

**FAIR HOUSING**

**MAKES U.S.**

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# I Wanted To Make A Statement

## The Frank J. Williams Story

With over 50 years in the industry, Frank Williams has played an integral part in fighting racism and championing the fair housing movement.

Frank recalled his childhood in Flint, Michigan, stating, “I was taught, right along with all the white kids, that all people are created equal...and I believed that.” Racist sentiments still ran high in the slowly integrating community, and Frank was expelled from school for dating a white woman, who he later married.

The couple moved to Chicago in 1962. After his own frustrating experience with a REALTOR®, Frank secured his license in 1966 and joined a firm. In his first month, he made several sales, but as his practice grew, he observed the difficulties minorities faced – struggles securing fair financing, neighborhood segregation, and intimidation – all compounded by Chicago’s practice of redlining.

Although based in Chicago and Beverly, Frank has had a long view of the problem. There are historical inequities that have left minority populations at a disadvantage from the consequences of centuries of slavery to anti-immigrant movements. “We talk about Chicago as the center, but I grew up in Flint, Michigan, and it [housing discrimination] was happening there. It was happening in Chicago. It was happening in Mississippi. It was happening everywhere.”

The prevalence of housing discrimination motivated many to become involved in finding solutions. The National Association of Real Estate Brokers (NAREB) was founded in 1947, making it the oldest minority trade association in America, and was formed out of a need to promote fair housing and equal opportunities for African-American real estate professionals, consumers and communities. Frank Later became the President of the Chicago Chapter of NAREB (Dearborn REB) in 1974.

In 1968, the Fair Housing Act was passed, and by 1971, Frank had opened his own firm. However, the Fair Housing Act was not an immediate solution to housing discrimination. Frank explained how some areas would perform a “bait-and-switch” version of fair housing by creating quotas for loan applications, engaging in steering, or faulty versions of integration management plans.

Frank also faced protests throughout the 1960s and 1970s from within his community. Demonstrators vandalized his business, angry at his efforts to combat housing discrimination. “I remember how angry I was looking around my office.” In 1975, his home was firebombed.

Frank, however, did not stop his efforts in his community or in changing professional associations like NAR, where he stated in some meetings, “there wasn’t anyone that looked like me.” He believed that not only did NAR need to stand behind the Fair Housing Act, but the real estate industry needed to create opportunity and space for minorities to enter the business, to succeed, and to become leaders. Frank eventually became president of the Chicago Association of REALTORS®, and was voted REALTOR® of the Year in 1992. His record in advocacy also includes being the president of the South Side NAACP chapter from 1979 through 1985.

In the fifty years since the Fair Housing Act first passed, Frank acknowledges that the country has made progress. But, there is still work to be done. He states, “As a Black American, a REALTOR®, and a parent, I am determined to help erase discrimination from our housing landscape.”

For more information, resources and to get involved, visit [www.FairHousing.realtor](http://www.FairHousing.realtor)



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