a new Olympic event, geez!).

One agent even testified how her reputation, and really her life, had unraveled in the aftermath. She seemed depressed and conceivably suicidal, which, sadly, just cannot be the end result that we are seeking as a civilized society. There is something wrong with trying to correct one societal ill or wrong by inflicting another/more.

When I teach workshops on upholding fair housing in our marketing (particularly on social media), I am quick to say that we should help each other too. I do not believe some of us are even aware that we are not treating everyone the same. Those of us in the ‘some’ group likely are on ‘autopilot’ because of how we have been socialized in a country that has historically and legally been intolerant of the ‘other’ (see ‘There Goes the Neighborhood’: An abridged modern history of race and homeownership in the U.S., page 5).

Thus, when we see a colleague post something that treads the fair housing line, we absolutely should say something to that colleague first (before they are ‘called on the carpet’ because it may be simply an awareness gaffe). You may not want to teach a workshop (and you do not have to, ha!) but so much of this is a ‘we need better, ongoing fair housing education’ issue that our daily interactions as professionals are prime teachable moments. Let’s use them to help each other because if the tables are turned to put the hidden cameras on us, we (that truly have no ill intent) would want someone to gently educate us on how we can do better and stay out of ‘hot water’.

Case in point, [it was reported](#) (Brambila, 2020b) that none of the agents testifying could define ‘steering’. Yes, that is a real estate pre-license class basic but many of us are many, many, many moons removed from those classes. Again, we need better ongoing fair housing education as a collective.

HOW DO WE ACT ON THIS?

Should we have penalties? Of course.

Is ignorance of the law an excuse? Of course not.

Should we distinguish between intentional and unintentional transgressions along with explicit and subtle disparate acts and outcomes verse pro-fair housing acts and outcomes? Absolutely.

Does the lack of intentionality absolve one from breaking the law? No way.

Yet, we do more for clients, us (as their agents), and our industry as a whole if the focus becomes improving awareness with questions like:

How specifically are we treating every single client the same every single time?

How specifically can we implement better systems and routines to ensure we treat every client the same, every single time?

How specifically can we make this a community of professionals all working towards these ends of treating every client the same every single time? (Instead of taking the individualistic, ‘every woman for herself’, approach that we heard in the NY state senate hearings.)

As a collective that has an awareness dilemma about what it looks like

to treat clients the same, particularly in these times, we can actively take a posture of lifelong learners interested in giving every single client the highest quality of service every single time. The byproduct becomes fair housing for all and thriving longevity as agents.

Unfortunately, however, duality in our individual awareness of and action to promote the same treatment does exist. Make no mistake — there is still a remnant of real estate licensees that revel in racism (like this [Arizona Sotheby's agent](#)) (Vandell, 2020). Even for them (the aware, self-proclaimed racists), calling it ‘discrimination’ is still not appropriate because it minimizes the actual laws being broken. Thus, whether it is overlooked or intentional, ‘discrimination’ just does not fit where the moments from 2020 are taking us because it either packs too much of a ‘punch’ or not enough. Language has the power to unite or divide, develop or destroy so let’s choose our words deliberately to advance the true spirit of fair housing.

How Dr. King's dream is not a zero-sum game for one firm

I love pizza (even though now I try to get healthier toppings and crust). But the problem is if there is only one slice for two hungry adults, either someone will go without or both people will still be hungry if they share it (unless, perhaps, it is a giant New York slice).

This may be how some of us view justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (J.E.D.I.)—as a zero-sum game where there is only one piece of a pizza pie that either we have to share (leaving neither of us satisfied) or one of us goes without enjoying (allowing only one at a time to be satisfied).

But as much as I love pizza pies, there is a more comparable metaphor for J.E.D.I.. I believe J.E.D.I. is more like having a delightfully layered, cornucopia salad³. Just one or two ingredients in a salad can be dreadfully boring although it may get the job done of quenching our hunger. But we can up our satiety with more ingredients where a side salad can actually become a sought-after entree (looking at you, Auntie, and your seven-layer salad, *yum!*). J.E.D.I. is the filling dish to greater satisfaction for all (modern research confirms diversity promotes financial growth rather than scarcity); and, one real estate company is pushing to make this a reality through its mentorship program.

Within the last year and in light of the tragic murder of George Floyd, Dream Town Realty (Dream Town Realty, Inc., 2021a) started the InspiRE (see what they did there with the ‘RE’, giving a nod to real estate?) mentorship program. Conceptualized and developed by Dream Town Realty’s founder and CEO, Yuval Degani, the InspiRE mentorship program (Dream Town Realty, Inc., 2021b) mentors aspiring real estate pros from underrepresented communities. By the way, 86% of REALTORS®

³ Today Years Old: after reading this draft, my mom just told me that she remembers seeing an episode of The Oprah Winfrey Show back in the 1990s with Jane Elliott (<https://youtu.be/ebPoSMULi5U>). On that show, Jane Elliott referenced the importance of using a salad analogy instead of a melting pot. I had no clue but I love that my line of thinking matches such a J.E.D.I. trailblazer.

are white (National Association of Realtors, 2020) despite people of color winning access to the organization during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s after decades of explicit exclusion and segregation.

J.E.D.I. doesn't say, "Let's have a battle royale for a limited number of slots to be REALTORS®" like the pizza pie analogy would require. Instead, J.E.D.I. says, "The more the merrier! And, because these underrepresented groups (there is only 14% BIPOC) may not have REALTORS® naturally proximate to them to help them learn the ropes, let's add to the salad ingredients that replace what has been missing". In essence, there is no subtraction or division but rather duplication. The admitted mentees are paired with seasoned RE brokers and the mentees' fees for both pre-license education and the state exam in Illinois are covered through the program. Someone pinch me because I must be dreaming... oh wait, maybe that is why it is called Dream Town Realty.

In light of the original Fair Housing Act being enacted, which was spurred by the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on April 4, 1968, I am reminded of Dr. King's words, "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character." These words do not signify a quest for a colorblind society, where the inequities caused by racism are ignored, minimized, silenced, and dismissed. That has been a false interpretation and misapplication of this famous speech. Instead, these words — as evidenced by the context of Dr. King's life — call for a society where opportunity and access are granted to all races even those among the margins.

Dream Town Realty is making Dr. King's dream a reality. Interested in how your firm can do something similar or if perhaps you should apply for this mentorship? Check out my chat with the Dream Town Realty InspiRE mentorship program team.



Click the image above to watch Dr. Lee's talk on [Youtube](#)

Who's Who in the video:

Founder & CEO, Dream Town Realty — Yuval Degani

VP of Administration & Human Resources — Claire Reinhart

Dream Town's InspiRE mentorship 2021 program cohort participant — Kyle Barbour

Dream Town's InspiRE mentorship 2020 inaugural class graduates — Danny Torres
and Milly Ortiz (Dr. L. Davenport, 2021a)



Milly Ortiz of Dream Town Realty with her mentor (taken during her training)
(Dream Town Realty, Inc., 2021b).

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS:

The Dream Town Realty InspiRE mentorship program is a 6-week

commitment for 6–8 hours per week. Dream Town will pay for the state licensing exam fees, and the 15-hour pre-license course will be provided through the Real Estate Institute. Dream Town will provide training for mentees, explaining processes and crucial administrative functions. Mentees will shadow their mentor across all business functions—showings, client meetings, marketing meetings, and more. Mentees will gain hands-on experience with behind the scenes tasks, such as entering new listings and creating marketing collateral.

Applications are always open on a rolling basis for the Dream Town Realty InspiRE mentorship program. Apply at www.DreamTown.com/mentorship.

Neither fair nor a haven, NAR's Fairhaven is what we need

The National Association of REALTORS® launched a free interactive training platform called Fairhaven (National Association of Realtors, n.d.-b). Here's my take on this virtual experience.

Some of us are dealing with fatigue. Pandemic fatigue. Protest fatigue. And both may include fatigue surrounding race, racism and other needs of protected classes. The frustration is valid, and it likely represents how many of us feel, so I dare not brush past it.

There are other complex issues that REALTORS® are facing and addressing, such as low housing inventory, natural disasters, disruptive technology, the uptick of bank and mortgage defaults just this month, and the like. But most of these other challenges today were not present consecutively for 10, 20 or 50 years.

I will repeat myself for the people in the back: These other challenges have not been non-stop, unrelenting year after year after year.

Yet, the disregard for the legal rights of those in protected classes has been a battle since those lawful rights were granted in 1968, 1974 and 1988 (noted in “*There Goes the Neighborhood*: An abridged modern history of race and homeownership in the U.S.”, page 5). Thus, it’s not that any of our challenges are to be ignored, but it’s finally high-time we get fair housing right.

Remember in school how those who did not pass a core subject typically had to repeat it? Retaking one course did not stop your learning progression (retaking calculus likely did not stop your Shakespearian class).

Likewise, we as a collective industry have to retake our fair housing studies (which does not have to be a deterrent for other matters) until we either make it a realization for all protected classes (that is our passing grade) or retire. Like me, I hope you want to see our industry’s betterment by handling fair housing properly — it’s the law.

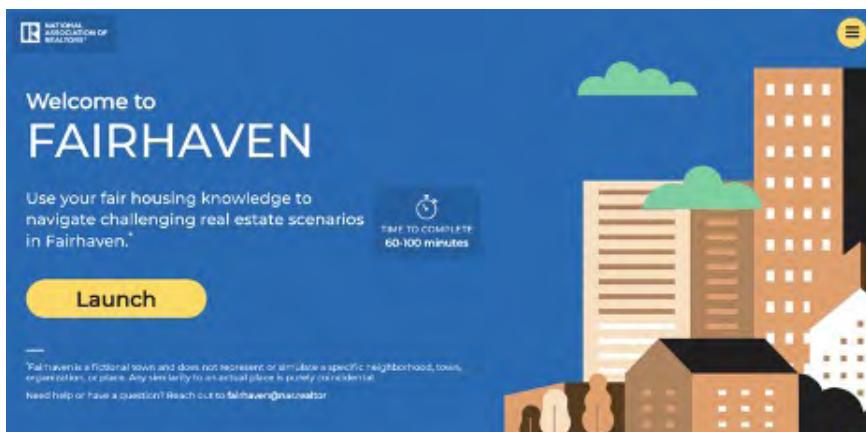
To help us as an industry, the National Association of REALTORS® has upped its “game” to help us get fair housing right.

FAIRHAVEN HAS ME ‘IN MY FEELINGS’

Since I have lived in Atlanta, for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day, I make it a point to visit the various museums that allow us to hear firsthand accounts from survivors and simulate what it was like to be a freedom rider, a lunch counter sit-in protester, an enslaved Civil War soldier and others who bravely faced discrimination.

Those brief, manufactured experiences in someone else’s shoes are emotionally taxing, but they heighten our awareness of the struggles of those who have come before us. We can choose to say it’s too much and walk away, but they couldn’t, which fully embeds the pain they experienced.

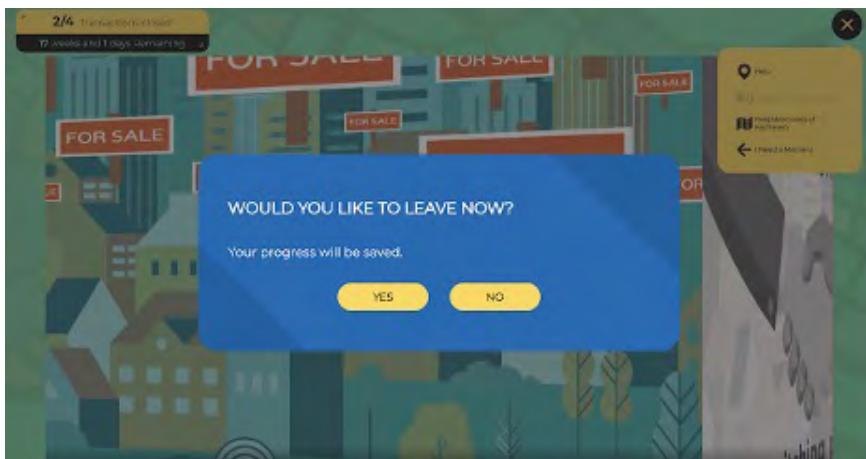
Real talk: That’s how I felt when I visited Fairhaven. Not the actual city in Massachusetts or the fictional town in Need for Speed. The Fairhaven I am referring to is the [National Association of Realtor’s new online fair housing simulation](#) (National Association of Realtors, n.d.-b).



When you visit Fairhaven, you are just a click away from launching the web-based virtual game-like world. Those of you already geared up with PS5 and acquainted with virtual worlds will likely see this as a piece of cake that is perhaps too simplistic for your sophisticated gaming abilities.

But the user-friendliness of NAR's Fairhaven hopefully gives all of the pros even more reason to be early adopters and finishers of this simulation.

You will welcome the guided prompts with tips and instructions throughout NAR's Fairhaven for the rest of us. In this first iteration, after logging in with your NRDS number, you will simply click "Continue" (or the forward arrow in some instances) to advance to the next screen throughout your entire time in NAR's Fairhaven.



In true gaming fashion, NAR's Fairhaven does not outline the different simulations of buying and selling you will encounter — that is part of the surprise and fun of gaming.

However, at the start, you are informed that the goal is to complete four transactions by the end of the simulation based on the various scenarios you will face. How that will happen is the mystery that your responses to the prompts will determine throughout the multiple scenarios.

For those of you like me (competitive!), I can imagine that your competitive senses are tingling, and you might be itching to play just to prove you can close all four deals. That's great! To encourage a "buzz" around Fairhaven, I wish there was a leaderboard that shows scores and times and even allows us to high-five each other (like I do when riding with Peloton).

I am halfway through the simulation (with two of my four transactions closed) and just had to step away. Again I recognize the privilege of

stepping away from NAR Fairhaven's simulations of discrimination; that's not always an option, as illustrated by the real stories in NAR's Fairhaven.

In the roughly 30 minutes that I have been in NAR's Fairhaven, I have had to make decisions surrounding timely topics, including:

- Gender identity
- Disability accessibility
- Language barriers
- LGBTQ+ partners
- Assigning clients with agents because they share a protected class.
(Scenario example: You're Asian, so you must want to work with another Asian, regardless of whether the agent is Japanese and you are Korean.)
- Covert discrimination and unfair treatment

All that in just a half-hour!

The music is somber throughout, and rightfully so, except when I closed a sale.

Bonus: NAR's Fairhaven includes additional resource links and videos throughout with heart-wrenching stories of discrimination from actual real estate clients and testers.

We might not have personally seen all of these forms of discrimination up close or even understand how insidious they can be, but NAR's Fairhaven gives us a bird's-eye view of real and recent stories with quick access to additional information. No excuses.

20 weeks and 8 days Remaining

CONCLUSION



Discrimination against LGBTQ+ clients and colleagues is unacceptable. Unfortunately, it still happens. Watch this video to hear William's story. Footage courtesy of the Fair Housing Justice Center.

Furthermore, thank you, NAR, for getting us out of the habit of solely focusing only on fair housing in earshot of clients. This simulation touches watercooler conversations among our colleagues, along with our responsibility to speak up and even report them (“see something, say something” is not just for the NYC MTA).

Additionally, in NAR’s Fairhaven, you get to step into the roles of clients facing discrimination on a few occasions, which hopefully helps further build more profound empathy. It sure did for me! I consider myself a champion of fair housing, and NAR’s Fairhaven is making me go harder.

2/4 Transactions closed
16 weeks and 8 days Remaining

CONCLUSION



Watch the video to hear from the testers who participated in the investigation. Footage courtesy of [Newsday](#).

Fairhaven is such a great start that I have to ask: NAR, May we please have a version of this in training module form so that brokers, managers and coaches can use these modules separately as part of office training and workshops? Modules would allow us to project to a classroom and spend time on topics that we need most on a given day.

Within days of this request, which I made via my published op-ed column in Inman News, I was contacted directly by NAR. Cue ominous, scary music *dun-dun-duuuun*. Here's what NAR had to say:

I was so pleased to read your Fairhaven column. This was a labor of passion from a cadre of NAR staff and members. To address some of your thoughts:

- We will be adding to Fairhaven as time goes on; a leaderboard can be included.
- We did create Fairhaven in such a way that it can be imported to a company's Learning Management System.

Marc Gould

SVP, Member Development, National Association of REALTORS®

Wow! "He liked it, he really liked it," I cheered while imitating the old 1980s Life Cereal commercial with Mikey. More importantly, NAR acknowledged a voice and took suggestions under advisement from someone of a historically marginalized racial group that is still underrepresented in 2021 in this association. Why do I point that out? This is a prime example of how refusing to remain silent — even on seemingly micro matters — as an **Anti-Racist Real Estate Pro** promotes both diversity and inclusion from varying communities in the long run. Discussions on how to fix issues of our industry — like the Fairhaven game — must include the voices of all communities impacted. Will we — as underrepresented communities — always get the response of inclusion and consideration that we want? I

actually believe that eventually we will if we stay persistent, even dogmatic, because “the squeaky wheel gets the oil”.

Coach’s challenge: Have you experienced NAR’s Fairhaven yet? The CDC has recommended we stay put as much as possible, but NAR’s Fairhaven is a locale that I hope you will visit before the year ends. Take others with you on the journey.

Additional resources to be an Anti-Racist Real Estate Pro

For this year's Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, and since we are still in a pandemic, I leaped at the opportunity to virtually participate in the [Equitable Dinners series](#): Lift Every Voice Racial Equity and Poverty. From soul-shaking poetry to a one-person play, this was a great way to bring our community together to reflect. Since they used Zoom, we were able to have Breakout rooms with a handful of participants to share our personal reflections.

In our breakout, one participant shared earnestly and somewhat curiously, "My friends and I get how redlining and restrictive covenants prevented people of color from homeownership before the civil rights movement of the 1960s. But it seems the systems aren't racist anymore; we have laws to stop that now. Instead, it just seems that it is based on a person's financial situation." I appreciated this white woman speaking up because I realize her sentiment likely reflects that of others.

'The systems aren't racist anymore; we have laws to stop that now'.

Yet, real talk, we all know that the presence of laws does not mean there are not lawbreakers. The presence of laws simply means that there is now the *possibility* of a penalty *IF* one is caught AND convicted. If you have ever seen Dateline, the TV show that often featured the horrifying, tragic, and cautionary stories of missing or murdered people, you get this reality.

In truth, spotting lawbreakers requires an enduring vigilance that frankly can be both tricky and exhausting. The same is true in real estate because fair housing laws do not stop cold-turkey the remnants of racism in housing which I categorize under verbal gymnastics and lingering aftershocks.

VERBAL GYMNASTICS: STEERING, FALSE INFORMATION, AND PREREQUISITE INCONSISTENCIES

The controversial 2019 Newsday Housing Exposé (see page 29) and the subsequent state legislature hearings in 2020 caught on camera what felt like to me could be a new Olympic event: Verbal Gymnastics. Prospects for housing (the testers) were given different, inconsistent, and in some cases, downright false information and prerequisites to complete.

More current than the Newsday report, an interracial Ohio couple in January 2021 filed a lawsuit alleging they were discouraged from purchasing in an exclusively white Michigan neighborhood by the white real estate agents (yes, that is plural) involved.

In all of these recent instances, at best, the real estate agents tested and/or sued revealed poorly managed paperwork and non-existent client systems. At worst, the real estate agents tested and/or sued revealed a thinly veiled attempt to illegally steer prospects. The argument for the former may sound like “my intent was not to violate fair housing; I simply do things differently for the different needs of my clients”. That’s still not legal in this context. For the latter, it could be that the intent was to outright violate fair housing. That’s definitely not legal in this context.

Real talk, the fair housing laws do not require intent as a state of mind (*mens rea*), but rather these Acts examine the actions (or omission of actions) and the resulting effects (*actus reus*). Thus, the somewhat child-like plea of “I did not mean to” does not free one of guilt when it comes to breaking fair housing laws.

For the people in the back, let me be clear:

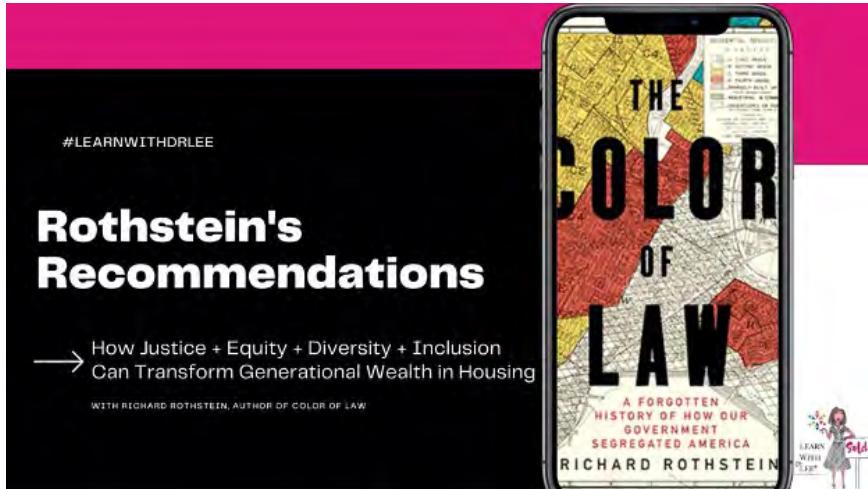
Our intentions may have been pure. And, we may even say, “I do not have a racist bone in my body just ask those that know me”, “I have friends/family of other races”, “I only see green” or other defenses to show our prejudice-free heart. Yet, if our actions (or omitted actions) violate fair housing laws, then we have broken the law *periodt*. Impact is greater than intentions. The solution, then, is not solely being a well-meaning real estate pro but actively an Anti-Racist Real Estate Pro.

WHAT OTHER PROACTIVE STEPS SHOULD WE TAKE AS INDIVIDUALS AS WELL AS MEMBERS OF REALTY FIRMS AND ASSOCIATIONS?

I am so glad you asked (*wink, wink*)! Be sure to watch and grab the gems (that I have dubbed *Rothstein's Recommendations*) that Richard Rothstein, the author of the seminal work The Color of Law⁴, shares in this information-packed interview, including:

- What realty firms and associations should do beyond giving an apology
- Why a voluntary reparations fund is needed (here's an example that your community can follow)
- The importance of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (J.E.D.I.) communities within our firms and associations but also taking J.E.D.I. direct action in the surrounding neighborhood
- The importance of real estate associations (and firms) being proactive and self-auditing fair housing compliance by partnering with local Fair Housing Centers
- How school test score data unintentionally preserves segregation and disparities in housing
- How you individually or collectively with your firm and association can participate in the New Movement to Redress Racial Segregation (click here to stay informed), to take action in your local community

4 Work Smarter: By the way, if your reading list has become an unending laundry list, check out the 17-minute, no fee film version of The Color of Law: <https://www.segregatedbydesign.com/>



Click the image above to watch Dr. Lee's conversation with Richard Rothstein on his real estate recommendations for 2021 and beyond on [Youtube](#) (Davenport, 2021c)

LINGERING AFTERSHOCKS FROM REDLINING AND RACIST COVENANT RESTRICTIONS

Earthquakes are often followed by aftershocks. Typically, we have to maintain vigilance during the aftershocks, whether or not we were injured or saw damages by the initial quakes because new and/or additional injury and damages can occur.

Surprisingly (but not surprisingly), even the quakes or lines man-made beginning in the 1930s to keep people of color (and, in some instances, immigrants) out of certain communities (a.k.a. redlining and racist covenant restrictions) did not just screech to a halt in 1968 with the passing of the Fair Housing Act. There have been ‘aftershocks’ that are still reverberating today.

This Texas community tried to address them but instead, created other problems.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THESE RESIDUAL EFFECTS OF REDLINING AND MORE IMPORTANTLY WHAT ARE SOME RESOURCES TO HELP COUNTERACT AND REPAIR THE DAMAGE?

Check out this conversation with Charles Lee (Senior Policy Advisor of the [Office of Environmental Justice at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](#) (US EPA, 2019)) and Dr. Robert K. Nelson (Director of the [Digital Scholarship Lab at the University of Richmond](#) (University of Richmond, Digital Scholarship Lab, 2020)) where they share a four-part strategy for the Anti-Racist Real Estate Pro:

- Reviewing the '[Mapping Inequality Project](#)' (University of Richmond, Digital Scholarship Lab, n.d.) to explore redlined communities
- Lobbying for The Fair Housing Act to be improved to account for present disparities
- Reviewing [Rachel Morello-Frosch's studies](#) (Morello, n.d.) on the current effects of segregation
- Creating [Google Alerts](#) (Google, n.d.) to stay current in your community

REAL (ESTATE) TALK

RESOURCES TO BE AN ANTI-RACIST REAL ESTATE PRO

LEARN WITH DR. LEE

Click the image above to watch Dr. Lee's talk on [Youtube](#) (Davenport, 2021b)

The marathon continues: the J.E.D.I. Defender challenge

As we left behind a turbulent 2020, agents had an opportunity to continue to show courage at an individual level with the 2021 J.E.D.I. Defender challenge. Although that has ended, here's what many enthusiastic agents did at the start of 2021 that you can duplicate at any point in time individually or with a team to challenge yourself to be defenders of justice, equity, diversity and inclusion.

In April of 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated. Within days of Dr. King's murder, the federal Fair Housing Act of 1968 was finally enacted after "more than twenty years of advocacy and opposition" including congressional deadlock (Reina et al., 2021).

It was not the first U.S. fair housing law (Medford, 2020) — we saw that in 1866 — but it was the most comprehensive one that did not require the nearly impossible burden of proof to include a demonstration of intentional discrimination. In other words, fair housing legislation sadly did not (and does not) occur by accident, osmosis or without determined intervention and even loss of life.

WHY THEN?

Then-President Johnson saw the passing of the Fair Housing Act of 1968 as a "fitting memorial" (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, n.d.) to Dr. King's life, which was dedicated to the realization of civil (which are ultimately human) rights.

BEYOND BEING SORRY

The following is largely adapted from "Is there courage in the coach?" by Venus Jones (Jones, 2020), who's an award-winning poet, actress and keynote speaker.

**Dear Realtor, I know life is not fair.
Yet, I expect you to care and be aware.**

**When I start crying and staring into space,
I want to know if it's safe to bring up race.**

**Sometimes stories of struggle can make us connect.
Sometimes I need to know if I can breathe and reflect.**

**How much about my history did you choose to learn?
Have you been willing to rebuild what's been burned?**

**People can be bridges if they have the right tools.
But too many believe being vulnerable is for fools.**

**Courage leads to advocacy and freedom is the cause.
Allyship is a life-long practice with very little pause.**

**Activism might look like art or protesting on marching day.
It might also look like self-care and permission to pray.**

**Dear Realtor, the more you share the better I feel.
Don't just tell me I matter and hand me my bill.**

In the year 2020, we heard from the National Association of REALTORS® a “we are sorry” for discrimination along with penance that includes higher code of ethics standards that formally disallow hate speech, harassment, slurs and epithets among members at any time. What a courageous moment!

As we leave behind a turbulent 2020, we have an unprecedented opportunity to move beyond just feeling guilty in matters of race and real estate. Sorrow and repentance are necessary and appropriate but simply having feelings of remorse are not the finish line in the journey of being an **Anti-Racist Real Estate Pro**. Now, more than ever, we have an opportunity to show courage at an individual level. Thus, annually as we commemorate both the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. federal holiday and April as Fair Housing month, I challenge you to yearly repeat the following J.E.D.I. Defender challenge. This is a great annual tradition to keep fair housing an integral part of our individual businesses, firms, associations, and communities. As history has proven, the journey of being an **Anti-Racist Real**

Estate Pro is not a quick sprint but rather necessitates the commitment and endurance of a lifelong marathon.⁵

J.E.D.I. DEFENDER CHALLENGE WEEK 1:

What trustworthy publication (podcast, video channel, social media acct., email newsletter, etc.) will I sign-up with this week that promotes the American Dream of FAIR homeownership?

J.E.D.I. DEFENDER CHALLENGE WEEK 2:

What authoritative class will I sign-up to take this week (for example, [NAR's Fairhaven](#) (National Association of Realtors, n.d.-b)) that promotes the American Dream of FAIR homeownership?

J.E.D.I. DEFENDER CHALLENGE WEEK 3:

What credible organization will I volunteer with this week to promote FAIR homeownership?

J.E.D.I. DEFENDER CHALLENGE WEEK 4:

What ethical conversations can I have this week to promote FAIR homeownership? Hint: This may be 1:1 or featured (please tag #JediDefender) on your website, social media, email, newsletter, video series, so forth.

May the force of fair housing be with you!

⁵ J.E.D.I. stands for justice, equity, diversity and inclusion, a newly popular acronym that seems to have been originally coined by Avarna but I first heard used by my friends at COMPASS Real Estate.

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“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” —Declaration of Independence



These noble ideas have culminated for many into the American dream of homeownership. However, we have seen repeatedly that even in 2021 (over 244 years since the ideologies of America were canonized), these ideals are not always actualized for all Americans, particularly among marginalized racial groups. As we leave behind a turbulent 2020, we have an unprecedented opportunity to move beyond just feeling guilty regarding matters of race and real estate. Sorrow and even repentance are necessary and appropriate but simply having feelings of remorse are not the finish line in the journey of being an Anti-Racist Real Estate Pro. Anti-racism for the real estate pro (a.k.a. those of us that champion fair housing), lies not in arriving at a set destination but rather moving along a continuum of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (J.E.D.I.).

This book discusses the following questions that are vital to the journey of How to Be an Anti-Racist Real Estate Pro:



How did we get here?
Where are we today?
What's next?



Now, more than ever, we have an opportunity to show courage and commitment as an Anti-Racist Real Estate Pro at an individual level and to be change-makers in our firms, associations, and communities, along with ensuring fair housing is an integral part of our individual businesses. Because, as history has proven, the journey of being an Anti-Racist Real Estate Pro is not a quick sprint but rather a lifelong marathon. May the force of fair housing be with you!



About Dr. Lee Davenport

Armed with degrees in business and legal studies, Dr. Lee Davenport is an international real estate educator (as well as a former RE/MAX managing broker and agent). She has been recognized by Inman News and numerous real estate organizations as one of the top 25 U.S. real estate coaches.

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