

Fair housing internship

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This paper will provide an analysis of an internship performed at the Central Alabama Fair Housing Center (CAFHC), Montgomery, Alabama. This paper will give an overview of the internship program and its requirements, the history of the Fair Housing Act, a sociological review of fair housing, and discuss the responsibilities and observations made during the internship.

To qualify for the Sociology Internship Program, a student had to be an undergraduate working toward a degree in Social Sciences. The program was designed to provide qualified undergraduate students with experiences in a government, non-profit, or public service institutions under the supervision of a faculty member.

The internship consisted of conducting tasks assigned by the agency supervisor, maintaining a journal describing activities performed and explanations of how they related to sociology, recording personal feelings about the experiences, a ten page paper related to the internship experience and working 150 hours at the Central Alabama Fair Housing Center. The objective of the internship was to have the student apply skills and knowledge learned during completion of social science coursework and, to work in a non-profit agency under the supervision of a faculty member.

The methods of evaluating the internship included meeting twice a month with the instructor/advisor and discussing journal entries, being evaluated by the agency supervisor for work performance, evaluation by the instructor and writing an internship research paper on History of the Fair Housing Act On April 4, 1968. This act unleashed a firestorm of civil unrest in urban communities across the nation (Fair Housing Report, 2008).

A week to the day after King's assassination, President Lyndon Johnson signed into law the federal Fair Housing Act (Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968). This law, co-sponsored by Senator Walter Mondale and Edward Brooke, had been languishing in Congress for two years and only passed because of the response to the assassination and subsequent events (National Fair Housing Alliance, 2008). In 1988, the law was amended by the Fair Housing Amendments Act, co-sponsored by Senator Edward Kennedy and Arlen Specter.

This law significantly strengthened the enforcement power of the Act, giving the Department of Housing and Urban Development and Department of Justice the authority to enforce and expand the reach of the law while still providing for private enforcement mechanism (NFHA, 2008). The Fair Housing Act is now one of the most powerful tools in our civil rights arsenal but it can only be as effective as the skilled application and intent of the user of this tool (NFHA, 2008).

Sociological Review of Fair Housing The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has defined the term "fair housing choice" as the ability of a persons of similar income levels to have the same available housing choice regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, familial status or disability (Analysis of Impediment to Fair Housing Choice, 2004).

The Central Alabama Fair Housing Center is a non-profit agency, working to ensure equal housing opportunities for all people regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status (having or expecting children), or disability. Discrimination occurs when housing providers treat people

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differently because of their race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status, or disability. The Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in rental, sales, mortgage lending, and home insurance markets. Illegal practices include guiding people to or away from a neighborhood or areas based on race (steering), refusing to insure or finance a home based on the racial make-up of a neighborhood, not allowing a guide dog or wheelchair ramp in an apartment building, demanding sexual favors in exchange for rental assistance, inflating the price of a home to discourage someone from making an offer, refusing to rent an apartment to a person with AIDS or HIV and selectively asking for a “green card” or other documentation based on an applicant’s accent or ethnic background (CAFHC, 2010).

Karl Marx, the nineteenth-century father of communism and one of the founders of the Conflict Theory viewed society as consisting of primarily two classes capitalists, or owners of the means of production, and proletariats, or workers, who were exploited by the capitalist (Harford, 2005). Marx’s division of classes is not the only division. Max Weber, an outspoken critic of Marx’s views, argued that property is not the sole basis of class. Instead, class is determined by the three p’s- property, prestige, and power.

Weber’s more general concept of class is accepted by many but their views of how to qualify fairness of prestige and power has been often different (Harford, 2005). Using Weber’s concept, when taking a look at the Fair Housing Act, we see that forty years after the Fair Housing Act, there are still more than 3.7 million instances of discrimination reported each year (U. S. Bureau of the Census). African-Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans and

American Indians report unfair treatment within the rental, sales and insurance market daily.

Marx and Weber categories deal only with economical stratification however; fair housing studies show that discrimination occurs regardless of economic status. For example a study performed by The National Community Reinvestment Coalition (NCRC) showed that low- and moderate-income minorities received a lower portion of prime loans than high-cost loans. Lenders seem to favor middle- and upper-income white household borrowers with prime loans. In comparison, African-American with middle- and upper-income households received a lower percent of all prime and high-cost loans (NCRC's 2007).

Staff Responsibility & Duties Working as an intern with the Fair Housing Center has been very informative and exciting. As an intern, I observed the various staff members and their jobs duties. I learned the importance of each position. The Executive Director of a Fair Housing Center (FHC) must oversee, motivate and support staff members, each of whom are very valuable team members. The Executive Director oversees all of a FHC's departments (including counseling, outreach, investigations and litigation) and is responsible for preparing and overseeing FHC's annual operating budget.

The Executive Director also ensures that The Fair Housing Center is fulfilling its contractual obligations to numerous governmental entities. Periodically, the Executive Director must attend city council or other meetings, and network with others in the non-profit community, including local non-profit organizations, and fair housing organizations throughout the country. The <https://assignbuster.com/fair-housing-internship/>

Director, along with the rest of the Fair Housing Center's management team, oversees the Fair Housing Center's annual summits and conferences. Center's staff also includes test coordinators.

This is normally a full time staff member and duties include the recruiting and training of testers, designing and analyzing tests, and maintaining test files and other records. To hold this type of position, most candidates should have experience in conducting tests, great speaking skills, and experience in research analysis as, training in the fundamentals of fair housing. The test coordinator must be an advocate for civil rights and have earned at least a Bachelor of Science degree. A Fair Housing Specialist (Enforcement Specialist) is normally a part-time staff member.

Duties include intake screening, demographic research, data collection and analysis, identification of public impediments to fair housing choice, and enforcement-related outreach. He/she can also assist in developing test strategies and performing analysis as well as assist in writing reports as requested. To hold a position as a Fair Housing Specialist (Enforcement Specialist), candidates should have had training in the fundamentals of fair housing, have knowledge of civil rights, know how to conduct research, understand area demographics, and have earned at least a Bachelor's Degree in a social science field.

The position of attorney is a full time position. Duties include intake, client representation in HUD, taking administrative actions, conducting public and legal education programs, serving as a liaison to private attorneys, conducting legal and other research, and maintaining intake and case files. To qualify for this position a candidate must have a J. D. degree, a demonstrated

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commitment to civil rights, and an ability to work with diverse communities. The position of administrative Assistant/Office Manager is normally a part-time position.

The duties include general office management, clerical tasks and serving as the office receptionist. Candidates for the position should have experience working for the public, very good social skills, an understanding of civil rights, ability to work with people from diverse backgrounds and experiences in non-profit office management. Summary and Conclusions The objective of the internship was for me to incorporate the knowledge learned from my social science classes into skills while interning.

During my interning with the fair housing center, my responsibilities and activities included: reviewing fair housing laws, reading over Central Alabama Fair Housing Center's grant proposals and work deliveries, discussing non-profit grant management/grant writing/daily operations of a non-profit organization with director, observing operations of organization, including sitting in on a job interview, learning about division of staff duties in the office, helping to implement grant activities/outreach and distribution files/information, deciding on a distribution plan for grant deliveries, helping to develop radio campaigns plans, learning about in-kind service donations, sitting in on fair housing education programs for housing management and developing a new survey for the city. Interning for a fair housing center provided a vehicle for travel that could and is helping society to achieve the balance and integrated living patterns envisioned by the original authors of The Civil Rights Act. While we have made some progress in reducing levels of residential segregation, most Americans still live in communities that are

largely divided by race and ethnicity, (National Fair Housing Alliance, 2008).

Personal Thoughts and Opinions My experience as an intern with the Central Alabama Fair Housing was very informative, exciting and a helpful experience to me as a future director of my own non-profit agency.

Although I will not provide services that will pertain to civil rights, having an opportunity to work within a fine tuned organization, learning the operations, and experiencing firsthand the everyday workings within a non-profit agency was the best experience that a future director could have. Experiencing outreach, research development, grant writing, organization application and Fair Housing training while interning, allow me to understand the importance of loving what you are called to do and showed me the difference one can make in society. I got a chance to learn that a fair housing center is one link that is connected to many links to form a chain called HUD, the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The fair housing centers are local centers that help to enforce justice that has been mandated by the civil right laws, expand comprehensive requirements of the civil rights law, while still providing a private enforcement mechanism for the area communities. The fair housing centers are state and local portals that are used to report, provide insight and attain answers for our nation's struggles to achieve the benefit of living in richly diverse communities. Having an opportunity to learn while being a part of the non-profit arena, gave me the fuel needed to continue striving for justice.

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