



Dear Friend:

Cleveland Benson earns \$10,000 a year at an aluminum plant in Edison, New Jersey. He wants to live with his wife and children in a suburban apartment near his work, but Edison and nearby towns "zone out" housing he can afford.

Lydia Cruz lives with her children in an overcrowded apartment in a run-down public housing project. Its recreational facilities are inadequate and poorly maintained. She earns \$6,500 a year as a social worker for Middlesex County. For many months, Mrs. Cruz searched without success for housing. She would like to live in a racially and economically integrated area, free of crime and drug abuse, and with schools which could give her children the opportunity for a good education.

There are hundreds of thousands of Americans like Mr. Benson and Mrs. Cruz. Responsible. Industrious. Workers who want to end the hardship of long, expensive travel to their jobs; parents who want good schools and improved surroundings for their children.

Mr. Benson and Mrs. Cruz have joined five other black, Spanish surnamed, and white citizens in a lawsuit to open up housing for lower-income families in 23 New Jersey suburbs. The suit, prepared by NCDH lawyers, contends that the zoning policies of these Middlesex County towns deny people of modest means both housing and jobs throughout a major labor market area.

Freedom to move to and live near good jobs is an old American tradition. NCDH is working to clear the way for today's minorities to follow that tradition. The enclosed brochure describes what NCDH is doing to end discrimination in housing. As you read it, please think of the hopes of parents like Mr. Benson and Mrs. Cruz for their children.

NCDH needs your support in its effort to build an open society where every child can have a decent home, a good education, and a real chance in life. Please contribute as generously as you can.

Sincerely,

Myrna Loy

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# Fire Guts Black Family's Home

*Arson suspected in wake of cross-burning  
at house in an all-white development*

**By Christopher M. Cook and Linda Field**

Deer Park—Number 14 Hendel Circle sits in an all-white development. Friday, a black family took title to it; Monday, a cross was burned on its front lawn, and shortly after 4 AM yesterday the house was destroyed by a fire that police term arson. Suffolk County arson squad detectives said they believe, in light of the cross burning, that the fire was racially motivated, as do the new owners, Thomas and Vernerva Mosley, who had planned to finish moving into the house this weekend. The couple has two daughters, Tavanda, 8, and Frances, 7. Detectives said the fire started in the living room in the back of the house. They said that there is evidence that the floor was doused with a flammable liquid.

Some of the neighbors in the 10-year-old development of immaculately-kept houses said that they, too, believe the origins of the fire are racial. "There was a lot of animosity around here towards a black family moving in there," said one woman. She would not allow her name to be used, saying, "I'm frightened. You don't know what the repercussions could be." Another resident, Ken Sandburg, who lives across from the burned out house said, "Definitely, people were not happy about them moving in."

Other neighbors refused to discuss the fire. One woman said, "I'm sorry, I don't know anything about it," then shut the door. "A lot of people are very uptight about it," said another woman. Community leaders in the area expressed shock over the incident. Babylon Councilwoman Sandra Bachety, a Democrat who lives in Deer Park, said she was dismayed. "I thought we had gotten much further than that," Bachety said. Hannibal Herring, president of the United Deer Park Civic Association, said "Well, there is no end to the bad news. We deplore the senseless violence."

Marie Middleton, president of the Deer Park chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, said, "It's a sad occasion that people have to resort to such cowardly

negative actions. It seems to destroy all the positive qualities that we should acquire as human beings."

Mosley, a New York City Transit Authority torman, who had saved for seven years to buy the house, paced back and forth yesterday on the sidewalk outside the charred remains. "We will build it over," he said calmly. "We have a lot invested here. We looked for over a year and a half for it . . . We never expected this kind of problem. We checked around and found there were a lot of black families around here. Wheatley Heights is right in back," he said, referring to a predominantly black area to the west. "We figured we'd have no problems." The Deer Park school district's enrollment is less than 10 per cent black.

Yesterday's incident was the third since the fall of 1978 in Suffolk in which homes of black persons were damaged by fire. Police said were suspicious or deliberately set. In this month, a Lindenhurst man was damaged by fire. In his home house was gutted in.

At least a dozen other homes in the area were damaged by fires, but scene graffiti reported in Nassau cases, police motive involved in Islip, C. wood, A ho, Mas, dan

remained of what once was teenagers stopped by to neighborhood had been away from 14 Hendel residents. They said there, a white couple torn apart by a divorce. They said the what Sandburg called.

Sandburg and other house had become a gathering riding motorcycles and was vandalized by some seem to care," said Sandburg. "I had a problem over there. I'm running up and down Sandburg said that his wife was buying the house. He said he gre



# Arsonist burns out black family



Post photo by Mary McLoughlin  
Robert Davis in the rented house he was going to leave  
for a new home in Lindenhurst.

By ROBERT WEDDLE

A broken TV saved a father and son from being victims of an arson blaze that swept through their dream home.

Robert Davis, 38, says he planned Friday to sleep in his new house with his son, Robert Jr., 9, the night before moving in, but changed his mind when the television set wouldn't work.

When he arrived at the house at 351 S. 8th Street, Lindenhurst the next morning, he found it demolished by fire.

Suffolk police say it was arson and think someone was trying to prevent the Davis family, which is Black, from moving into the white, middle-class neighborhood.

#### MESSAGE

The broken television was a message that it meant for me to go home," said Davis. "I was not angry.

"I lost only the worldly things," he said, "but we lost our lives. That's the worst thing. And the church of the First Baptist of Babylon told us how much they care about us. That's what counts."

His wife, Jeannette, agreed.

"I am not bitter," she said. "That would only hurt me. I just can't understand why anyone would do such

a thing. You hear about these things, but you never think it will happen to you."

The Davis' came here 10 years ago from their native Trinidad. They also have two daughters, Rachel, 8 and Catherine, 6.

Davis bought the house as a Christmas gift for the family and as an escape from the high rent he was paying on a house a mile away.

It never occurred to him he might be the target of a racist attack. Even after a small fire was started and burned itself out four days earlier, he said he didn't think about race.

#### CHILDISH

"When I buy a house I don't go door to door asking people what color they are," he said.

"We thought the first fire was a childish prank," said Mrs. Davis. "There's only one other black family on the street where we live now and no one ever made anything of it."

Davis believes his insurance will cover the losses and he will find another house on Long Island — but not in Lindenhurst.

"I don't want my kids to go through what I am going through," Davis said. "This is 1979 and not the 1950s. Martin Luther King opened our eyes and showed us people should live together in peace."



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hereby declares  
the goal of  
a decent home  
and a suitable  
living environment  
for every  
American  
family." U.S. Housing Act, 1949



was twenty-five years ago that the U.S. Congress proclaimed the goal of a decent home for every American family.

Yet, today there are still some six million families living in dilapidated and substandard homes. Some are in rural areas but the vast majority live in decaying and decrepit urban neighborhoods.

For all of them, the house they live in is more of a trap built by a hostile society than a center for a decent home life.

What has gone wrong? Why, 25 years after a national commitment to good housing for all, are we still so far short of the goal? The answers may be found principally in two harsh realities:

Government policies which assign the lowest priority to the housing needs of low and moderate income families and,

Discrimination based on race and color against prospective residents.

## What's happening today?

In the cities . . . construction of subsidized housing, the only choice for the working poor in the major cities, has been virtually eliminated.

With the dwindling of government assistance, neighborhoods which could be rehabilitated are entering into a downward spiral of decay and abandonment.

New job opportunities have stagnated as employers have moved out toward the suburbs.

Mass transportation, education and other vital municipal services are being slowly crushed between the pressures of increasing demand and decreasing tax revenues.

In the suburbs . . . patterns of discrimination foster one-color, one-economic-level living on a wide scale.

Economically qualified blacks and others are shunted to the outskirts. Restrictive zoning prevents higher density, lower cost housing and perpetuates the drift toward a polarized society.

Access to jobs is severely limited by the absence of public transportation.

## What can be done?

Only ever vigilant, effective citizen concern can be counted on to back up anti-discrimination laws already on the books. Coordinating the expression of concern for civil rights in housing has been a special function of the National Committee Against Discrimination in

Housing (NCDH) since it was founded in 1950. NCDH helped create the national climate of public opinion that made fair housing legislation possible. NCDH works to break down the many racial and economic barriers to fair housing through an aggressive program of public education, community leadership, and court action.

NCDH provides information and advice for many groups concerned with complex and changing federal laws and programs. Mobilizing thousands of citizens of goodwill, these groups serve in many ways; they test the equality of treatment of black and white applicants by real estate brokers and rental offices; they gather evidence of racial discrimination by lending institutions; they testify at hearings on behalf of state and municipal fair housing measures; they combat misuses of local zoning to exclude housing for low-income families; they seek to create a local awareness of fair housing laws, and to stabilize interracial neighborhoods by counteracting block busting techniques through person-to-person contact.

## NCDH in action

**LEGAL SERVICES** NCDH takes legal action to help strike down racial and ethnic barriers, and to establish landmark decisions of national significance.

- NCDH challenged the right of the Nixon Administration to impound housing funds duly appropriated by the Congress. NCDH was sustained in federal court, but the Administration appealed the ruling, and an appellate decision is pending.
- A minority builder was blocked from constructing federally subsidized housing in Parma, Ohio, a suburb of Cleveland, by a local referendum that changed the zoning rules. NCDH has challenged this action in court.
- NCDH joined other groups to challenge an ordinance in Upper Arlington, Ohio, which makes it unlawful to test compliance with fair housing law by having whites make inquiry immediately after black homeseekers are turned down.

**MONITORING GOVERNMENT** NCDH monitors the activities of government agencies.

- Reports that some offices of HUD were lax in enforcing civil rights regulations caused NCDH to join in a national monitoring survey of HUD performance.
- NCDH evaluates proposed regulations of federal agencies affecting equal opportunity in housing. In the past year NCDH provided criticism of rules for equal treatment of minority home-buyers by lending institutions, and of regulations affecting minority access to leased public housing.

- NCDH prepared a restatement of basic principles on the Role of the Federal Government in Housing in response to an invitation from the Secretary of HUD.
- NCDH contributed to an understanding of pending federal housing legislation with a comparative analysis of the three major bills under consideration, emphasizing their potential impacts upon equal opportunity in housing.

**FIELD SERVICES** NCDH is now in the midst of a regional housing training program aimed at providing community leaders in fair housing, civil rights, urban planning, real estate, and mortgage lending with the guidance, information, and tools they need. Recent workshops in Atlanta, Chicago and San Francisco have sparked follow-up action in those regions. Subsequent workshops are being held in the Northeast and the West. These seminars emphasize:

- Promoting vigorous enforcement of state and federal legislation;
- Advancing ethical real estate practices through education and publicity, and compliance with fair housing law;
- Fostering affirmative merchandising and financing of homes to maintain racial diversity;
- Encouragement of employers to locate where fair housing opportunities exist and to support fair housing.

**PUBLIC EDUCATION** NCDH's systematic program of public information has helped raise the consciousness of the American public as to the lawful basis of freedom of choice in housing, and to the social and economic necessity for such freedom. TRENDS IN HOUSING, a bi-monthly national reporting service on civil rights in housing is distributed to 15,000. FLASH, an action newsletter, conveys important events to civil rights/housing leaders to permit timely response.

**RESEARCH** NCDH research provides information through publication and upon mail or phone request to almost 1,000 fair housing groups, religious groups, civil rights and public interest organizations, home builders, government officials, environmentalists, and the business community.

