You Can Move in But You Can't Stay: To Protect Occupancy Rights After Halprin, the Fair Housing Act Needs to Be Amended to Prohibit Post-Acquisition Discrimination, 42 J. Marshall L. Rev. 751 (2009)

Scott N. Gilbert
YOU CAN MOVE IN BUT YOU CAN'T STAY:
TO PROTECT OCCUPANCY RIGHTS AFTER
HALPRIN, THE FAIR HOUSING ACT NEEDS TO BE AMENDED TO PROHIBIT POST-
ACQUISITION DISCRIMINATION

SCOTT N. GILBERT*

I. THE FAIR HOUSING ACT NEEDS RENOVATING

The Blochs are Jewish, and their religious beliefs require them to display a religious symbol called a mezuzah on the outer doorframe of their residence,1 which they did for over thirty years without conflict.2 When the Blochs' condominium board reinterpreted an existing rule to prohibit display of the mezuzah, their longstanding practice now clashed with the association's new interpretation of the rule.3 They were denied an accommodation based on their faith,4 and building staff repeatedly removed the Blochs' displays.5 Prohibiting the mezuzah meant the Blochs could only remain in the building by living in violation of Jewish law.6

* J.D., The John Marshall Law School 2009. The author wishes to thank Professors F. Willis Caruso and Robert G. Schwemm for their guidance with this Comment and their tireless advocacy for fair housing. The author also wished to thank Elizabeth Barton for her thoughtful editing. The author dedicates this Comment to his wife, Donna Harakal, and his mother, Susan Rosseland, for their support and encouragement, and to the attorneys who defend human rights over property rights.


2. The Shoreline Towers Condominium Association Board amended the association rules on September 10, 2001, to prohibit boots, mats, and any other objects from being placed outside unit entrances. Id. Between its passage in 2001 and May 2004, the rule was not interpreted to apply to the Bloch's mezuzah. Plaintiff's Second Amended Complaint at 3, ¶ 16, Bloch v. Frischoltz, No. 05 C 5379, (N.D. Ill. Aug. 7, 2006) (unpublished Plaintiff's Second Amended Complaint on file with the JMLS Fair Housing Clinic and the author).

3. Plaintiff's Second Amended Complaint, supra note 2, at 3, ¶ 16.

4. The Board denied the Blochs' request for an exception to the rule in September 2004. Bloch, No. 05 C 5379, at 2.

5. Id.

6. Remaining in the building under the board's interpretation of the rule means that the Blochs are denied the full use and enjoyment of their dwelling.
Armed with the knowledge that federal civil rights laws prohibit housing discrimination on the basis of religion and race,\(^7\) the Blochs reasonably believed that their rights had been violated. The Blochs sought the assistance of The John Marshall Law School Fair Housing Legal Clinic ("JMLS Clinic") and filed suit in federal district court.\(^8\) To their surprise, the Blochs' federal claims did not survive the defendant's motion for summary judgment.\(^9\)

The district court in **Bloch v. Frischoltz**\(^10\) relied on a recent Seventh Circuit case, **Halprin v. Prairie Single Family Homes of Dearborn Park Ass'n**,\(^11\) which held the FHA inapplicable to "post-acquisition housing discrimination" or discrimination that occurs after a person takes possession of property.\(^12\) Accepting that the Halprins had suffered housing discrimination because of their religion, the **Halprin** court nevertheless denied them a remedy because the conduct occurred after the sale.\(^13\) This interpretation and application of the FHA in **Halprin** is currently the law in the Seventh and Fifth circuits,\(^14\) and the Blochs are among the first to be directly harmed by its erroneous holding. Currently pursuing an appeal in the Seventh Circuit, the Blochs seek to have summary judgment reversed, so they can go to trial.\(^15\)

---

because they are forced to live in violation of Jewish law. Plaintiff's Second Amended Complaint, *supra* note 2, at 3, ¶ 10-11, and 5, ¶ 25.


10. *Id.* at 2.

11. 388 F.3d 327 (7th Cir. 2004).

12. *Id.* at 328-30. In granting the defendant's motion for summary judgment against the Blochs, Judge Guzman approvingly cited **Halprin** for the proposition that the FHA "does not reach post-acquisition discrimination in the enjoyment of property." **Bloch**, No. 05 C 5379, at 2.


14. The Fifth Circuit has adopted the Seventh Circuit's reasoning in **Halprin**. See Cox v. City of Dallas, 430 F.3d 734, 742-43, 745 (5th Cir. 2005) (holding that neither § 3604(a) nor § 3604(b) gave current owners a cause of action for discriminatory delivery of services).

15. Oral argument before a panel of the Seventh Circuit took place on February 20, 2008, and the Blochs' lead attorney at the Clinic argued for reversing summary judgment and remanding for trial by distinguishing **Bloch** from **Halprin**. Interview with James P. Whiteside, Clinical Attorney, The John Marshall Law School Fair Housing Legal Clinic, in Chi., Ill. (Jan. 14, 2008). One point of distinction between the two cases is that **Bloch** involves an association rule, while **Halprin** involved the conduct of individual board members. *Id.* Discrimination by associations against housing occupants should be prohibited under the FHA because associations exercise ongoing control over occupancy rights. *Id.* The three judge panel issued its opinion on July 10, 2008, ruling against the Blochs two to one. **Bloch** v. Frischholz, 533 F.3d 562, 565 (7th Cir. 2008). Judge Wood dissented, arguing that the conduct in question violated the FHA, and that there were disputed issues of material
The Fair Housing Act ("FHA") celebrated its fortieth anniversary in 2008. With the last significant amendment in 1988, it is time to amend the Act again. While overt housing discrimination may have decreased since 1968, fair and nondiscriminatory housing for all is still a distant goal, rather than a proud achievement. Another goal of the FHA was fact making summary judgment inappropriate. Id. at 566. In an unusual move, however, the Seventh Circuit granted a rehearing en banc on October 30, 2008. Id. at 562. The en banc hearing took place on May 13, 2009, but as of September 7, 2009, no opinion has been released, so the Blochs' hope of getting their day in court remains alive.


18. Since the FHA was passed in 1968, HUD has carried out three major studies of housing discrimination in the United States: in 1979, 1991, and 2000. SCHWEMM, supra note 17, at 2-10 to -11. The 1979 study of forty metropolitan areas determined that a black who went to four real estate agents would face discrimination seventy-two percent of the time when renting and forty-eight percent of the time when buying. Id. at 2-11 (citing RONALD E. WIENK ET AL., MEASURING RACIAL DISCRIMINATION IN AMERICAN HOUSING MARKETS: THE HOUSING MARKET PRACTICES SURVEY ES-2 (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development 1979)). From the results of this study, HUD estimated that "2,000,000 instances of housing discrimination were occurring annually in the 1980's." Id. HUD's second national study was published in 1991 and showed no significant change from the earlier study. MARGERY A. TURNER ET AL., HOUSING DISCRIMINATION STUDY: SYNTHESIS, at vii (HUD 1991). The 1991 study ran 3,800 paired tests in twenty-five markets to record housing discrimination faced by black and Hispanic testers. Id. at vi-vii. A "paired test" is where one white and one black or Hispanic tester go to the same housing with identical credentials except race. Id. Estimating from the test results, HUD found the rates of discrimination for buyers to be—fifty-nine percent for blacks and fifty-six percent for Hispanics; and for renters to be: fifty-three percent for black and forty-six percent for Hispanics. Id. HUD's third national study was conducted in 2000 and the conclusion is quite disappointing after thirty plus years of federal fair housing law: despite declines since 1989, discrimination still persists nationally in the sale and rental markets of large metropolitan areas. MARGERY A. TURNER ET AL., DISCRIMINATION IN METROPOLITAN HOUSING MARKETS: NATIONAL RESULTS FROM PHASE I OF THE HOUSING DISCRIMINATION STUDY 2000, at iii (HUD 2002), http://www.huduser.org/publications/hsgfin/phase1.html.

19. The 2000 HUD study estimated that in paired rental tests whites were consistently favored over blacks 21.6 percent of the time, and that non-
integration—here, progress has been almost glacial. The forty-one-year-old warning of the 1968 Kerner Commission about two different Americas, one for whites and one for blacks, is as relevant today as it was then.

Among a litany of issues that could be addressed by amending the FHA, this Comment is concerned with the fact that the FHA does not expressly prohibit "post-acquisition housing discrimination." Despite the lack of explicit language, fair housing commentators understandably thought that Hispanic whites were consistently favored 25.7% of the time. TURNER, supra note 18, at iii-iv. As for home sales, whites were consistently favored over blacks in seventeen percent of tests, while non-Hispanic whites were consistently favored in 19.7% of tests. Id.

20. Senator Mondale, the principal sponsor of the FHA, was opposed to the fact that the country was separating into "white ghettos" and "black ghettos." 114 CONG. REC. 2, 2276 (1968). The purpose of federal fair housing legislation would be to replace this pattern with "truly integrated and balanced living patterns." Id. at 3422.

21. Using the 2000 Census data, the extent of racially segregated housing in the United States has been calculated at sixty-four for blacks and whites, where a score of 100 equals total isolation of the races and 0 means total integration. JOHN ICELAND & DANIEL H. WEINBERG, RACIAL AND ETHNIC RESIDENTIAL SEGREGATION IN THE UNITED STATES: 1980-2000 60 (U.S. Census Bureau 2002), http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/housing/housingpatterns/pdf/censr-3.pdf. The 2000 score was down four points from the 1990 score of sixty-eight, which in turn was down five points from the 1980 Census score of seventy-three. Id. Although the score change reflects a decrease in segregation over the twenty-year period, one commentator states that there continues to be high levels of racial segregation and unlawful discrimination, and that "[o]nly modest changes in these deep-seated patterns have occurred since enactment of the 1968 Fair Housing Act." SCHWEMM, supra note 17, at 2-1.

22. NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMISSION ON CIVIL DISORDERS, REPORT OF THE NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMISSION ON CIVIL DISORDERS 1 (1968) (hereinafter KERNER COMMISSION REPORT).

23. In the wake of racial riots in urban American cities in the summer of 1967, President Johnson formed a commission to answer three questions: what happened, why it happened, and how can it be prevented from happening again. Id. The report's basic conclusion was that "[o]ur nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal." Id.

24. Halprin, 388 F.3d at 330. Commentators and other jurisdictions have adopted and expounded on this phrase: "harassment that is alleged to have occurred after a sale or rental transaction has been completed is referred to as 'post-acquisition harassment,' tracking language employed by the Seventh Circuit." Aric Short, Post-Acquisition Harassment and the Scope of the Fair Housing Act, 58 ALA. L. REV. 203, 232 n.23 (2006). On remand, the district court adopted Judge Posner's phrase. Halprin v. Prairie Single Family Homes of Dearborn Park Ass'n, No. 01 C 4673, 2006 WL 2506223, at *1 (N.D. Ill. Jun. 28, 2006).

25. "Until recently, it was generally assumed that § 3604(b) not only protects homeseekers in their efforts to secure housing on a nondiscriminatory basis but also guarantees their right to equal treatment once they have
Occupancy Rights after Halprin
discrimination occurring after a person took possession of their dwelling was covered by the FHA, as nearly forty years of broad construction given to the FHA in Federal courts, and past cases successfully litigated amply supported that view.

In Halprin, Judge Posner broke with past holdings and decided that the FHA does not prohibit post-acquisition housing discrimination, at least where it did not rise to the level of actual or constructive eviction. Halprin will foreclose the use of a federal court to remedy conduct that certainly appears to be an FHA violation, as the Blochs can attest. As a result of Halprin,
aggrieved persons seeking shelter under the FHA will be denied a remedy for discrimination that used to be, and still should be, actionable. While national data on the prevalence of post-acquisition discrimination is unavailable, this author reviewed both the open cases and the new intakes at the JMLS Clinic in 2007 and found the problem to be quite common.

This Comment utilizes Halprin to argue that the FHA needs to be amended to explicitly prohibit post-acquisition housing discrimination. Part II briefly covers the history of housing discrimination in the United States, followed by a review of the legislative history of the FHA. Part III analyzes the ambiguous language of the FHA with regard to post-acquisition discrimination and then examines the Halprin decision. Part IV concludes that the FHA as written should cover post-acquisition discrimination but then proposes that in order to adequately protect the interest in nondiscriminatory occupancy, the FHA should be amended to make the prohibition express.

II. BY LOOKING BACK A PROPOSAL FOR CHANGE WILL EMERGE

A. A Brief History of Housing Discrimination in the United States

It is beyond the scope of this Comment to comprehensively trace the evolution of housing discrimination in the United States or adequately explain the causes of contemporary housing segregation. An abbreviated overview is necessary, however, to...
put the FHA in historical context.

1. Before 1968

There is some historical evidence that blacks and whites lived in mixed neighborhoods between the Civil War and the start of the twentieth century. As many blacks moved north in the early 1900s, there was a concurrent black migration from rural to urban areas. The response was nearly a half century of official and institutionalized racial discrimination, leading to hypersegregated housing patterns by 1940.

Government actions at times aided and abetted housing discrimination, including the fact that zoning laws mandating racial segregation were legal until 1917. In 1926, the Supreme Court held that racially restrictive covenants in property deeds were constitutional, a ruling that was not reversed until 1948. During the 1930s, the Federal Housing Authority also officially practiced housing discrimination by insuring mortgages only to whites, for example. The tide began to turn when President

---


36. Only 70,000 blacks left the South during the 1870s, for example, while industrialization and labor shortages drove that number to 197,000 between 1900 and 1910. Id. at 27-28. World War I and the need for even more labor turned the "stream into a flood," such that 525,000 blacks migrated north between 1910 and 1920, and the number grew to 877,000 for the 1920s. Id. at 29.

37. In 1870, eighty percent of blacks lived in the rural south; while by 1970, eighty percent lived in urban areas. Id. at 18.

38. See infra notes 40-43 and accompanying text (summarizing the history of government complicity in promoting housing segregation before 1950).

39. See MASSEY & DENTON, supra note 35, at 21 (documenting the explosive rise in segregated housing between 1860 and 1940).

40. See Buchanan v. Warley, 245 U.S. 60, 70, 82 (1917) (invalidating a municipal ordinance that mandated segregated residential blocks as a violation of the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, meaning that such laws were constitutional prior to 1917).

41. See Corrigan v. Buckley, 271 U.S. 323, 330-31 (1926) (holding that racially restrictive covenants in real estate transactions did not violate the Fourteenth Amendment because there was no state action).

42. See Shelley v. Kraemer, 334 U.S. 1, 19-20 (1948) (deciding that judicial enforcement of racially restrictive covenants constituted the 'state action' necessary to implicate the Fourteenth Amendment, and that the covenants violated the Equal Protection Clause). Sadly, Shelley did not outlaw racially restrictive covenants outright, and their use did not end until the FHA was passed in 1968. SCHWEMM, supra note 17, at 3-10 to -11.

43. The Federal Housing Authority guaranteed mortgages in response to the Great Depression, but the policies authorized racial discrimination by
Kennedy issued an Executive Order in 1962, ordering the federal government to stop discriminating in housing, although at that time its reach was limited.44

Private action also contributed to segregated living patterns, as many Northern whites resented the influx of blacks.45 Primarily fearing loss of jobs,46 they reacted with violence47 and by "white flight."48 As a result, the black "ghetto" was born.49 The real estate agent profession is complicit in this history of discrimination as well, as they formally utilized a list that ranked races and nationalities based on their "beneficial effect on land values."50


44. President Kennedy signed Executive Order 11063 on November 20, 1962, that banned all racial discrimination in federal housing, which included federal property and private property bought with federal loans or covered by federal mortgage insurance. Exec. Order No. 11063, 27 Fed. Reg. 11527 (Nov. 20, 1962). The Order did not reach conventionally financed housing, and it did not provide for judicial enforcement. SCHWEMM, supra note 17, at 3-7.

45. In response to black migration, Northern white resentment increased in the 1920s, as many whites responded negatively to the massive immigration of Southern blacks. MASSEY & DENTON, supra note 35, at 29.

46. Southern black migrants competed with Northern whites for jobs and were often employed as strikebreakers, which only compounded the existing racism and resentment Northern whites held towards the new arrivals. Id. at 28-29.

47. Race riots, where blacks were attacked specifically because of the color of their skin, erupted in large northern cities in response to the northern migration of blacks early in the twentieth century. Id. at 30. "In Chicago alone, between 1917 and 1921, fifty-eight black homes were bombed, averaging one every twenty-one days." Short, supra note 24, at 252-53.

48. Flight to the suburbs after World War II was more attractive to whites than "defense of threatened neighborhoods" in racially changing areas. MASSEY & DENTON, supra note 35, at 45.

49. The Kerner Commission defined a "ghetto" as a part of a city affected by poverty and social disorganization, where racial minorities live "under conditions of involuntary segregation." KERNER COMMISSION REPORT, supra note 22, at 12. The black ghetto was fundamentally different than ethnic European ghettos of the early Twentieth Century, because unlike blacks, which remained in segregated housing, those groups were quickly assimilated into white residential housing patterns. MASSEY & DENTON, supra note 35, at 10; see also id. at 17-59 (exploring the creation of the black ghetto in America).

50. Homer Hoyt's infamous 1933 list was derived from real estate brokers on the West Side of Chicago. F. WILLIS CARUSO, CASES AND MATERIALS ON FAIR HOUSING AND FAIR LENDING LAWS 4 (5th ed. 2004). The rankings were: (1) English, Germans, Scotch, Irish, and Scandinavian; (2) Northern Italians; (3) Bohemians or Czechoslovakian; (4) Poles; (5) Lithuanians; (6) Greeks; (7) Russian Jews of the lower class; (8) South Italians; (9) Negroes [sic]; (10) Mexicans. Id. The National Association of Real Estate Brokers adopted a discriminatory code of ethics in 1924, ordering agents not to bring races or
2. 1968 and Beyond

The year 1968 was a pivotal fair housing year for two reasons: the Supreme Court decided a seminal housing rights case and Congress enacted the FHA. Relying on the Thirteenth Amendment, the Court in *Jones v. Alfred Mayer Co.* held that §§ 1981 and 1982 of the Civil Rights Act of 1866 reached private conduct. As a result, a private individual can be liable for violating another individual's constitutional rights, without requiring state action. *Jones* was argued before the FHA was passed but decided afterward, and the Court had to reconcile the fact that there were now two federal civil rights statutes that dealt with housing rights. *Jones* resolved the potential conflict by holding that both operate independently.

On March 1, 1968, the Kerner Commission released its report on the causes and solutions to the violent race riots that had swept the country's cities the previous summer. The report stated, in no uncertain terms, that segregated housing was a primary cause of the social unrest and that the United States was "moving toward becoming two societies, one black, one white." One of the Kerner Commission's principal recommendations was to call for the passage of a fair housing law.

---

51. See *Jones v. Alfred H. Mayer, Co.*, 392 U.S. 409, 409 (1968) (holding that the Thirteenth Amendment gave Congress the power to allow § 1981 and § 1982 of the Civil Rights Act of 1866 to reach wholly private conduct—a significant change in Supreme Court jurisprudence).


55. *Id.*

56. *Jones* was argued on April 1 & 2, 1968. *Id.* at 409.

57. *Jones* was decided on June 17, 1968. *Id.*

58. *Id.* at 416-17. Justice Stewart found "vast differences" between § 1982 and the FHA. *Id.* Section 1982 only covers racial discrimination and requires private enforcement, while the FHA is "applicable to a broad range of discriminatory practices and enforceable by a complete arsenal of federal authority." *Id.*


60. The bipartisan commission stated the matter bluntly regarding racial segregation in housing: "[w]hat white Americans have never fully understood—but what the Negro can never forget—is that white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it, and white society condones it." *Id.* at 2.

61. *Id.* at 1.

62. *Id.* at 27-28.
In the context of this history of housing discrimination and segregation as well as the subsequent efforts to find a legal solution to the problem, it is just as important to note what the Supreme Court has not said in the area of housing rights. Generally, the Supreme Court must find that a fundamental right or a suspect class has been implicated before the Court will apply heightened review of governmental policies. Housing is not a fundamental right under the Fourteenth Amendment, although the right to establish a home is. Also, poverty, homelessness, and disability are not suspect classes under the Fourteenth Amendment. There is, however, a fundamental right to free association implicit in the First Amendment. These holdings highlight the boundaries of any legal remedy to segregated housing. While the Warren Court found public school segregation to be an Equal Protection violation warranting an

63. Black's Law Dictionary defines “fundamental right” as:
   A significant component of liberty, encroachments of which are rigorously tested by courts to ascertain the soundness of purported governmental justifications. A fundamental right triggers strict scrutiny to determine whether the law violates the Due Process Clause or the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment. As enunciated by the Supreme Court, fundamental rights include voting, interstate travel, and various aspects of privacy (such as marriage and contraception rights).

BLACK'S LAW DICTIONARY 697 (8th ed. 2004).

64. Black's Law Dictionary defines “suspect classification” as “[a] statutory classification based on race, national origin, or alienage, and thereby subject to strict scrutiny under equal-protection analysis.” Id. at 1487.

65. Black's Law Dictionary defines “strict scrutiny” as “[t]he standard applied to suspect classifications (such as race) in equal-protection analysis and to fundamental rights (such as voting rights) in due-process analysis. Under strict scrutiny, the state must establish that it has a compelling interest that justifies and necessitates the law in question.” Id. at 1462. Justice Stone set the stage in 1938 for the later development of the concept of “strict scrutiny” in his famous “footnote four” from a case about interstate commerce, when he wrote that “more exacting judicial scrutiny” may be required when legislation appears to encroach on fundamental liberties or affect only “discrete and insular minorities.” United States v. Carolene Products, Co., 304 U.S. 144, 153 (1938).

66. See Lindsey v. Normet, 405 U.S. 56, 74 (1972) (holding that housing is not a fundamental right).

67. See Meyer v. Nebraska, 262 U.S. 390, 399 (1923) (deciding that the right “to marry, establish a home and bring up children” were fundamental rights under the Fourteenth Amendment).

68. See City of Cleburne v. Cleburne Living Ctr., 473 U.S. 432, 440-41 (1985) (listing recognized suspect classes as race, alienage, or national origin, and recognized quasi-suspect classes as: gender and illegitimacy, but declining to extent to further disadvantaged groups).

69. NAACP v. Alabama, 357 U.S. 449, 460 (1958) (recognizing a right to free association in the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, implicitly incorporating the First Amendment).
affirmative mandate that public schools desegregate, no such order with regards to private residential housing is forthcoming.

B. A Brief History of the Fair Housing Act

Before analyzing the ambiguous language of the FHA as it pertains to post-acquisition discrimination, a short overview of the passage of the FHA is pertinent. This review will include the legislative history of the FHA and the state of the FHA today.

1. Legislative History of the Original FHA

At the outset, it is important to note that the FHA was passed under strained and extraordinary circumstances. As a result, traditional reliance on legislative history as a window into what Congress intended is difficult at best. Fair housing legislation that would expand on what President Kennedy ordered in 1962 was not included in the landmark 1964 Civil Rights Act. Subsequent efforts at enacting fair housing legislation also failed in 1966 and 1967. The stalemate was broken in 1968 primarily

70. Brown v. Bd. of Educ. of Topeka, 349 U.S. 294, 301 (1955) (Brown II), (mandating the desegregation of public schools as the remedy for the violation found in Brown I: that racially segregated schools violate the Equal Protection Clause).

71. The Supreme Court recently rejected two public school policies that used racial classifications to promote racial balance, which is impermissible under the Court's current equal protection jurisprudence. Parents Involved in Comty. Sch. v. Seattle Sch. Dist. No. 1, 127 S. Ct. 2738, 2755 (2007). The Seattle school district argued that it needed the racially based school assignment policy to "address the consequences of racially identifiable housing patterns." Id. at 2758. The Court rejected this argument, noting that "accepting racial balancing as a compelling state interest would justify the imposition of racial proportionality throughout American society." Id. at 2757. Without explicitly referring to segregated housing, it is clear by inference that the current Court will not mandate any form of housing desegregation pursuant to the United States Constitution.

72. See infra notes 78-80 (recounting the circumstances under which the FHA was enacted).

73. "[S]ince Title VIII was enacted substantially unchanged from the way it was first introduced by Senator Dirksen on the floor of the Senate, its legislative history does not include the committee reports and other documents that usually accompany major legislation." SCHWEMM, supra note 17, at 5-6; see also infra note 81-82 (discussing the difficulty of using legislative intent with the FHA).


76. President Johnson submitted fair housing legislation to Congress in 1966, S. 3296 and H.R. 14765, the House passed it, but it was filibustered and died in the Senate. SCHWEMM, supra note 17, at 5-2 to -3.

77. President Johnson again called for a fair housing bill in 1967, but the House Judiciary Committee reported out a civil rights bill not pertaining to
because of three events: (1) the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; 78 (2) the tumultuous aftermath of Dr. King's death; 79 and (3) the release of the Kerner Commission Report. 80

The legislative history of the FHA is not particularly helpful in analyzing whether coverage of post-acquisition housing discrimination was intended. 81 While it is true that the Act does not use language that expressly prohibits post-acquisition discrimination, 82 the broad congressional intent was to integrate American society, not just to end housing discrimination. 83

2. FHA Amendments and HUD Regulations

The first important amendment to the FHA included sex as a protected class in 1974. 84 The next major amendment was in
1988, when the FHA was substantially altered at its twentieth anniversary. The Amendments added two more protected classes: "familial status" and "handicapped." The Amendments also created a new administrative enforcement mechanism for handling housing discrimination complaints, giving the Department of Housing and Urban Development's ("HUD") administrative law judges the power to award damages and impose injunctions for FHA violations.

HUD is the primary federal agency responsible for enforcing the FHA. HUD is authorized and required to promulgate regulations interpreting and implementing the FHA. HUD regulations, which protect occupants from post-acquisition discrimination, exist and are to be accorded great weight by federal courts.

Analyzing the ambiguous language of the FHA and Halprin in Part III will help determine whether the FHA as written is susceptible to a post-acquisition reach.

86. The FHA defines "familial status," in pertinent part, as meaning "one or more individuals (who have not attained the age of 18 years) being domiciled with ... a parent or another person having legal custody of such individual or individuals." 42 U.S.C. § 3602(k) (2006).
87. Under the FHA, "handicapped" is defined in part as a person having "a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more of such person's major life activities." 42 U.S.C. § 3602(h) (2006).
88. HUD enforcement provisions at 42 U.S.C. § 3610-12 (2006). One commentator summarized the goal of the amended enforcement procedures: [T]he basic purpose of the 1988 Act's reformation of the HUD procedure was to provide an administrative enforcement system for persons aggrieved by discriminatory housing practices that would handle complaints quickly, easily, and inexpensively and would include "teeth" in the form of serious sanctions against violators and substantial remedies for complainants.
SCHWEMM, supra note 17, at 24-7; id. at 24-2 to -3 (summarizing the HUD enforcement changes brought by the 1988 Amendments).
91. "Since 1989, HUD regulations interpreting § 3604(b) have identified a number of practices barred by this provision that affect current residents." SCHWEMM, supra note 17, at 14-9. HUD regulations prohibit "[f]ailing or delaying maintenance or repairs ... because of [a protected class]." 24 C.F.R. § 100.65(b)(2) (2007). HUD regulations also proscribe "[l]imiting the use of privileges, services or facilities associated with a dwelling because of [a protected class]." 24 C.F.R. § 100.65(b)(4) (2007).
92. HUD's determination that Petitioner's had standing to sue was "entitled to great weight." Trafficante, 409 U.S. at 210. "Reference must be given to these interpretive regulations, so long as they do not violate the plain meaning of the statute and are a 'permissible' or 'reasonable' construction of the law." SCHWEMM, supra note 17, at 7-13.
III. WHETHER THE CURRENT FHA APPLIES POST-ACQUISITION: HALPRIN'S NEGATIVE ANSWER WARRANTS SCRUTINY

A. How Prevalent is Post-Acquisition Housing Discrimination?

Currently, there are no known quantitative studies documenting the frequency of post-acquisition discrimination.93 The number of federal court cases where the alleged discrimination occurred during occupancy suggests that it is a common occurrence,94 but a more accurate estimate would be useful both to this discussion and to the fair housing bar.95

The John Marshall Law School operates The John Marshall Law School Fair Housing Clinic ("JMLS Clinic").96 In pursuit of quantitative information regarding the frequency of post-acquisition claims, this author examined every intake form generated by the JMLS Clinic between January 1, 2007, and December 31, 2007.97 The intakes were sorted into four categories: (1) pre-acquisition claims; (2) post-acquisition claims; (3) not applicable; and (4) unknown.98

93. Professor Schwemm observed that he knew of no agency or organization that distinguishes pre- and post-acquisition discrimination in their reporting, and he knew of no studies examining this topic. Telephone Interview with Robert G. Schwemm, Ashland Professor of Law, University of Kentucky College of Law, in Lexington, Kentucky (Oct. 8, 2007).

94. See infra note 219 (listing cases where federal appellate courts found post-acquisition discrimination actionable); supra note 28 (documenting other federal cases where post-acquisition claims were upheld).

95. Professor Schwemm stated that an accurate statistical estimate of the frequency of post-acquisition discrimination would be useful. Interview with Robert G. Schwemm, supra note 93. Professor Caruso stated that an estimate of the prevalence of post-acquisition housing discrimination would be "helpful to the fair housing bar." Interview with F. Willis Caruso, Clinical Professor, The John Marshall Law School, in Chicago, Illinois (Oct. 29, 2007).

96. The JMLS Clinic provides legal services to victims of housing discrimination while also training law students in civil rights litigation practice. Interview with F. Willis Caruso, supra note 95. The JMLS Clinic receives hundreds of contacts each year, and an intake form is generated for each contact. Id. If the legal problem is not something the JMLS Clinic can help with, the person is referred to another legal agency. Id. The case may involve housing discrimination, yet still be referred out, as the Clinical professors running the JMLS Clinic need to take into account JMLS Clinic resources and educational value to the students, alongside the merits of the case. Id.

97. The author conducted this survey at the JMLS Clinic on December 11, 2007, and January 28, 2008, to capture intakes received after December 11th. Scott Gilbert, Survey of Post-Acquisition Claims at the JMLS Fair Housing Clinic in 2007, January 28, 2008 (unpublished, on file with the author). A total of 454 intakes were included. Id.

98. The pre-acquisition category is defined as those contacts where it is clear from the face of the intake form that the alleged conduct involved housing discrimination that occurred prior to the person obtaining the property in question. Id. The post-acquisition category is defined as those
Clinic were also sorted into three categories: (1) pre-acquisition; (2) post-acquisition; and (3) not applicable. 99

The results were striking. Of the fifty-four open cases at the JMLS Clinic in 2007, twenty-four are post-acquisition claims, nineteen are pre-acquisition claims, and eleven are not applicable. 100 Post-acquisition claims constitute forty-four percent of the JMLS Clinic's open cases, 101 and fifty-six percent of the JMLS Clinic's cases which were being actively litigated at that time. 102 Of the 454 intakes received by the JMLS Clinic in 2007, fourteen percent are post-acquisition claims. 103 The "not applicable" category should arguably be removed from this tally because it contains numerous intakes not related to housing discrimination at all. 104 Excluding the "not applicable" intakes means that post-acquisition claims comprise thirty-eight percent of the JMLS Clinic's housing discrimination intakes in 2007. 105 If only the pre- and post-acquisition intakes are compared, the result speaks for itself: sixty-eight percent of the housing discrimination complaints made to the JMLS Clinic in 2007 were post-acquisition in nature. 106

Discrimination after the transaction is clearly frequent enough to warrant an exploration as to whether the current FHA prohibits such conduct as written.

99. As of December 11, 2007, the Clinic had fifty-four open cases. A fourth category for unknown cases was not needed to sort the open cases, as there is enough information on file at the Clinic to classify every open case. Id.

100. Id. For open cases, the not applicable category encompasses cases that are: (1) settled but not finalized; (2) currently inactive but not formally closed; or (3) consolidated with other open cases. Id.

101. Twenty-four out of fifty-four equals forty-four percent. Id.

102. Eleven Clinic cases were not active in 2007. Id. Twenty-four out of forty-three equals fifty-six percent. Id.

103. Sixty-five out of 454 equals fourteen percent. Id.

104. The not applicable category contains 282 intakes, and it includes calls about divorce, criminal matters, landlord tenant disputes, etc., that do not implicate the FHA. Id.

105. The actual percentage may be even higher, as the "unknown" category contained seventy-six intakes, the majority of which are likely unrelated to housing discrimination (but this could not be confirmed for the stated reason that the intake contained insufficient information). Id. Subtracting both the "N/A's" and the "unknown" intakes leaves ninety-six intakes, of which sixty-eight percent were post-acquisition in nature. Id.

106. When both the "N/A's" and the "unknowns" are excluded, it leaves sixty-five post-acquisition intakes and thirty-one pre-acquisition intakes. Id.
B. Legislative Intent Behind the FHA: Not too Helpful

While Judge Posner may be superficially correct in saying that the FHA's drafters were primarily concerned with access to housing and not occupancy, the Supreme Court and other commentators disagree that the FHA's focus was so narrow.

As previously discussed in Part I(B), the legislative history of the FHA provides little assistance toward resolving the post-acquisition question. What is clear, however, is that the primary sponsors of the bill spoke of two goals: ending housing discrimination and integrating America's residential housing. While Congress did not appear to think that merely ending housing discrimination would directly lead to integration, it did see the denial of access as a major obstacle to achieving integration. Trafficante v. Metropolitan Life Insurance Co., the first Supreme Court case to interpret the FHA, reached the same conclusion that Congress intended to both end housing discrimination and foster integration.

Trafficante is also pertinent because a unanimous Supreme Court held the FHA was to be construed broadly by giving it a "generous construction" because, according to the Court, Congress considered it to be of the "highest priority." It hardly seems logical, therefore, that Congress would pass a law affording access to housing in order to facilitate integration, while at the same time contemplating that such a law would not protect the owner or renter once in possession.

107. In Halprin, Judge Posner stated that "[t]he Fair Housing Act contains no hint either in its language or its legislative history of a concern with anything but access to housing." Halprin, 388 F.3d at 329.
109. 'It is not at all clear that the 1968 Congress' focus was as narrow as Halprin imagines." SCHWEMM, supra note 17, at 14-13 n.10. "[P]assage of the FHA did not involve thoughtful, meticulous drafting or consideration of the statute's language." Short, supra note 24, at 224.
110. See supra notes 72-83 and accompanying text (examining the chaotic circumstances of the FHA's passage and the low value, this history provides, when searching for legislative intent behind the FHA).
111. Senator Mondale wanted to replace America's ghettos with "balanced and integrated" housing patterns. 114 CONG. REC. 2, 2276 (1968).
112. Senator Mondale admitted in floor debate that "fair housing by itself will not move a single Negro into the suburbs—the laws of economics will determine that." Id. at 3422. Prohibiting discrimination, however, will at least provide an opportunity for integration. Id.
113. 409 U.S. at 211 (quoting and adopting Senator Mondale's statement on integration being the goal of the FHA).
114. Id. at 212.
115. Id. at 211.
116. "[I]t is difficult to imagine a privilege that flows more naturally from the purchase or rental of a dwelling than the privilege of residing therein." United States v. Koch, 352 F. Supp. 2d 970, 976 (D. Neb. 2004).
C. Compare the FHA to § 1982 of the 1866 Civil Rights Act

The Civil Rights Act of 1866\textsuperscript{117} provides inferential evidence of whether the Ninetieth Congress intended the FHA to cover occupancy and not just the real estate transaction.\textsuperscript{118} Unlike the FHA, § 1982 expressly protects occupancy by establishing the right "to hold" property.\textsuperscript{119} Section 1982 is also narrower than the FHA because it is limited to racial discrimination.\textsuperscript{120} Also, when the FHA was passed, before \textit{Jones} had been decided, § 1982 did not yet reach private conduct.\textsuperscript{121} Despite these limitations,\textsuperscript{122} § 1982 does cover racially-based housing discrimination that occurs long after the sale or rental.\textsuperscript{123} If Judge Posner is right about Congressional intent regarding the FHA, then an anomaly results: a broad fair housing law enacted in 1968 was actually intended to have a much shorter reach than a narrow racial discrimination law enacted in 1866.\textsuperscript{124}

D. Compare the FHA to Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act

The FHA has often been compared to Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which prohibits employment discrimination.\textsuperscript{125}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[118] The inference goes like this: when the FHA was passed, § 1982 was not yet applicable to private action, but it did cover post-acquisition discrimination. Therefore, Congress intended the new FHA to rectify this gap by reaching private action, while retaining the post-acquisition reach of its predecessor. Rigel C. Oliveri, \textit{Is Acquisition Everything? Protecting the Rights of Occupants Under the Fair Housing Act}, 43 HARV. C.R.-C.L. L. REV. 1, 28-29 (2008).
\item[119] Section 1982 states, "All citizens of the United States shall have the same right, in every State and Territory, as is enjoyed by white citizens thereof to inherit, purchase, lease, sell, hold, and convey real and personal property." 42 U.S.C. § 1982 (2006). "Numerous cases have held that § 1982's "right to hold" is violated by discrimination directed at in-place residents." SCHWEMM, \textit{supra} note 17, at 14-15.
\item[120] Section 1982 "deals only with racial discrimination and does not address itself to discrimination on grounds of religion or national origin." \textit{Jones}, 392 U.S at 413.
\item[121] \textit{See id.} at 439 (comparing \textit{Jones} decision date of June 17, 1968, with FHA passage date of April 8, 1968, to confirm that § 1982 did not reach private conduct until after the FHA was enacted).
\item[122] \textit{See SCHWEMM, supra} note 17, at 11-1 (tallying the seven protected classes in the FHA). Compare this to § 1982, which only prohibits discrimination based on race. \textit{Jones}, 392 U.S at 413.
\item[123] "[Section] 1982 has always contained specific language indicating that its guarantee of nondiscriminatory treatment is intended to extend beyond purchase or lease to include the 'hold' stage of a housing transaction." SCHWEMM, \textit{supra} note 17, at 27-12.
\item[124] \textit{Id.} at 14-14 to -15.
\end{footnotes}
The *Trafficante* Court looked to Title VII, passed just four years before the FHA, to decide by analogy how broadly to define "standing"\(^{126}\) under the FHA.\(^{127}\) Lower courts have looked to Title VII caselaw when interpreting the FHA ever since.\(^{128}\)

It is settled caselaw that Title VII protects the job holder, as well as the job seeker from discrimination; not even Judge Posner disputes this.\(^{129}\) Similar language in the FHA and Title VII has led many courts and commentators to make the analogy that the FHA protects housing "holders" as well as housing seekers from discrimination.\(^{130}\)

Having looked to two other prominent federal civil rights statutes for guidance on occupancy rights, an examination of the language of the FHA is warranted before moving on to analyze *Halprin*.

**E. What the FHA Actually Prohibits, Ambiguities and All**

Although the FHA encompasses §§ 3601-3619 and § 3631, the main substantive provisions defining prohibited conduct under the FHA are contained within § 3604, § 3605, § 3606, and § 3617.\(^{131}\) In fact, the FHA defines a "discriminatory housing practice" as

---

\(^{126}\) In an early FHA case, the Supreme Court defined standing as "whether the litigant is entitled to have the court decide the merits of the dispute," and that "[t]his inquiry involves both constitutional limitations on federal-court jurisdiction and prudential limitations on its exercise." *Warth v. Seldin*, 422 U.S. 490, 498 (1975). The constitutional aspect is whether the plaintiff "has made out a 'case or controversy' between himself and the defendant within the meaning of Art. III." *Id.*

\(^{127}\) The *Trafficante* Court found that because both Title VII and the FHA define an aggrieved person as one who has claimed to be injured by a discriminatory practice, and that where such language in Title VII shows a congressional intent to define standing as broadly as allowed under Article III, such broad standing applied to the FHA as well. 409 U.S. at 209.

\(^{128}\) Other than the issue of standing, another prominent example of the FHA borrowing from Title VII precedent is with the disparate impact theory of discrimination. *Schwemm, supra* note 17, at 7-4. In 1971, the Court first interpreted Title VII to allow employment discrimination claims based on disparate impact, where there is no showing of intentional discrimination. *Griggs v. Duke Power Co.*, 401 U.S. 424, 430, 432 (1971). In 1977, the Seventh Circuit, by analogy to Title VII, allowed a disparate impact claim of housing discrimination to proceed against a municipality. *Metro. Hous. Dev. Corp. v. Vill. of Arlington Heights*, 558 F.2d 1283, 1290 (7th Cir. 1977).

\(^{129}\) *Halprin*, 388 F.3d at 329.

\(^{130}\) One commentator who examined the parallels between Title VII and the FHA documented the extensive fair housing case law where Title VII was used to support a post-acquisition reach of the FHA. *Short, supra* note 24, at 241-43. Professor Short concluded that the nearly identical statutory language made it hard to justify recognizing post-hiring claims under Title VII while rejecting post-acquisition claims under the FHA. *Id.*

\(^{131}\) 42 U.S.C. §§ 3601-3619, 3631 (2006). The "substantive heart" of the FHA is in the prohibitions within these four sections. *Schwemm, supra* note 17, at 4-4.
conduct that is unlawful under these four sections. The basic formula for finding an FHA violation is to determine: (1) if a "dwelling" is involved; (2) if a "protected class" is involved; (3) if a "discriminatory housing practice" has occurred; and (4) whether an exception applies.

A major ambiguity in the FHA, unrelated to the post-acquisition debate, is whether housing discrimination must be intentional. In order to violate the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, discrimination must be intentional. Under the FHA, however, courts have accepted disparate impact claims, drawn by analogy from Title VII employment discrimination case law. The intentional discrimination controversy is another topic unto itself but is worth noting here because it is also ripe for congressional intervention.

It is not necessary to document every housing-related practice that is prohibited under the FHA, but each substantive section will be briefly analyzed to determine how it applies generally, as well as whether it applies in the post-acquisition scenario.

133. See 42 U.S.C. § 3603(b) (2006) (defining a "dwelling"); see also SCHWEMM, supra note 17, at 4-4 (relating that FHA protection is limited to dwellings).
134. SCHWEMM, supra note 17, at 11-1.
135. See 42 U.S.C. § 3602(f) (defining a "discriminatory housing practice").
136. A full examination of the available FHA exceptions is outside the range of this Comment, but a good example is the statutory so-called "Mrs. Murphy exception," where a private homeowner renting no more than three rooms out of her own home is exempt from the prohibitions of the FHA, so long as she does not use real estate professionals or advertise the rental. 42 U.S.C. § 3603(b)(2) (2006); see also SCHWEMM, supra note 17, at 9-3 (summarizing the exceptions to the FHA). Where an exception may be applicable, it is important to note, however, that FHA exceptions are to be construed narrowly. United States v. Columbus Country Club, 915 F.2d 877, 883 (3d Cir. 1990) (determining that where the body of the statute is construed broadly, it is a natural corollary to construe the exceptions narrowly).
137. There are different standards of proof for different sections of the FHA, but several sections, including § 3604(a) and § 3604(b), define unlawful conduct as some prohibited conduct done "because of" a protected class. SCHWEMM, supra note 17, at 10-1. The meaning of "because of" is not defined in the FHA, and the Supreme Court has not resolved this dispute. Id.
139. See supra Part III(D) (exploring the relationship between the FHA and Title VII, and the use of Title VII precedent by analogy in fair housing cases).
140. Congress could also amend the FHA to statutorily provide for a disparate impact cause of action to prevent a hostile Supreme Court from judicially revoking the doctrine.
1. Section 3604

Section 3604 of the FHA contains six subparts, (a) through (f). Each subpart will be examined with a focus on whether the subsection could be construed to protect occupancy rights.

a. Section 3604(a)

Section 3604(a) makes it unlawful to "refuse to sell or rent... or to refuse to negotiate for the sale or rental of... a dwelling... because" a person is part of a "protected class." After this explicitly stated prohibited conduct, § 3604(a) also contains a catch-all phrase prohibiting conduct that would "otherwise make unavailable or deny" housing to a protected class. Courts have construed this "otherwise deny" language to prohibit a wide range of discriminatory practices not amounting to outright refusals to deal or negotiate. Federal courts have interpreted the § 3604(a) catchall "otherwise make unavailable" clause to prohibit discrimination directed at current occupants of dwellings and not just those seeking housing.

b. Section 3604(b)

Section 3604(b) makes it unlawful to discriminate "in the terms, conditions, or privileges of sale or rental of a dwelling, or in the provision of services or facilities in connection therewith," because a person is part of a protected class. There is an active controversy over the proper interpretation of the "in connection therewith" phrase.

143. Id.
144. Delaying tactics, more burdensome procedures, or other attempts to avoid dealing with a protected class member amounts to a § 3604(a) violation as much as an outright refusal. SCHWEMM, supra note 17, at 13-2. The catch-all "otherwise deny" phrase is broad; but to come within § 3604(a), discriminatory conduct must "deny housing or negatively affect its availability." Id. Some of the other discriminatory practices held to be prohibited by § 3604(a) include racial steering, exclusionary zoning, mortgage redlining, and discriminatory property appraisals. Id. at 13-1.
145. While acknowledging that not every complaint would be severe enough to find that housing had been made "unavailable" under § 3604(a), one commentator proposes leaving that determination to the finder of fact. Short, supra note 24, at 215. Professor Short explains that "there is no textual reason to categorically reject the viability of harassment claims under § 3604(a) simply because such claims might occur post-acquisition." Id.
147. See Short, supra note 24, at 209 (indicating the debate over the proper way to read § 3604(b)—narrowly or broadly); Robert G. Schwemm, Cox, Halprin, and Discriminatory Municipal Services Under the Fair Housing Act, 41 IND. L. REV. 717, 769-71 (2008) (acknowledging the broad versus narrow debate, before examining the clause and concluding that either reading is...
The broad reading would use the "in connection therewith" phrase to link the "provision of services" phrase with dwelling, an interpretation that naturally opens the door to post-acquisition claims. The narrow reading would link the "provision of services" phrase with the sale or rental, and not dwelling. This constricted interpretation would appear to limit the use of § 3604(b) to discrimination that occurs during the sale or rental transaction.

c. Section 3604(c)

Section 3604(c) prohibits statements or advertisements that express a preference based on a protected class. Despite this section containing the phrase "with respect to the sale or rental," it is applicable in some post-acquisition situations, such as where a landlord makes discriminatory statements to a current tenant.

d. Section 3604(d)

Section 3604(d) prohibits anyone from representing that housing is not available, when in fact it is available. This section has essentially been absorbed by § 3604(a)'s "otherwise make unavailable" clause, except for "testers," who have standing to sue based on § 3604(d). This section is not relevant to the post-acquisition discussion.

---

148. The broad reading is supported by numerous HUD regulations, which have recognized that § 3604(b)'s "in connection therewith" phrase refers to the dwelling and not the transaction. SCHWEMM, supra note 17, at 14-3.

149. HUD regulations, courts, and commentators had assumed that § 3604(b) did not just protect homeseekers from discrimination but protected their right to equal treatment once they occupied the dwelling. Id.

150. Halprin appeared to implicitly rely on the narrow reading of § 3604(b) by stating that the section is only concerned with discrimination that prevents people from acquiring property. 388 F.3d at 328-29. When the Fifth Circuit followed the Seventh, it expressly held that the statute required a narrow reading of § 3604(b). Cox v. City of Dallas, 430 F.3d 734, 745 (5th Cir. 2005).

151. Short, supra note 24, at 209.


155. SCHWEMM, supra note 17, at 16-1.

156. In the fair housing context, "testers" are people who pose as renters or purchasers, where they do not really intend to rent or buy, in order to collect evidence of housing discrimination. Havens Realty Corp. v. Coleman, 455 U.S. 363, 373 (1982).

157. Id. at 373-74.
e. Section 3604(e)

Section 3604(e) makes it unlawful "[f]or profit, to induce or attempt to induce any person to sell or rent any dwelling by representations regarding the entry or prospective entry into the neighborhood of a person or persons of a [protected class]."\(^{158}\) This section outlaws a practice called "blockbusting," where the allegedly changing character of a neighborhood is used to frighten people into leaving or not entering a neighborhood.\(^{159}\) Section 3604(e) reaches post-acquisition discrimination, such as when blockbusting is employed against current homeowners to scare them into selling.\(^{160}\)

f. Section 3604(f)

Section 3604(f) is a subsection added to the FHA in 1988,\(^{161}\) extending FHA protection to the disabled.\(^{162}\) The language used in §§ 3604(f)(1) and (f)(2) largely tracks with the language used in § 3604(a) and § 3604(b), respectively,\(^{163}\) and affords the same protections as those sections.\(^{164}\) Relevant to this discussion, however, are several provisions relating to disability that clearly protect occupancy rights.

Sections 3604(f)(1) and (f)(2) expand the protections afforded beyond the disabled individual to "a person residing in or intending to reside in that dwelling after it is so sold, rented, or made available; or ... any person associated with that person."\(^{165}\)

---

159. The practices prohibited in § 3604(e) are generally referred to as "blockbusting." SCHWEMM, supra note 17, 17-1 n.2. Section 3604(e) makes it unlawful: "[f]or profit, to induce or attempt to induce any person to sell or rent any dwelling by representations regarding the entry or prospective entry into the neighborhood of a person or persons of a particular race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status, or national origin." 42 U.S.C. § 3604(e) (2006).
160. See United States v. Bob Lawrence Realty, Inc., 474 F.2d 115, 118 (5th Cir. 1973) (upholding blockbusting claim where prohibited conduct was directed at homeowners in possession of their homes).
162. 42 U.S.C. § 3604(f) (2006). The other two federal statutes that ban discrimination based on disability, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, use the term "disability" in a way that is synonymous with the phrase "handicap" as used in the FHA. SCHWEMM, supra note 17, at 11-D:1. For purposes of this discussion, the two terms are to be considered interchangeable.
163. The language of § 3604(a) and § 3604(b) was copied almost exactly over to § 3604(f)(1) and § 3604(f)(2) respectively. SCHWEMM, supra note 17, at 11D:3. The reason these rights for disabled persons were separated from the other protected classes was to make clear that housing made available only for the disabled was lawful. Id.
164. Id. at 13-1, 14-1.
165. 42 U.S.C. § 3604(f)(1) and (f)(2) (2006). This also means it is illegal to deny housing to a person because someone associated with the prospective
The key language is "residing in," clearly expressing a legislative purpose to protect the disabled from discrimination after they have taken possession of the dwelling.166

Section 3604(f) also confers housing rights to the disabled not available to the other protected classes, such as the right to "reasonable accommodations"167 and "reasonable modifications."168 This is a substantial and complex area of fair housing law in its own right, but the important point for this Comment is that § 3604(f) confers extensive rights to disabled occupants of dwellings. As one commentator has argued, Congress must accept the post-acquisition reach of the FHA because when it was amended in 1988, there had already been post-acquisition cases, yet Congress chose not to write such conduct out of the Act.169

2. Section 3605

Section 3605 prohibits discrimination against protected classes in transactions related to residential real estate, including loans and appraisals.170 Germane to this discussion, § 3605(b)(1)(A) provides that this section does not just cover loans for buying or building homes, but also for "improving, repairing, or maintaining a dwelling."171 The chosen language expresses a design to prohibit post-acquisition loan discrimination because one ordinarily would not improve, repair, or maintain a dwelling in

166. Short, supra note 24, at 217. See id. at 217 n.101 (collecting cases recognizing a post-acquisition scope of disability discrimination under § 3604(f)).
167. Section 3604(f)(3)(B) defines a refusal to "make reasonable accommodations in rules, policies, practices, or services, when such accommodations may be necessary to afford such person equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling" as discrimination. 42 U.S.C. § 3604(f)(3)(B) (2006). "Reasonable accommodations" are feasible and practical changes that do not fundamentally alter the defendant's program or impose undue financial and administrative burdens. SCHWEMM, supra note 17, at 11D:8. The elements for a reasonable accommodation claim are: (1) the request must be reasonable; (2) the plaintiff must be handicapped; (3) the defendant knew or should have known about the handicap; (4) the accommodation may be "necessary;" and (5) the accommodation was denied. Id.
168. Section 3604(f)(3)(A) defines "discrimination" as a "refusal to permit, at the expense of the handicapped person, reasonable modifications of existing premises occupied or to be occupied by such person if such modifications may be necessary to afford such person full enjoyment of the premises." 42 U.S.C. § 3604(f)(3)(A) (2006). The elements of a reasonable modification claim are: (1) the tenant asked permission of the landlord to make modifications at her expense; (2) the tenant is disabled; (3) the modifications may be necessary to afford the tenant full enjoyment of the premises; and (4) the landlord refused the modification. SCHWEMM, supra note 17, at 11D:7.
169. Oliveri, supra note 118, at 32.
which they had no property interest.172

3. Section 3617

Section 3617 makes it unlawful to “coerce, intimidate, threaten, or interfere with” rights defined in § 3603, § 3604, § 3605, or § 3606.173 Such coercion is a violation under three circumstances: (1) when a person exercises or enjoys his own housing rights;174 (2) when a person has exercised his housing rights in the past;175 and (3) when a person has “aided or encouraged” another in the exercise of that person’s housing rights.176

A broad reading of § 3617, by reference to the language alone, would accord weight to the past tense language used.177 Logically, current interference with housing rights that were exercised in the past would likely involve interference directed at current occupants of housing.178

A narrow reading of § 3617 would in essence ignore the past tense language and focus on the requirement that the interference be related to one of the other substantive provisions of the FHA.179 Because the other provisions relate to sales and rentals, so the logic goes, there can be no violation of § 3617 without a sale or rental transaction.180

Federal courts are not the only branch of government to have weighed in on the meaning of § 3617, however, as HUD has issued regulations defining § 3617181 that are to be accorded great

---

172. SCHWEMM, supra note 17, at 18:2.
174. SCHWEMM, supra note 17, at 20:2.
175. Id.
176. Id.
177. Id.; see also Short, supra note 24, at 218 (arguing that the use of past tense language means that the real estate transaction in question is not prospective).
178. Reading § 3617 to reach post-acquisition claims would satisfy the requirement that a violation of § 3617 be tied to the rights granted by the FHA because the right to acquire a home free from discrimination was exercised in the past by a current occupant facing discrimination. Short, supra note 24, at 218.
179. Some courts have read § 3617 to require a current violation of § 3604 or § 3605 in order to find a § 3617 violation. Oliveri, supra note 118 at 12. See Frazier v. Rominger, 27 F.3d 828, 834 (2d Cir. 1994) (rejecting a § 3617 claim where there was no current violation of any right conferred by the other substantive provisions of the FHA because then § 3617 had no “predicate”).
180. Judge Posner, in Halprin, seemed to prefer the narrow reading of § 3617, noting that the lack of a § 3604 violation might “doom” the § 3617 claim as well, before reluctantly deferring to a HUD regulation on point. 388 F.3d at 330.
181. See 24 C.F.R. 100.400 (2007) (interpreting unlawful conduct under § 3617 of the FHA, promulgated by HUD).
weight.\textsuperscript{182} HUD regulation 100.400(c)(2) goes beyond the language of the FHA, providing that "enjoyment of a dwelling" is protected from the conduct prohibited in § 3617, i.e., coercion, interference, or intimidation.\textsuperscript{183} Enjoyment of one's dwelling clearly extends past acquisition and into occupancy.\textsuperscript{184}

4. \textit{Section 3631}

Section 3631 is generally considered part of the FHA, even though it was initially passed as part of Title IX of the 1968 Civil Rights Act and not Title VIII.\textsuperscript{185} Section 3631 criminalizes the use or threat of force that violates housing rights of a protected class member.\textsuperscript{186} Unlike § 3617, however, § 3631 provides its own list of housing rights that trigger criminal sanctions when violated.\textsuperscript{187} Material to this discussion is that § 3631(a) expressly protects \textit{occupants} of dwellings from violence or interference because of protected class status.\textsuperscript{188}

Prior to \textit{Halprin}, the general consensus among federal courts and fair housing commentators was that post-acquisition discrimination was prohibited in a number of contexts.\textsuperscript{189} Before proposing an FHA amendment that would expressly protect occupancy, an analysis of \textit{Halprin}'s reasoning is necessary.

\textbf{F. The Halprin Decision}

As a threshold matter, it is important to note that both the original \textit{Halprin} district court opinion\textsuperscript{190} and the \textit{Halprin} Seventh Circuit opinion\textsuperscript{191} were decided on the defendant's motion to dismiss.\textsuperscript{192} The procedural disposition of the case means that both

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{182} See \textit{Trafficante}, 409 U.S. at 210 and \textit{SCHWEMM}, supra note 17, at 7-13 (justifying the deference to be given HUD regulations).
  \item \textsuperscript{183} 24 C.F.R. 100.400(c)(2) (2007).
  \item \textsuperscript{184} Short, \textit{supra} note 24, at 217-18.
  \item \textsuperscript{185} Id. at 220.
  \item \textsuperscript{186} 42 U.S.C. § 3631 (2006).
  \item \textsuperscript{187} Section 3631 prohibits interference with protected class members who engage in "selling, purchasing, renting, financing, occupying, or contracting or negotiating for the sale, purchase, rental, financing or occupation of any dwelling." 42 U.S.C. § 3631(a).
  \item \textsuperscript{188} The use of the word "occupying" meant Congress intended to prohibit interference with persons already in possession. Short, \textit{supra} note 24, at 220. See also id., 220 n.123 (listing cases recognizing post-possession § 3617 claims).
  \item \textsuperscript{189} See \textit{supra} notes 25-28 and accompanying text (exploring the general consensus before \textit{Halprin} that post-acquisition housing discrimination is prohibited by the FHA in numerous contexts).
  \item \textsuperscript{190} Halprin v. Prairie Single Family Homes of Dearborn Park Ass'n, 208 F. Supp. 2d 896, 899-900 (N.D. Ill. 2002).
  \item \textsuperscript{191} \textit{Halprin}, 388 F.3d at 328.
  \item \textsuperscript{192} For purposes of a Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6) motion to dismiss for failure to state a claim, the court is required to assume the factual
\end{itemize}
the trial court and the appellate court accepted as true the Halprins' allegations that they were the victims of a pattern of housing discrimination because of their religion. Nevertheless, the courts went on to hold as a matter of law that the FHA did not prohibit such conduct. This was not a case where the facts were in dispute or where the plaintiff could not provide some proof of the conduct alleged, as would be required at the summary judgment stage. Rather, these were court interpretations that even where housing discrimination was aimed at a protected class, the FHA was not implicated because the conduct occurred after the dwelling was acquired.

1. Halprin I – The First District Court Case

The Halprins brought their case to federal court, alleging violations of §§ 3604(a), (b), (c), and § 3617. After finding no allegations in the complaint are true and draw all reasonable inferences in the plaintiff's favor. Halprin, 208 F. Supp. 2d at 899.

193. Plaintiffs, Robyn Halprin (“Robyn”) and Rick Halprin (“Rick”), owned a home in The Prairie Single Family Homes of Dearborn Park subdivision (hereinafter “Subdivision”). Id. at 898. Rick is Jewish. Id. The Subdivision was managed by the defendant homeowners association: The Prairie Single Family Homes of Dearborn Park Association (hereinafter “Association”). Id. Conflict began in November 2000 when Robyn was not elected to the Association Board and defendant Mark Ormond (“Ormond”), an Association Board member, refused to disclose the number of proxy votes. Id. At some point before January 10, 2001, Ormond vandalized the Halprin’s home by writing “H-town property” in red letters on a stone wall, which plaintiffs alleged referred to “Hymie town,” a place where Jewish people live. Id. Ormond's vandalism included damaging trees and plants as well as tearing down strings of holiday lights. Id. Robyn placed notices on public light poles and trees, offering a reward for identifying the vandals. Id. Although not on Association property, Ormond, nevertheless, removed the notices and pressured the Association lawyer to press the City of Chicago to demand removal of the notices. Id. On January 8, 2001, Ormond prevented Robyn from speaking to the board about the Association. Id. One or more defendants altered Board meeting minutes and destroyed a tape recording in order to conceal the fact that Ormond had threatened to “make an example” of Robyn. Id.

194. Halprin, 208 F. Supp. 2d at 901.

195. Summary judgment should be granted “if the pleadings, the discovery and disclosure materials on file, and any affidavits show that there is no genuine issue as to any material fact and that the movant is entitled to judgment as a matter of law.” FED. R. CIV. P. 56(c). The party moving for summary judgment bears the initial burden of establishing that there are no material facts in dispute. Celotex Corp. v. Catrett, 477 U.S. 317, 323 (1986). Summary judgment is not proper, however, if “the evidence is such that a reasonable jury could return a verdict for the nonmoving party.” Anderson v. Liberty Lobby, Inc., 477 U.S. 242, 248 (1986).

196. See supra Part III(F)(1) (briefing the first Halprin district court opinion); see supra Part III(F)(2) (examining the Halprin Seventh Circuit opinion).

197. The Halprin district court ruled on the plaintiffs' § 3604(b), § 3604(c),
violation of any provision of § 3604 because the conduct was not related to the sale or rental of a dwelling, the district court also dismissed the Halprins’ § 3617 claim. Because their § 3617 claim was based on the same underlying conduct as their § 3604 claim, the district court reasoned that dismissal of the § 3604 claim required the dismissal of the § 3617 one as well.

2. Halprin II – The Seventh Circuit’s Decision

The Seventh Circuit’s decision is not a model of clarity with regards to which provision of the FHA is being applied to the facts, and, at one point, both § 3604(a) and § 3604(b) are conflated. Without dealing with § 3604(c) at all, the Seventh Circuit rejected the Halprins’ claims under § 3604(a) and § 3604(b) on the same logic as the trial court: that the alleged discrimination occurred after the plaintiffs had moved into their home.

Judge Posner, unlike the district court, acknowledged a circumstance when § 3604 could be implicated post-possession: where the conduct was severe enough to amount to “constructive eviction.” But this seems to set the bar very high before § 3604 could be invoked during occupancy, essentially only when occupancy was lost.

After affirming the dismissal of the § 3604 claim, the Seventh Circuit noted that the lack of a § 3604 claim might appear “to doom their claim under § 3617 as well,” as the district court thought. But there is a HUD regulation that explains the conduct prohibited by § 3617, and it includes the right to

and § 3617 claims. 208 F. Supp. 2d at 900. The district court rejected the plaintiffs’ § 3604(a) claim, however, ruling that it was not alleged in the plaintiffs’ complaint and was therefore untimely. Id. 198. Halprin, 208 F. Supp. 2d at 903-04.

199. Id.

200. At one point, Judge Posner referred to making a home “unavailable” (an apparent reference to § 3604(a)) and then in the same sentence to “privileges or services” (an apparent reference to § 3604(b)) without distinguishing the two distinct FHA provisions. Halprin, 388 F.3d at 329.

201. Further conflating § 3604(a) and § 3604(b), two FHA provisions ordinarily dealt with separately, the Seventh Circuit held that the plaintiffs had no claim under § 3604. Id. 202. Id; see also BLACK’S LAW DICTIONARY 594 (8th ed. 2004) (defining “constructive eviction”).

203. See Short, supra note 24, at 215 (arguing that it is for the fact-finder to determine whether conduct was severe enough to violate the FHA). Constructive eviction occurs where a landlord “has substantially deprived the tenant of the beneficial use of the premises, or when the landlord’s actions . . . [are] so severe as to interfere with the tenant’s peaceful enjoyment of the premises.” Honce, 1 F.3d at 1091.

204. Halprin, 388 F.3d at 330.

205. Id.

"enjoyment of a dwelling."\textsuperscript{207} The HUD regulation clearly authorizes a post-acquisition reach of § 3617, and as Judge Posner observed, it "cuts § 3617 loose from § 3604, contrary to the language of § 3617."\textsuperscript{208} The validity of the regulation was not challenged by the defendant, so the Halprin court observed that it could not rely on the apparent overreach of the regulation as a route to affirming the dismissal.\textsuperscript{209} After implicitly encouraging future fair housing defendants to challenge the validity of HUD regulation 100.400, the Seventh Circuit reinstated the Halprin's § 3617 claim and remanded.\textsuperscript{210}

3. \textit{Halprin III—Remanded Back to the District Court}

On remand, the defendant again moved to dismiss, initially challenging the validity of the relevant HUD regulation.\textsuperscript{211} In the intervening time, however, the Seventh Circuit had upheld the validity of the regulation,\textsuperscript{212} so the argument failed.\textsuperscript{213} The defendant next argued that the alleged conduct did not interfere with the plaintiff's "enjoyment of a dwelling," but the court also rejected this argument.\textsuperscript{214} Finally, the court disagreed with the argument that there was no evidence of a pattern of harassment.\textsuperscript{215} After four years of litigation, without even getting to discovery, the district court ended its opinion with the admonition to end the "pleading wars."\textsuperscript{216}

4. \textit{The Aftermath of Halprin}

Other fair housing defendants have been quick to rely on \textit{Halprin} and argue that the FHA does not apply to post-acquisition housing discrimination, and some courts accept these arguments.\textsuperscript{217} Most significantly, the Fifth Circuit accepted

\textsuperscript{207} 24 C.F.R. 100.400(c)(2) (2007).
\textsuperscript{208} Halprin, 388 F.3d at 330.
\textsuperscript{209} Id.
\textsuperscript{210} Id. at 330-31.
\textsuperscript{211} Halprin, 2006 WL 2506223, at *1.
\textsuperscript{212} See East-Miller, 421 F.3d at 562 (upholding HUD regulation 100.400(c)(2) because its validity was not challenged); Farrar, 137 F. App'x at 912 (assuming that even if the HUD regulation 100.400(c)(2) phrase "enjoyment of a dwelling" could sever § 3617 from the rest of the FHA, there was no violation in the case at bar).
\textsuperscript{213} Halprin, 2006 WL 2506223, at *1.
\textsuperscript{214} Id.
\textsuperscript{215} Id.
\textsuperscript{216} Id. at 2.
\textsuperscript{217} See Bloch, 533 F.3d at 563-64 (agreeing with the \textit{Halprin} court that the FHA does not reach post-acquisition discrimination); Cox, 430 F.3d at 742-43, 745 (holding that in the Fifth Circuit neither § 3604(a) nor § 3604(b) was violated where the alleged discriminatory conduct was not related to the sale or rental of a dwelling); Krieman, 2006 WL 1519320, at *5 (following \textit{Halprin} by rejecting post-acquisition claim under § 3604(a)); Reule, 2005 WL 2669480,
Halprin's holding, and thus the rule that the FHA does not protect occupancy is now binding precedent in the Seventh and Fifth Circuits.218

G. Compare Halprin to the Law in Other Circuits

In contrast to the Fifth and Seventh Circuits, eight other federal circuits confronted with housing discrimination directed at occupants have recognized the post-acquisition scope of the FHA.219 Although none of these cases deal directly with whether the FHA extends to post-acquisition discrimination, they implicitly endorse extending the FHA to protect occupancy by upholding claims arising after the real estate transaction.220 These cases

____________________
20091

218. Cox, 430 F.3d at 742-43, 745; Halprin, 388 F.3d at 330.
219. See Hogar Agua Y Vida En El Desierto, Inc. v. Suarez-Medina, 36 F.3d 177, 179 (1st Cir. 1994) (reversing the district court ruling that an FHA exception applied, accepting post-acquisition claims where the plaintiffs were allegedly harassed after signing the rental agreement); Betsey v. Turtle Creek Assoc., 736 F.2d 983, 988 (4th Cir. 1984) (upholding a disparate impact claim brought by current tenants and accepting the post-acquisition reach of the FHA); Hamad v. Woodcrest Condo. Ass'n, 328 F.3d 224, 229 (6th Cir. 2003) (continuing the pattern that other Circuits followed before Halprin and recognizing post-acquisition claims where some of the plaintiffs who alleged familial status discrimination were present occupants); Neudecker, 351 F.3d at 364 (8th Cir. 2003) (upholding a post-acquisition disability harassment cause of action under the FHA because the harassment occurred during tenant's occupancy); Walker v. City of Lakewood, 272 F.3d 1114, 1120 (9th Cir. 2001) (accepting the merits of the underlying FHA claim brought by tenants who had already acquired their units when ruling on other matters); Honce, 1 F.3d at 1090 (recognizing the hostile housing environment claim where the harassment "alters the conditions of the housing arrangement," implying post-possession interference with occupancy); Woodard v. Fanboy, L.L.C., 298 F.3d 1261, 1263 (11th Cir. 2002) (accepting that post-acquisition familial status discrimination is actionable by tenants); Clifton Terrace Assoc., Ltd. v. United Tech. Corp., 929 F.2d 714, 720 (D.C. Cir. 1991) (rejecting a third party claim, while generally accepting § 3604(b) discriminatory service claims by housing occupants).
220. Federal cases before Halprin did not explicitly discuss the temporal scope of the FHA. See supra note 219 (compiling a roundup of the Federal Circuits that recognize post-acquisition housing discrimination claims under the FHA without addressing the post-acquisition aspect). This author found only two federal district court cases prior to the Seventh Circuit's Halprin opinion that expressly discussed the reach of the FHA beyond the transaction: the original Halprin trial court case from 2002, 208 F. Supp. 2d at 901, and Schroeder v. De Bertolo, 879 F. Supp. 173, 176-78 (D. PR 1995). In Schroeder, the district court rejected the defendant's claim that FHA protection did not extend beyond the purchase, noting that the FHA "does not lend itself to such a narrow interpretation," because the "otherwise make unavailable or deny"
should not be criticized for their failure to discuss the temporal scope of the FHA, however, because Halprin was the first decision of the Federal Circuit Court of Appeals to talk about this so-called temporal scope of the FHA. While Judge Posner seems to think that federal courts have been wrong about the FHA for nearly forty years, the vast weight of authority choosing to ignore the post-acquisition question supports the opposite contention: that the FHA unequivocally extends to post-acquisition discrimination as written. There is no Supreme Court holding on the post-acquisition scope of the FHA, however, so the circuits remain split.

IV. AMENDING THE FHA IS THE BEST WAY TO PROTECT HOUSING OCCUPANTS FROM DISCRIMINATION

In light of the foregoing analysis, it is apparent the federal circuits are divided over the post-acquisition reach of the FHA, a split that needs to be resolved. It is also apparent that the FHA can be, and has been for many years, accorded a post-acquisition scope as written. This Comment, siding with the courts and commentators who recognize that the current FHA protects occupancy, argues for Halprin to be reversed. There are two primary ways to undo Halprin, judicially and legislatively. First, the judicial route to change will be examined, but ultimately rejected due to its unpredictability. Second, the legislative route to change will be examined and ultimately accepted as the preferred remedy to the problems created by Halprin.

Before proposing an FHA amendment, the wider context of phrase "sweeps activities which go beyond initial sale." Schroeder, 879 F. Supp. at 176-78. The occupant had a "continuing right to quiet enjoyment and use of her condominium and common areas," and the owner's right to acquire housing free from discrimination "encompassed the right to maintain that dwelling." Id.

221. In Halprin, Judge Posner cited five earlier Circuit or Supreme Court cases that recognized a post-acquisition scope of the FHA but criticized them for not undertaking "a considered holding on the scope of the [FHA]." 388 F.3d at 329.

222. The Supreme Court denied certiorari in the Cox case from the Fifth Circuit, which if granted, would have afforded the Court an opportunity to address the post-acquisition issue. Cox v. City of Dallas, 430 F.3d 734 (5th Cir. 2005), cert. denied, 126 S. Ct. 2039, (2006).

223. See supra 219 (tallying Federal Circuits that recognize post-acquisition claims); supra note 28 (reporting other cases upholding post-acquisition claims).

224. Professor Schwemm suggested a third method of undoing Halprin: HUD issuing a regulation that expressly interprets the FHA to protect occupancy. Such a regulation would be "important to a judicial solution, because the courts are supposed to give heavy deference to HUD's interpretations of the FHA." Interview with Robert G. Schwemm, supra note 93.
whether the FHA has been, or can be, successful in combating housing discrimination needs to be addressed. Nearly forty-one years after the passage of the FHA, as previously reported, housing discrimination and housing segregation remains pervasive.\footnote{225} University of Kentucky College of Law Ashland-Spears Professor Robert Schwemm, with over thirty-five years of experience in fair housing law, questions whether our society really wants to end housing discrimination.\footnote{226} While calling the FHA’s enforcement mechanisms “second to none,”\footnote{227} Professor Schwemm contrasts the “high degree of noncompliance with the FHA” to the relative success that other federal civil rights laws have had in fostering integration in America’s workplaces and public accommodations,\footnote{228} before concluding that housing discrimination is a “uniquely intractable problem.”\footnote{229}

In response to the common occurrence of post-acquisition housing discrimination, this Comment proposes a narrow amendment to the FHA to protect occupancy rights. Expressly protecting occupancy would make the FHA more logical, more fair, and more consistent with the legislative intent behind it.

**A. A Judicial Overruling of Halprin Would be a Good Start but not Sufficient to Solve the Problem**

The Supreme Court could take a suitable case and resolve the current circuit split by deciding whether the FHA prohibits post-acquisition discrimination.\footnote{230} The benefit of a judicial overruling of *Halprin* is obvious—a High Court decision would immediately bind the Seventh and Fifth Circuits.\footnote{231} The downsides, however,
are numerous.

Even if the Supreme Court were to hold that the FHA protects the occupancy rights, its decision would not adequately settle the issue for two reasons. First, any judicial holding that the FHA protects occupancy could be overruled by a future Supreme Court.\(^{232}\) Therefore, the permanence of a judicial solution is suspect. Second, a positive Supreme Court holding would not likely address every relevant provision of the FHA. As discussed previously, many provisions of the FHA operate independently, and each applies in some post-acquisition situations.\(^{233}\) Any single Supreme Court case, therefore, would be very unlikely to grant certiorari on every relevant provision of the FHA. In other words, even a favorable holding would not settle the issue for every pertinent part of the FHA. Some sections or provisions would remain unsettled. Because of this uncertainty, even a favorable Supreme Court ruling is not a sufficient solution.

The foregoing presumes a favorable Supreme Court ruling, something not at all assured. A strategy that depended on getting the Court to reverse *Halprin* would be shattered by a Court decision that endorsed the *Halprin* viewpoint. Suddenly, the reach of the FHA would not just be stunted in the Seventh and Fifth Circuits, but all across the country. While a negative Court ruling would suffer the same frailties as a positive one,\(^{234}\) in its aftermath an unknown number of aggrieved persons would suffer from post-acquisition discrimination, yet have no remedy under the FHA. A negative Supreme Court ruling could have a positive outcome for proponents of an FHA amendment because such a ruling may spur Congress into action.\(^{235}\)

---

232. Although the doctrine of *stare decisis* calls for adhering to precedent and counsels against reversing past decisions, the Court can reverse itself when it chooses—“when governing decisions are unworkable or are badly reasoned, 'this Court has never felt constrained to follow precedent.'” *Payne v. Tenn.*, 501 U.S. 808, 827 (1991).

233. *See supra* Part III(E) (analyzing the provisions of the FHA applicable to post-acquisition discrimination).

234. A negative Court holding, rejecting the post-acquisition scope of the FHA, would be just as open to future reversal as a positive holding and would be just as likely to only address some but not all of the relevant provisions of the FHA.

235. Professor Schwemm suggested this scenario, comparing it to the situation in 2007 when “Congress [was] considering a corrective response to the [Supreme Court's] negative Title VII ruling in the Ledbetter (statute of limitations) case.” Interview with Robert G. Schwemm, *supra* note 93. Professor Schwemm was referring to the controversial 2007 Supreme Court case that rejected, by a vote of 5-4, an employment discrimination claim as untimely, although the victim did not become aware of the discrimination for many years. *Ledbetter v. Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co., Inc.*, 550 U.S. 618, 618 (2007). Professor Schwemm made these prescient comments during a phone interview on October 8th, 2007. Interview with Robert G. Schwemm, *supra*
B. A Legislative Overruling of Halprin, by Amending the FHA, is the Best Solution

While the unpredictability of any judicial solution to the Halprin problem has been examined, it merits noting that similar uncertainty affects any legislative solution. Once Congress opened the FHA, it would be subject to amendments and legislative priorities far afield of the narrow issue of occupancy that motivated the amendment process in the first place. Alternatively, if Congress failed to pass the proposed amendment, it could be taken by courts as an implied endorsement of the Halprin position.

Although respectful of the risks, this Comment nevertheless recommends amending the FHA to protect occupancy. A number of post-acquisition claims are for sexual harassment, and this fact could be promoted when lobbying Congress to amend the FHA.

1. Use § 3604(f) language from the 1988 FHA amendment

Perhaps the easiest way to amend the FHA, while maintaining internal consistency and similar use of language, would be to incorporate three phrases from the 1988 amendments into the original provisions of the FHA.

a. Link “services and facilities” to the “dwelling”

First, the language in § 3604(f)(2) could be grafted onto § 3604(b). The exact words “in connection with such dwelling” would be substituted for “in connection therewith,” thereby

---

note 93. Although Congress did not change employment discrimination law in 2007, it just recently legislatively overruled the Ledbetter decision. Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009, Pub. L. No. 111-2, 123 Stat. 5. By Professor Schwem’s logic, a similarly harmful fair housing ruling from the Supreme Court could likewise spur a congressional amendment of the FHA. Interview with Robert G. Schwemm, supra note 93.

236. Professor Caruso warned that amending the FHA is dangerous because any attempt to improve or strengthen the Act would also open the door to other harmful amendments that could narrow or weaken it. Interview with F. Willis Caruso, supra note 95.

237. Professor Schwemm noted and then dismissed the risk, by pointing to the Supreme Court’s position that “unsuccessful Congressional attempts to amend are not worth much interpretative weight.” Interview with Robert G. Schwemm, supra note 93.

238. Professor Schwemm noted that by focusing on the landlord sexual harassment issue, Congress might be persuaded to take up the task of amending the FHA and to keep any such endeavor limited to the task at hand. Id.

239. The idea of looking to § 3604(f) for guidance on how to amend the other provisions of the FHA was originally proposed by Professor Schwemm during his interview. Id.


The John Marshall Law Review

resolving the § 3604(b) debate in favor of the broad interpretation. As amended, § 3604(b) would read:

It shall be unlawful to discriminate against any person in the terms, conditions, or privileges of sale or rental of a dwelling, or in the provision of services or facilities in connection with such dwelling, because of race, color, religion, sex, familial status, or national origin.

This change alone would not prohibit post-acquisition discrimination, but it would set the stage by indicating that the FHA is concerned with what happens to the occupant of a dwelling after the sale or rental transaction.

b. Link "services and facilities" to "use and enjoyment"

Second, a paraphrased version of the language from § 3604(f)(3)(B) could be inserted into § 3604(b). While § 3604(f)(3)(B) is about making “reasonable accommodations” for the disabled, the phrase “to afford such person equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling” could be incorporated into § 3604(b). As a result of this proposed amendment, § 3604(b) would read:

It shall be unlawful to discriminate against any person in the terms, conditions, or privileges of sale or rental of a dwelling, or in the provision of services or facilities in connection with such dwelling, or in the provision of services or facilities that impaired the use and enjoyment of such dwelling, because of race, color, religion, sex, familial status, or national origin.

Inserting this or similar “use and enjoyment” language would clearly protect occupancy rights, in relation to the provision of services or facilities in connection with the dwelling.

242. See supra Part III(E)(b) (examining the debate over the meaning of the “in connection therewith” phrase in § 3604(b) and noting the existence of both broad and narrow interpretations).
244. See SCHWEMM, supra note 17, at 14-3 (noting that HUD regulations, courts, and commentators had assumed that § 3604(b) protected occupancy rights; amending § 3604(b) to codify the broad interpretation that would validate those previous assumptions).
246. Id.
249. The “use and enjoyment” phrase in the current § 3604(f)(3)(B) protects occupancy rights. Short, supra note 24, at 217.
c. Link “use and enjoyment” to “intimidation and coercion”

Third, the same “use and enjoyment” phrase from § 3604(f)(3)(B) could be added to § 3617 to explicitly prohibit interference that occurs after the person has acquired the dwelling. Amended this way, § 3617 would read:

It shall be unlawful to coerce, intimidate, threaten, or interfere with any person in their use and enjoyment of a dwelling, in the exercise or enjoyment of, or on account of his having exercised or enjoyed, or on account of his having aided or encouraged any other person in the exercise or enjoyment of, any right granted or protected by section 3603, 3604, 3605, or 3606 of this title.

Incorporating the use and enjoyment language from § 3604(f) would not only maintain internal consistency, but it would track the HUD regulation interpreting § 3617, which presumes a post-acquisition reach of § 3617.

2. Use § 1982 “to hold” language

Alternatively, the “to hold” phrase from the 1866 Civil Rights Act could be inserted into both § 3604(b) and § 3617 to protect the right to hold onto already acquired housing, free from discrimination. If § 3604(b) was modified in this way, the relevant part would read: “or in the provision of services or facilities that impaired the right to hold such dwelling.” If § 3617 was modified in this way, the relevant part would read: “[i]t shall be unlawful to coerce, intimidate, threaten, or interfere with any person in their right to hold a dwelling.”

While the “to hold” language is from the 1866 Civil Rights Act, the “use and enjoyment” language is taken from the 1988 amendments to the FHA. Use and enjoyment is the preferred language to use when amending the FHA because it maintains internal consistency within the FHA, and because it appears to be the more modern
phrasing.

3. Focus on the parties

Another approach would be to amend the FHA to add language that puts the focus on the parties by defining who could be a proper defendant.258 For example, post-acquisition claims would be appropriate against a housing provider or professional (such as a landlord),259 a homeowners' association,260 or a municipality,261 which engaged in a discriminatory housing practice. The benefit of this transactional approach would be its thoughtful focus on those parties that have the ability to interfere with one's occupancy rights262 and to hold those parties liable, even post-acquisition.

The detriment to this approach, however, outweighs its benefits. The current FHA language does not expressly link housing rights to the identity of the defendant. In fact, the FHA defines a proper defendant very expansively as "the person or other entity accused in a complaint of an unfair housing practice."263 An FHA amendment that aimed to protect occupancy by defining the proper defendants in a post-acquisition complaint would require extensive legislative drafting. Such an amendment would also mean post-acquisition rights would be defined quite differently than pre-acquisition housing rights.264 Therefore, the targeted amendments previously discussed in Part IV(B)(1) that call for inserting language protecting "use and enjoyment" is the preferred solution to the Halprin problem.

258. Professor Oliveri proposed this approach of looking at the parties when asking whether the FHA as written applies post-acquisition. Oliveri, supra note 118, at 39-40. Because this judicial approach to overruling Halprin has already been rejected, this Comment uses Professor Oliveri's proposed way of interpreting the current statute as an alternative basis for amending the FHA.

259. Id. at 40.

260. Id. at 53.

261. Id. at 49-50.

262. Id. at 39.

263. 42 U.S.C. § 3602(n)(1) (2006); Professor Schwemm observed that the FHA "makes little effort to define the scope of proper defendants." SCHWEMM, supra note 17, at 12B:1. As a result, "anyone who commits one of the acts proscribed by the statute's substantive provisions is liable to suit, unless he is covered by one of the exemptions." Id.

264. Professor Schwemm thought that this factor—the extensive change required to put the focus on proper parties—worked against this approach, as maintaining internal consistency within a federal civil rights statute was an important consideration. Interview with Robert G. Schwemm, supra note 93.
V. CONCLUSION

The FHA has had only limited success in eradicating housing discrimination, much less in actually ending housing segregation. A narrow amendment to the FHA could nevertheless expressly protect the right to occupy a dwelling free from discrimination. Many courts and commentators thought the FHA did sanction such conduct as it is currently written. The ongoing circuit split, with two circuits holding the opposite, indicates that the debate is far from settled.

For proponents of fair housing, waiting for the Supreme Court to resolve the conflict with a favorable holding is risky and uncertain. The more efficient and comprehensive solution is to amend the FHA as it approaches its forty-first anniversary, removing any question whether the FHA protects occupancy. The “use and enjoyment” language from the 1988 FHA amendment could extend occupancy protection to § 3604(b). The same use and enjoyment language from § 3604(f) could be used in § 3617 to further protect occupancy from interference, intimidation, or coercion. Such a focused amendment to the FHA may be achievable, and it would remedy an identified but continuing housing discrimination problem.

Perhaps the Blochs’ appeal will prevail and they will get to proceed to trial. This would reopen the doors of federal court to the Blochs, but not other victims of post-acquisition housing discrimination. Even if the Bloch appeal led to Halprin’s reversal, such a reversal would not change the law in the Fifth Circuit, nor would it protect such claims from adverse judicial interpretation in the future. Only a targeted FHA amendment protecting occupancy will solve the problem on a national scale.