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OPINION

50 Years after the Fair Housing Act

We still have a long ways to go

BY JEFFREY W. HICKS

We have come a long way toward building black homeownership since the Fair Housing Act was signed into federal law 50 years ago. In commemorating that milestone, we recognize and emphasize that with fewer than half of black Americans owning their homes we still have a long way to go to reach economic parity through homeownership.

The National Association of Real Estate Brokers, an equal



opportunity and civil rights advocacy organization for black American real estate professionals, consumers, and communities, has advocated for black American homeownership since it was founded on the principle of "Democracy in Housing" in 1947.

We were at the forefront and in the trenches of this movement prior to April 11, 1968, when this act signaled a new level of commitment to self-determination and empowerment for black people. Our organization was there, active in ensuring that the law passed.

Today we continue working to ensure that fair and equitable

treatment for black Americans under the law remains intact as we work to increase homeownership in black communities, nationwide.

The importance of the Fair Housing Act cannot be over-emphasized as vital to the journey to full fair housing for all Americans.

Recognizing this history helps to fortify us for the next stage of this ongoing movement. The obstacles to achieving fair housing may have changed over the past 50 years, but NAREB remains vigilant and ready to challenge any institutional and systemic barriers to increasing the rates of affordable and sustainable homeownership for Black Americans.

We recognize the challenges. Today, black homeownership is at a very low 42 percent. At its peak in 2004, Black homeownership stood 49 percent. We're working to return to -- and then surpass -- that level.

Democracy in housing represents something far different today -- the systemic obstacles of increasingly economically-segregated communities.

We fully understand that de jure segregation and institutional racism remain pervasive problems throughout the United States. We will continue to use all available tools in 2018 and in the future to increase black homeownership as a pillar of the American Dream. We will keep advocating for sup-

portive policies and educate our community about the inter-generational wealth-building power of homeownership.

The National Association of Real Estate Brokers will host a series of events and activities throughout 2018 to educate and inspire the public about the never-ending struggle for equality and true democracy in housing.

Our continuing movement to increase black homeownership signals our unshakable conviction that this pillar of the American Dream is still achievable, desirable and affordable for African Americans.

Jeffrey W. Hicks is the 30th president of the National Association of Real Estate Brokers.

From Military Hero to Heroin Addiction

It's up to us to lend a hand

BY SAMYUELL MONGKHOUNSAVATH

On a daily commute in Portland, it is tough to not make any eye contact with someone experiencing homelessness and panhandling at a stop light or at least spot someone who is hauling a mountain of all their belongings on their back in a makeshift rucksack.

Now imagine that person experiencing homelessness being a family member who voluntarily served in our nation's military, protecting its values and culture from impeding foreign enemies. That family member who desired to destroy the enemy before they reached our homeland; and why we can safely lay our heads down at night free from the thought of harm.

It is sad to say, but several of the nomads that we see living in tent cities (that consistently get raided) on the sides of our highways are those who have protected and served our country.

Dave, a veteran experiencing homelessness living in Portland who served eight years in the Marines with a total of four combat tours, willingly shared his story of a battle with homelessness and overcoming substance-use over a lightly competitive game of ping-pong.

The story begins in Iraq

where Dave was on his final convoy coming back in from doing route clearance where suddenly his truck was struck with a rocket propelled grenade. Two weeks later, he woke up in a hospital in Germany with metal plates in his legs, a reconstructed face and the single memory of a loud bang. After re-learning how to move his body through the military's rehabilitation program, Dave became accustomed to taking high-frequency pain medication to ease the pain of his recovering body.

During this process, Dave foresaw that he was going to be medically discharged from the military after completing physical therapy. In the process, he prepared his finances ahead of time to ensure he could provide for his wife and two kids for at least six months to ensure that they were covered while searching for employment.

Fast forwarding, the day that

Dave was officially medically discharged, his doctor prescribed painkillers were no longer prescribed. Throughout the physical rehabilitation period, Dave's body and mind became accustomed to the chemically induced high, which led to substance addiction. This addiction continued after his transition into civilian life.

As a result, the mixture of the high cost of pain killers, an improper wean off period within the military's rehabilitation system and Dave's addiction to pain medication, Dave resorted to the use of heroin and alcohol. Heroin and alcohol reliance has consumed Dave's life to the point that he has no finances for housing and no contact with his two children and former spouse. The low cost and high availability of drugs on the streets makes it an easy substance of choice for many Veterans alike. It isn't fair that Dave

and our nation's heroes who have sacrificed their lives for the sake of our country's livelihood must go through an unfortunate transition in their lives like this.

A local, Portland, non-profit that is combating against the homelessness of our nation's heroes is Transition Projects. Their mission is to serve people's basic needs as they transition from homelessness to housing. A small department within the organization called Supportive Services for Veteran Families, works specifically with veterans like Dave by providing them with services such as rapid re-housing, homeless prevention and contact to outside resources such as substance use counseling, financial guidance and alternative benefits specific to the veteran population.

The team is comprised of veterans and members who have family and friends who have

served. They are empathetic to the needs of their clients and go the extra mile to get the service member help. The four counties that they serve are Multnomah, Clackamas, Washington and Clark.

If you live in one of these counties and know of a veteran who is need of help, please contact the Transition Project's Homeless intake hotline at 855-425-5544. The veteran will complete a pre-screening and will be assessed based on severity of need.

It is important that we as a tightly-knit community serve our local heroes like Dave who have voluntarily served us with their lives. It is up to us as Oregonians to send out an arm and lift our oppressed, so that they can stand on their own two feet again.

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