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TOPIC's AUDIT

in search of community

TOPIC'S AUDIT

Phase I-1973

"Some believe there is nothing one man or one woman can do against the enormous array of the world's ills. Yet many of the world's greatest movements of thought and action have flowed from the work of a single man. Few will have the greatness to bend history itself, but each of us can work to change a small portion of events, and in the total of all those actions will be written the history of this generation. It is from numberless diverse acts of courage and belief that human history is shaped. Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build currents that can sweep down the mightiest walls of depression and resistance."

Robert Kennedy

Audit Coordinators: Patty Mortl
Mike Silva

Cover Design and Illustrations: May Silva

FOREWORD

One afternoon, about two year ago, I asked a local real estate agent - an acquaintance - if he ever showed homes in my tract to black people. His response to my question was lengthy, covering a number of major points. 1) Black people generally want to live with other black people and do not want to look in white areas; 2) White people who have invested in a certain community have a right to maintain that community in the manner they desire, keep its racial integrity and protect the value of their property; 3) A realtor who would show to blacks in an all-white area would be blackballed on the multiple listing service, cut out of business by the other realtors, and lose his investment and his livelihood; 4) If I wished to live with blacks, I should move to where they were, since the majority opinion in my neighborhood was against me. He suggested one area in particular where I might like to move, and said he would be doing business there for another year or so, until it had reached the saturation level, and then he would be moving on where there was more activity.

The conversation presented me with a great personal frustration. I live in an all-white community, and am attempting to raise an open family in an environment where parents band together to call off proposed exchange field-trips involving schools from the inner city; where I have been asked to keep my friends' children inside my house when prospective buyers are looking at nearby For Sale homes. Having the facts of life explained to me, finding that I was a victim of manipulation policy, was a very discouraging shock. At the time, I could find no appropriate action.

About a year later, a small group of friends from an adjoining, integrated community came together to form a group called TOPIC - To Preserve Integrated Community. The group was formed in direct response to heavy real estate solicitation, panic peddling, and commercial exploitation of ever-delicate racial balance. Many of the people I knew in that community had moved there precisely because they wished to raise their families in integrated community; now they watched in dismay as that effort faded. For me the conclusion was obvious. As long as my community was closed to the black, their attempts to keep an integrated status were doomed to failure. I joined the group as Open Housing Coordinator.

There followed a series of arguments with a few local realtors who insisted that anyone could buy any house he wanted; that was the law. It would have been futile to continue the dialogue. I determined that I needed to develop some techniques, some skills, some insights to be able to clearly identify just what was happening before I could take action. The group agreed and pooled resources to send me to Rochester, N.Y. - the 19th Ward - for the National Neighbors Conference in the spring of 1973. Of special interest to me were: 1) A booklet, Racial Steering, which described much of what was apparently happening in our community; 2) a workshop on the audit technique, presented by members of St. Ann's Social Action Committee in Cleveland Heights, Ohio. When I returned from the conference, the group decided that we should conduct an audit, tailored to our community, to determine whether or not racial steering was taking place.

Another member of the TOPIC General Coordinating Committee, Mike Silva, joined with me in planning the course of action for the audit. Together, with the support of the other members of the group, we coordinated all phases of the audit, from the recruiting through the analysis, and on into the current follow-through program.

The purpose of the audit is a positive one - that is to help establish equal housing opportunity as a reality. My hope is that a measure of success in that effort will be achieved when the work of this, TOPIC's Audit, is completed.

Patty Mortl
Editor

INTRODUCTION

Racial steering is a term used to describe discriminatory activity in the showing of homes to prospective buyers. Steering is encouraging a home-seeker into or away from specific geographic areas and/or downgrading certain communities through negative remarks. When steering is based on the skin color of the home-seeker, it is termed racial steering.

Racial steering can be difficult to identify. That is not to say there are no blatant forms of steering. But those forms which are most obvious are also clearly illegal and extremely risky, increasingly so as more people become aware of the laws regarding equal opportunity in housing. For a sales agent to volunteer that a neighborhood is primarily black, turning fast, and on the skids is to invite prosecution and penalty. There are more subtle persuaders or disuaders which can be used equally as effectively to manipulate the racial composition of neighborhoods. For instance, if a home-seeker is relatively unfamiliar with a particular community, the agent may eliminate entire tracts from the list of available housing. Obviously the buyer who is unaware a neighborhood exists will not be able to select a home there. Or the agent may indicate that there are homes better suited to the buyer's needs in a different geographic area, in a manner convincingly enough that the buyer will cease insisting on the area he originally had in mind. The agent may choose to give lavish praise to one area and make absolutely no comment about another, leaving the home-seeker with a vague feeling of discomfort and uncertainty which will discourage further discussion of the one neighborhood and ease into a focus on the other. The same agent may then, with a client of a different color, totally reverse the procedure, thus maneuvering the buyers to perpetuate segregation.

What makes racial steering so problematical is that the home-seeker usually has no one with whom to compare notes. When one doesn't know how others have been treated, one can hardly discover whether or not he has been treated differently. It would border on ludicrous for a home-seeker to go to the local board of realtors or the real estate commission and report that an agent had said the music in the neighborhood schools wasn't as good as most people thought it was. It is extremely unlikely that such dialog would be termed discriminatory, and it is even more unlikely that such dialog would be compensated for or censured.

There is virtually no way to get at racial steering piecemeal-style. That is why the audit, properly planned and carried through, can be of such value in determining whether or not racial steering is being widely practiced in an area. It is only when that determination can can be convincingly established that appropriate action can be taken.

The results of widespread racial steering are clear. The integrated community, removed from the market of the white home-seeker, becomes a community in transition to black. The white community, removed from the market of the black home-seeker, virtually puts itself in position which encourages eventual block-busting, panic peddling, and commercial exploitation. Racial steering victimizes every segment of the urban population.

A Federal court has ruled recently that racial steering is a violation of the Federal Fair Housing Law. In Zuch v. Hussey, Judge Damon Keith said, "When a real estate agent actively undertakes an effort to influence the choice of a prospective homebuyer on a racial basis, the agent either directly or indirectly discourages the prospective homebuyer from purchasing a home in a particular area, and fosters the perpetuation of racially segregated communities.....the court concludes as a matter of law that steering is a violation of Section 3605 (a) of the Fair Housing Law."

It is through the audit technique that racial steering can be most clearly identified and articulately defined. Once the facts have been established and documented, there are unlimited avenues open to the solution of the problem. Probably the most effective are those that result in legal decisions such as the one cited above. When racial steering becomes costly rather than profitable, it may well fade into history.

THE AUDIT

TOPIC's Audit was conducted by forty volunteers, twenty white and twenty black. The volunteers were all residents of the Carson - Torrance general area of Los Angeles County. They were paired into teams, each team consisting of one white couple and one black couple. The couples were carefully matched to make all things equal in their home-seeking qualifications and needs. The only significant difference was the color of their skin. Each team was given an assignment to visit, over a period of eleven weeks, a total of seven real estate firms who served both the integrated and the all-white community. Originally there were fifteen firms selected at random for the audit. Two additional firms were added during the audit period.

Each couple recorded details of each visit on a data sheet which was immediately turned in to one of the audit coordinators. Specific information on the data sheet included the following: name and address of the realty firm; name and business card of the sales agent; date of the visit; area and price range of home sought; area and price range of homes available; display of HUD Equal Housing Opportunity poster on premises; availability of Multiple Listing Book; number of additional homes offered; unsolicited racial remarks made; negative neighborhood remarks made; financial terms offered; particulars of the home-seeker's scenario - size of family, profession, salary, and age; steering encountered; number of hours spent on the visit. The data sheet also provided space for fully-developed responses, verbatim quotes, and personal remarks.

Although a few technical difficulties were encountered occasionally, the original audit plan was adjusted to provide the balance that had been designed in it from the beginning. When Phase I of the audit was completed, a total of 117 visits had been made to 17 realty firms, and 72 salespersons had been contacted.

The audit data sheets were then examined and compared, point by point, to determine whether or not home-seekers, regardless of race, had equal housing opportunity. The findings of the audit are outlined in the following section of the booklet.

A preliminary report of the findings of the audit was forwarded to the Department of Justice, Housing Section of the Civil Rights Division, along with a complete set of documents relating to our investigation. Formal presentations were prepared and given at regular city council meetings in both Carson and Torrance. NAACP Legal Defense Fund attorney Lowell Johnston has been retained as our legal counsel. Specific proposals for positive action on the community level have been made by TOPIC and are under consideration by Carson City Council. Research is being carried out relating to radical restructuring of the current housing delivery system as it exists in the greater metropolitan area of Los Angeles. Audit - Phase II has been initiated. Details of some of the follow-up work of the audit are presented in the final section of the booklet.

THE RESULTS

Of the 17 realty firms visited, only 4 prominently displayed the HUD Equal Housing Opportunity poster in compliance with the law. The enforcement code of this regulation states that failure to display the poster is prima facie evidence of discriminatory practices.

95% of white couples requesting the Multiple Listing Book were shown it willingly; 21% of black couples were. 5% of white couples requesting the book were denied it; 64% of the black couples were.

In the desired price range of $35 - 45,000 homes, white couples were shown 68 additional homes; black couples were shown 35. White couples were shown a total of 116 additional homes; black couples were shown 88.

40% of the homes offered to black couples were out of their price range; 11% of the homes offered to white couples were out of their price range. Many of the homes shown to black couples were at least $10,000 higher than the desired price range.

There were 36 incidences of negative neighborhood remarks. 21 of these remarks were made to black couples about white communities.

One black couple was told that property in Torrance (a community with less than 1% black population) generally sold conventional and that it would be extremely difficult to find a home with FHA financing. Another black couple was told that they would need to earn more than $2000 a month to qualify for a $45,000 house in Torrance. A third couple was told that higher prices would have to be paid for homes in Torrance, and that the charge on a loan would be seven points.

Sales agents from 14 of the 17 firms visited made blatant racial remarks in clear violation of the Civil Rights Act of 1968. Approximately one-fourth of the audit data sheets indicated unsolicited racial remarks. 80% of these remarks were made to white couples about the Dominguez Hills and surrounding areas in Carson. These are black and integrated areas.

50% of the audit data sheets reported obvious steering. This steering involved 16 of the 17 firms visited. White couples were generally steered away from black or integrated areas, black couples were generally steered into those areas.

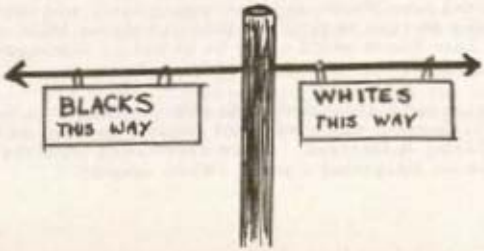
Although the Code of Practices of the Torrance - Lomita Board of Realtors states that no realtor has a right or responsibility to determine the racial composition of any neighborhood or any part thereof, over one-third of the sales agents did precisely that.

There was not a single white couple who did not experience at least one incident in which they were discouraged from seeking housing in integrated community.

Of the black couples requesting homes in Torrance, 75% encountered steering. They were directed to already-integrated or black communities.

Although no white or black couples specifically requested to see homes in Carriagedale, white couples were shown five homes in that tract, black couples were shown none. Black couples were discouraged from seeking homes in Green Meadows tract in almost every circumstance and directed into the neighboring integrated Palo del Amo Woods tract.

On four different occasions, when white couples and black couples requested to be shown identical listings, there was marked racial discrimination in the agents' responses.



Statistical information, facts and figures, numbers and percentages often seem cold and sterile; they do not always tell the story from the human perspective. The full story of the audit is interwoven in the individual experiences of the couples who participated and recorded their exchanges with the real estate agents. Following are excerpts from the written data sheets turned in by the couples:

When we asked about the area near the new Carson Mall, we were told that there were some problems in the schools. The agent said she would show us the area, but she thought that a private school might be a good idea. (White couple requesting integrated community)

She said you got a lot more house for your money "if you are willing to go over there." She called Carson a rapidly changing area. She said, "You've got to stay out of Dominguez Hills and Victoria Park areas. It's all black." When we said, "All black?" she said, "It's going all black. The mayor of Carson lives in Dominguez Hills. He's tried to put a stop to all real estate selling out of the area for a whole year. All the whites are moving." (White couple requesting integrated community)

"You have to be careful about the area if you buy in Carson. You'll know why you can get low-priced homes in certain areas if you just drive through them. These are changing neighborhoods. You know - Negroes are moving in. That whole area is black, although they are nice homes. There's panic selling over there. A few Negroes move in and all the Japanese panic and want to move out. Sometimes several Negro families move into the same house." An example of three Negro families in one home was given. "Even then they couldn't afford it." (White couple requesting integrated community)

We were advised to buy in Torrance because the area was better. The agent said Dominguez Hills would be a bad investment because it is turning all black. (White couple requesting integrated community)

The agent told us of selling a home in north Torrance to a couple who lived in Dominguez Hills. They were a Hawaiian couple with one daughter and the black kids gave the daughter such a bad time at school that they were anxious to get out. They sold their larger home in Dominguez Hills for less money than it cost them to buy an older, smaller home in north Torrance. (White couple requesting integrated community)

"The reason I didn't take you right there (Dominguez Hills) was because I wanted to explain. That area is about 75% colored and 25% Japanese and caucasian. I don't know if that makes any difference to you. Some people don't want to live in an area like that. Some people would prefer an area that's 50% colored and 50% white, but we have to tell you so you can't say later if you decided to buy there, that we didn't tell you. In fact, that's the law." When we said, "Really? That's the law? The government says you have to tell everyone that?" the agent replied, "Oh, yes. Otherwise, you wouldn't know what race lived there." (White couple requesting integrated community)

The agent told us that if we would stay south of Del Amo we'd find no blacks. He drove us to the house in Casa Dominguez to see the area for ourselves, after stating that it was about 60% black. He said he had more homes for the price we wanted in Casa Dominguez if we didn't mind the area. (White couple requesting integrated community)

"My advice to you would be to avoid that area. The whole area there seems to be going colored. I'd say that within about two or three years the whole area will be solid black. We're just not selling to whites there anymore." The agent went on to say that they were still selling to whites in the Palo del Amo Woods (integrated) and that prices hadn't gone down yet in Dominguez Hills, but that the whites were moving out and he wouldn't advise us to invest our money there. He added, "Those people over there in Carson, they say we caused it, the realtors. I don't know about the others, but I didn't cause it." (White couple requesting integrated community)

The agent said that Palo del Amo Woods was a very nice area, and there were very nice homes in it, but that it was starting to turn; not like Dominguez Hills, that had really turned. The agent said Palo del Amo Woods would never be as bad as Dominguez Hills. (White couple requesting integrated community)

The agent said that location had a great deal to do with the value of a home, and that they had a couple of listings in Gardena which were not selling, and that as we probably knew, only black people were buying in Gardena. As we drove away from the second house, the agent said, "This area is not integrated - yet." (White couple)

The agent commented that the area near Dominguez College was an integrated area. He said we could take home their listing catalog and see by comparison what was happening in that area. He said homes were more expensive in Green Meadows than in Dominguez because that is a nice area. (White couple requesting integrated community)

When we said we wanted Carson, the agent offered us a home in Carriagedale - very nice with a pool. (The same home was not offered to the black couple, although they specified a pool and the same price range - Ed. note) He said people just don't want to live in Dominguez Hills. "Being that you don't know this area, you don't know what's good for you. We'll show you what's best for you." We were then offered a home in Torrance. We insisted more on Dominguez Hills, and the agent said, "I'll drive you through and you can see for yourself." He said Torrance had the best schools in the area and Torrance was higher priced because it is the best area. "When you invest in a home and in a particular area, it depends what your priorities are." (White couple requesting integrated community)

"Yes, there are some beautiful homes there, but that area is quite integrated (Dominguez Hills). I don't know if that matters to you or not. Some people mind and some don't mind at all, but I feel I must tell you that." The agent then said that they had sold several homes to black couples and some were very nice people. Another reference to Carson as "quite integrated" was made. In another tract, we were told that some black people were buying there "but they are all professional people and any of them buying in there now would have to be making quite a good salary to be able to afford the homes." The agent then volunteered that homes in Carson would appreciate slowly because it was becoming more and more integrated. (White couple requesting integrated community)

The agent said, "I will sell you a house any place you want to buy, but if I were you, with two teenage daughters, I would not buy in Dominguez Hills because in about two years, it will be all black." (White couple requesting integrated community)

"Me, as a realtor, I am not to tell you this, but I would not like to sell you a house in that area, because in a year or two it will be all black. And you would have to sell it right away." (White couple requesting integrated community)

We were told that there were problems in the schools near the new shopping mall in Carson. There were Black Muslims in the area, even blacks didn't want to live there. The agent said that one family was scared out when a Muslim family vandalized their house. Two of her friends moved in and then out of the area. She would not recommend the area because of the problems. She would show us the area , if we wanted, and she thought a private school might be a good idea. (White couple requesting integrated community)

The agent had a four-bedroom listing on Galway in Carson, but even when we modified our position on Torrance and said proximity to both freeways would be good, she didn't tell us about Galway. In fact, she said as she looked at the book, "Carson, you don't want that." (White couple)

When we asked for homes in the South Bay and Carson, the agent mentioned a home in Gardena and said we could try the Redondo Beach office. He said Torrance was a nice area and that we'd like to live there, but that taxes were high. We mentioned the new mall in Carson, and he said, "You don't want to live there. It's too black." (White couple requesting integrated community)

When we asked for homes near the Carson Mall or near Cal State Dominguez, we were shown one home in the county strip, two others far from the requested area. We were finally shown a home in the general area we had asked for, but the agent said nothing about that home, although her praise was lavish for the others. (White couple requesting integrated community)

The agent said they had one four-bedroom, but that it was in an integrated area. "I don't think you'd be interested in that, but of course I don't know your feelings about that." The agent emphasized that the area was heavily integrated and said that property values are always lower in integrated areas. "If I had a home in that area, I'd sell now." (White couple)

Asked about the tract near the new Carson Mall, the realtor responded, "You don't want to live there; it's too black. It's no place to raise your kids. It's 70% black, but if you want to live in that type of an area, I'll show it to you." (White couple requesting integrated community)

The agent told us that any home north of Del Amo Boulevard is integrated. He volunteered which streets in Carson are integrated. Following insistence on our part that we be shown a home in Dominguez Hills, the agent said it was empty and that we could go by and look in the windows, but would make no attempt to take us and show it. (White couple requesting integrated community)

The agent said, "We tell colored people too, if it's an all-white area. A lot of them don't want to live in an all-white area." On a follow-up call, the agent said there were three homes available in Dominguez Hills but wanted to be sure we understood the area was about 75% colored. The agent then offered to check on the schools, called me back and gave me the phone number of Leapwood Elementary. She suggested I call them to see if there were any problems between the mixed races. (White couple requesting integrated community)

The agent said Dominguez Hills would be a bad investment because it is turning all black. (White couple requesting integrated community)

The agents said, "Carson is rough." (White couple requesting integrated community)

When we asked for Dominguez Hills, we were shown one terribly run-down house, badly in need of repairs. The price was $32,500 although we had stated $40,000. The sales agent commented on the poor condition of the house and then drove us to the county strip to show us other homes. (White couple requesting integrated community)

When we talked about the area near the Carson Mall, the agent said that it was an exposed area. When we asked what that meant, the agent said that it had more traffic. (White couple requesting integrated community)

The agent called another firm to see about some listings and said, in response to one of the listings given, "That's in Leadership (Dominguez Hills) isn't it?" and did not take the listing down. (White couple)

On August 25, an agent showed the black couple a home on Caney in Dominguez Hills. Seven days later, the same agent told the white couple that he was unfamiliar with the area when they requested Dominguez Hills.

When we requested housing in Carson or Torrance, we were shown seven homes in Torrance and told how great an area it is, how good the schools are, and that there are no ethnic problems. We were shown one more home, in Gardena. The agent mentioned that there was one home in Carson, but only after we had returned to the realty office. (White couple)

We specified an area between the hospital and Cal State Dominguez but the agent volunteered homes which did not meet our specifications and did not mention that there were even existing homes in the area requested. When we pointed to a map and said, "What about these homes?" the agent asked our feelings about integrated neighborhoods. When we said that would be fine, the agent continued to insist that she would really like to get us into another area. Although one home in Dominguez Hills fit our specifications perfectly, we were shown three other homes first, all outside the area requested - one with a pool although we had specifically said a pool was out because of small children. As we were running out of time, we were finally driven to the home in Dominguez Hills. (White couple requesting integrated community)

The agent said, "There are no homes anywhere near the new mall." (White couple requesting integrated community)

We specifically requested homes in Dominguez Hills. The agent showed us a home in Torrance, and suggested that we go look at another house in Torrance. We asked again for Dominguez Hills. The agent said he would check the listing book. He called back later with a list of five homes in Dominguez Hills. He was very excited about the homes in Torrance, very matter-of-fact about the others. (White couple requesting integrated community)

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The cumulative effect of individual irresponsibility is graphically illustrated by the above series of excerpts from the audit data sheets of white volunteers. The integrated status of the community is in grave jeopardy of course. In addition, those people who have homes for sale in the integrated community are deprived of the opportunity of showing their homes to an indeterminable number of potential buyers. The agent-client relationship itself is violated by the manipulation of home-seekers.

In contrast to what was told to white volunteers regarding integrated communities, it is interesting to note how agents responded to black volunteers about the same communities.

The agent was told over the phone that the house we wanted to see in Torrance was sold. He mentioned that Palo del Amo Woods and Dominguez Hills were nice integrated areas.

When we didn't specify a particular area, the agents said we would probably like the Dominguez area. After a try there, they thought we would like the Woods. When we strongly stated that we were not interested in that area, and wanted to see Torrance, we were taken to see a home, two-bedroom (although the stated size of our family was 5) for $45, 000 and one other home for $64, 000.

Although we requested West Carson, we were repeatedly urged into the Del Amo Highlands area. The agent suggested that the area we chose might be more commercial than the area suggested by him. He was definitely set on the Broadacres school area.

When we went in to see homes in Torrance, the agent told us about some homes in Carson, mentioning the new shopping mall. I did not respond. The agent then wrote down three addresses in Carson for us to drive by and see.

Although the south Torrance area was specifically requested, the agent suggested several times that homes in Dominguez Hills should be considered by us.

The agent told us that a home in Torrance would cost about $10, 000 more than a home in Carson-Dominguez Hills. He gently discouraged us from looking in Torrance, and encouraged us to look in Carson-Dominguez Hills. He told us our dollar would buy more there. He continued to lead us back to Dominguez Hills, making a positive remark about the new Carson Mall .

When we asked to see homes in Torrance, the agent told us that homes are expensive in Torrance and that they don't like to bother much with large houses because of points. He suggested that there were nice homes in Dominguez Hills. We said we already lived there.

We requested to see one home in the Multiple Listing Book, but when the agent called, he was told it was sold. We inquired about another, and the agent made another phone call and stated that it also was sold. He said that homes in Torrance were overpriced and we could get a better home at a cheaper price elsewhere. He suggested East Carson, and showed us pictures of homes in Casa Dominguez.

When we asked to see homes in Torrance, we were discouraged by the agent who said he could not find comparable homes in Torrance to the one in Dominguez Hills.

The agent told us how he had informed a Southern white lady how nicely the Negroes' homes and yards were kept up, and the white lady had then bought in the area. He told us that Dominguez Hills was integrated and that the families kept up their homes. He said, "Just last week I sold a home to a white couple in that area."

We requested a home in the county strip; the agent said that if we would settle for a four-bedroom, he had some nice homes in the Leadership tract in Dominguez Hills. We said, "No, we are familiar with the area there." He said, "Do you know where the new shopping mall is being built on Del Amo?" We said we did. He said, "There are nice homes over there."

We asked to see homes in Carson and Torrance. We were shown three homes in Carson. When we asked about Torrance again, the agent said the same homes in Torrance would be so much more expensive, and repeated this until he was sure I wouldn't care to see one. We were never shown a home in Torrance.

When we walked in the office, the listing book was immediately opened to Carson. When we stated that we weren't necessarily interested in Carson, the agent didn't seem to hear. He continued to flip through the Carson area pages. We again stated our non-commitment to Carson. The agent gave us an address of a $60, 000 home in Torrance to drive by. Our price range was $45 - 50, 000.

When we asked to see homes in Torrance, the agent stated he had a very nice home on Gladwick in Dominguez Hills.

Although we stated that we were already living in Dominguez Hills and were looking for a new home, the agent tried to disuade us. He said, "Dominguez Hills is having its problems now, but give it another 10 years, and it will be one nice place to live. Let's face it, there aren't too many places that people can go around here, if they want to live in a beautiful home."

The agent told me all the reasons he would not recommend Torrance. He said that what I had heard about Torrance was a lot of propaganda, and that there were very few homes for sale there. He said I would have more to choose from in Carson - Dominguez Hills. He said that Carson was a very progressive city, but repressive for realtors.

The agent wondered if we had looked in Carson. He was told we already lived in Carson. He later asked if we would not consider a larger home in Carson, since that would be closer to work for us.

On a follow-up visit, after we had been shown a home in Palo del Amo Woods, the agent offered to show us homes in Dominguez Hills. We declined.

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Repeatedly, agents assumed that integrated community was desirable, or suitable, only for the black home-seeker. One agent stated that blacks don't look in Torrance; that they want an integrated or all-black neighborhood; that they move to Carson or some parts of Lomita, Harbor City and Gardena. If the remark was sincere, it was, at best, patently ignorant.

Among the experiences encountered during the audit visits, some defy classification. One black couple called and made an appointment for a specific hour to see a specific home in an all-white community. When they arrived at the appointed time, the agent took out the listing book and attempted to show them homes in other areas. When they said they would like to see the home they had inquired about, he said they would have to call and make an appointment to see it. On another occasion, a black couple called and made an appointment to see a specific home in a white community. When they arrived at the office, the agent said that the family had gone out of town for the day and had not left the key. They made a new appointment to see the same house. When they came for that appointment, the agent said the family was having a dinner party and would be unable to show the house for several hours. The black couple said they would come back, and they did; and they were shown the home. On some occasions, the agent's resistance to show a home overcame the couple's insistence to be shown the home. The best illustration of that struggle occurred when it was necessary for the agent to drive directly past the street where the requested home was located, not once but twice, as he anxiously showed other, more suitable homes to the couple. Although the couple commented on that fact, they were never shown the home in question.

On other occasions, when black couples had made appointments over the phone, the agent had no time to show houses when they arrived at the office. The agent might jot down two or three addresses, telling the couple to drive by and take a look, and if they saw anything they liked, they could call for an appointment in a few days.

Blacks who requested homes in Torrance were frequently taken to Palo del Amo Woods, an integrated tract with a Harbor City mailing address, in the unincorporated county strip. Some were told that the tract was in Torrance; others were told nothing. Some black couples reported that they simply did not have time to see as many homes as were available to them in that tract. When they inquired about adjacent tracts, they were told the houses were small, poorly constructed, and not good values.

One example deserves special mention in the audit report. A black couple, who had requested homes in Torrance in the $40 - 45,000 price range, was taken to Palo del Amo Woods. They were shown five homes there, far out of their price range. The agent stated that the tract was in the Torrance strip, with a Torrance post office, that he thought it was in the Torrance school district, and that residents could vote for the mayor and councilmen of Torrance. Since his brochure listed a home in Carriagedale which suited the specifications, the couple asked to see that home. The agent said that it was small. When the couple asked where Carriagedale was located, the agent said it was west of Western, about four miles from its actual location. The agent did not take the couple to the house, nor did he help the conversation along with regard to the house. What makes this example noteworthy is not so much the extremism, although that in itself is almost comically paranoid. It is that, for the average bona fide home-seeker, the entire incident could seem ordinary, unremarkable, and non-discriminatory.

Another method of discouraging black home-seekers from Torrance was employed by an agent who drove the couple through a section of run-down homes and trailer courts, and past a junk-yard full of old beat-up cars. The agent pointed out that there were many sections of the city that were similar to that. One agent stated that most of the homes in Torrance were so old they would have to be torn down within the next few years. Another stressed age, price, and taxes of homes in Torrance, and was, as the couple stated in their report, "very discouraging."

Discouraging is an appropriate adjective describing the overall reports of black volunteer couples who sought housing in the white community. Discouraging because a man who does not have reasonable options cannot be said to have free choice, cannot be said to have equal opportunity. Discouraging because there aren't enough auditors available to monitor real estate activity on a continuing and comprehensive basis. Discouraging because, in racial steering, what a man doesn't know can, indeed, hurt him.

THE PROGRAM: AN ANALYSIS

There are many different perspectives from which to examine the audit. The following is a technical perspective, and will be of particular interest to those who are concerned with such things as adequate sampling and high degree of confidence in results and conclusions. Some of the information contained here, pertaining to the actual setting up of the audit, may repeat information that appears earlier in the booklet. This is in the interest of presenting a compact and comprehensive picture of the program all of its stages: the planning; the carrying out; and the analysis of the results.

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In July of 1973, TOPIC initiated a specific program to collect factual data to determine whether or not racial steering was being practiced in the Torrance - Carson area of Los Angeles County. The program is termed "audit", and the techniques were derived primarily from an audit conducted by St. Ann's Social Action Committee, Cleveland Heights, Ohio, as outlined in a workshop session at National Neighbors Conference in Rochester, N. Y. in the spring of 1973. Another invaluable source of information in planning the audit was Racial Steering, a publication of National Neighbors, Philadelphia, Pa. It was required reading for the entire team of audit volunteers.

The area in which the audit was conducted is outlined on the map which appears on the facing page. This area was ideal for the audit because it has a wide variety of ethnic communities, including predominantly black areas bordering on integrated areas, and predominantly white areas. The area residents have a wide diversity of income and available housing. All the volunteers for the audit were chosen from within the area. In addition, all the real estate firms chosen for visits did business primarily within the area.

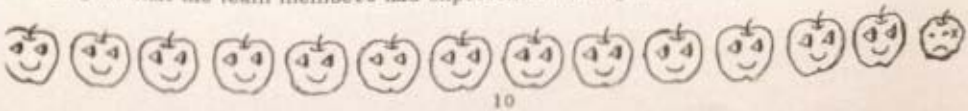
Volunteers were grouped into teams, each team consisting of two couples, carefully matched according to income, age, number of children, and in many cases profession. The only difference was in skin color. The procedure in the audit provided for each team to visit seven real estate firms, randomly assigned, over a period of eleven weeks. As the program was originally outlined, each firm was to be visited a total of five times by a black couple, five times by a white couple, resulting in a total of 150 visits.

Each team underwent extensive training to safeguard the admissibility of the audit as legal evidence. In the training period of three sessions, the teams were cautioned not to lead the salespersons into any racial discussions. In addition, they were instructed not to communicate with their partner couple on the team, to document all that transpired in their visits, to quote verbatim when possible the dialog exchange with the salespersons.

The couples kept extensive, factual records on an audit data sheet which was filled out and witnessed immediately after each visit. The audit coordinators kept all the audit data sheets until the completion of the entire audit. Included in the information on the sheets were particulars about: compliance with Federal Law requiring display of Equal Housing Opportunity posters (CFR Title 24); availability of the Multiple Listing Book; price of the homes sought versus price of the homes offered; area of the homes sought versus area of the homes offered; number of additional homes offered; unsolicited racial remarks made; negative neighborhood remarks made; specifics of financial terms offered for purchase; description of the home-seeker in regard to salary, family size, age, occupation, ability to make monthly payments, and other relevant facts. Couples also recorded hours spent on each visit.

The selection of individual salespersons was based on chance rather than on choice. Each couple made appointments with the first salesperson they came in contact with. Usually the appointments were made by telephone for a specific interview and showing, but occasionally a couple simply dropped into an office. In some cases, there were follow-up visits, although that was exceptional rather than the rule.

The information-gathering stage of the audit lasted from the end of July until well into October. At the end of that stage, the written reports of each team were carefully and repeatedly examined. Data was transferred onto 4 x 6 cards under the following categories: Salespersons visited from each realty firm; Hud sign violations; Negative Comments; Lies and Misinformation; Racial remarks; Steering; and Special Interest. Each card was cross-referenced to the original written document, identifying the team couple and the realty company visited. These cards proved to be extremely useful in analyzing the findings and facilitating the understanding of what the team members had experienced during the audit period.



An additional form was created to tabulate the information from the audit data sheets. Computer data forms were filled out by each individual team, based on the notes taken and reports made from the visits. This information provided the data base for a digital program specifically designed to extract results from the study. The data was tabulated according to color, team code, realty company code and the particular category of interest, such as the zones in which additional homes were shown or the price range in which additional homes were shown. The program had great flexibility in sorting and extracting data according to any of the categories listed on the computer data forms.

RESULTS

One hundred and seventeen (117) visits were completed by the end of the audit period, sixty-three (63) by the white couples, and fifty-four (54) by the black couples. The couples visited a total of seventeen (17) local realty offices and were shown approximately three hundred (300) homes by seventy-two (72) real estate salespeople. Of the seventeen real estate firms visited, sixteen (16) are members of the Torrance-Lomita Board of Realtors; the Board represents somewhat over 200 members including 1200 salespeople.

The teams spent a total of 500 hours on the visits to the real estate firms, and an additional 600 hours in preparation, training and audit-associated activities. The coordinators of the Audit spent an additional 2500 hours in preparation, training, coordinating and other detail. Added to those hours was time spent typing, copying, mailing, and telephoning. In addition, there was computer time. The total number of volunteer hours for the audit exceeds 4000. This figure is not intended to be discouraging, but to indicate the sustained effort involved in carrying through such a program. The time does not include any of the follow-up activity resulting directly from the audit.

The statistical results of the audit are reported earlier in the booklet.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

For the purpose of summary, the focus will be placed solely on that data which pertains to steering - namely, racial remarks made, obvious steering, and negative neighborhood comments. Although legally, one case of discrimination is accepted as sufficient evidence of discriminatory practice, those real estate firms which were not visited at least four times are eliminated in this summary because of insufficient sampling.

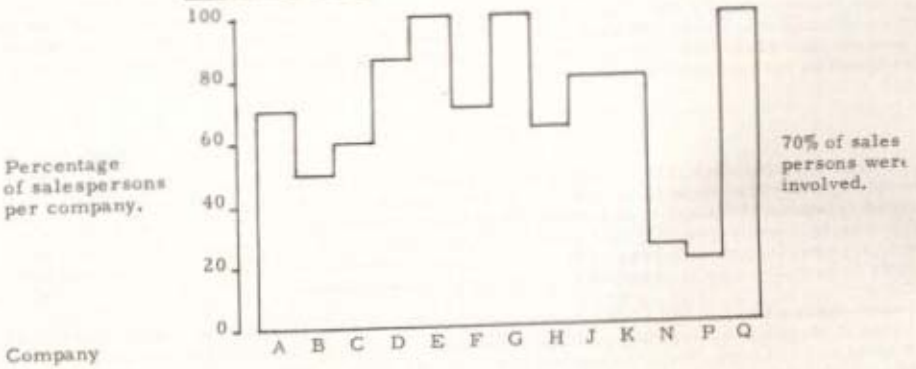
Typically, the real estate salespersons would admit that "there may be a couple of rotten apples in the barrel". The purpose of the following charts is to dispel that notion from the findings of the audit. Chart # 1 indicates the proportion of salespersons involved in each of the three categories stated above.

"THERE MAY BE A COUPLE ROTTEN APPLES....."

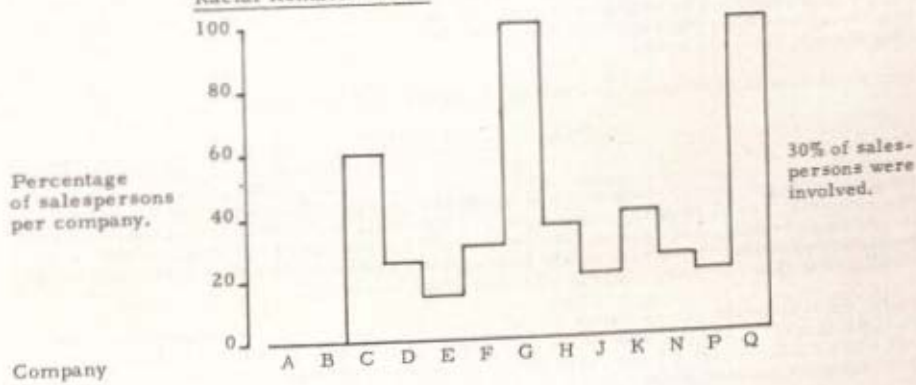
Chart # 1

SALESPERSONS INVOLVED IN STEERING

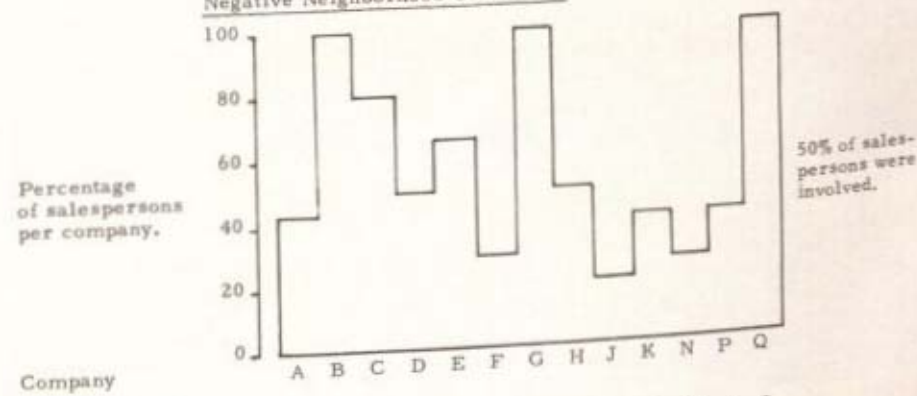
Obvious Steering



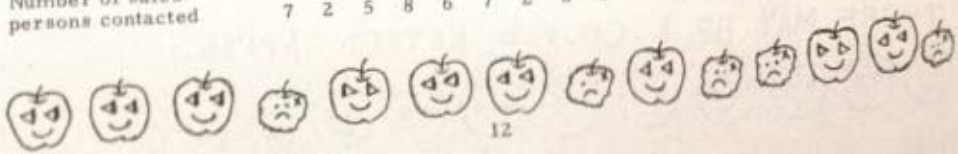
Racial Remarks Made



Negative Neighborhood Comments



Number of sales-persons contacted 7 2 5 8 6 7 2 8 5 5 4 5 2



It is evident that we are not looking at just a few rotten apples. When every company audited had at least one salesperson cited for obivous steering; when three companies had every salesperson cited for steering; when a total of 46 out of a possible 66 salespeople were cited for steering, we can only conclude that steering practices cannot be attributed to an isolated few.

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Let us now take a look at Chart # 2, at the real estate firms, how they performed on the whole, to discover if we have a case of a few isolated firms. The chart graphically illustrates the number of incidences out of the number of possibilities for steering. The data is presented in percentages.

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Here again we see that a significant percentage of the visits resulted in some form of steering. There is one company that steered every time it had the opportunity to do so, and one company that steered nine times out of ten. We have what certainly appears to be a pattern in the real estate industry, rather than a few rotten apples.

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"I want you to understand this, and I will tell you this whether you're prejudiced or not. I will always tell people whether an area is black, white, Oriental, Mexican or mixed. This area is mixed. Now - how do you feel about that?" *

*Source: Mr. R. Apple, local r.e. agent. Oct. 1973.

Chart # 3, designated Summary Sheet, presents the same information as Charts # 1 and # 2, but the raw data is in numerical form. Numbers tell the same story as do graphs. In the case of TOPIC's audit, on a scale of least-to-most, the least offensive offender offended more than 25% of the time. The most offensive offender offended all the time.

One can note, on the additional information regarding companies excluded from the audit results because of insufficient sampling, that performance bore out the findings in the more comprehensive sampling. In the bleak picture, there was little discernible relief. We conclude that the overall results of the audit establish, beyond a reasonable doubt, that racial steering is being practiced in the Torrance - Carson area of Los Angeles County, specifically in the area outlined in the map, figure 1.

We further conclude that our statistics, with only small percentage variation, would be borne out were we to audit the 200-plus real estate firms active in the area, the 1200 salespeople doing business in the area. Translated, the figures would read 120 firms, 800 persons.

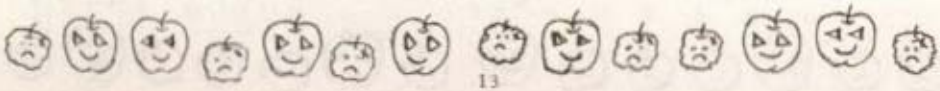
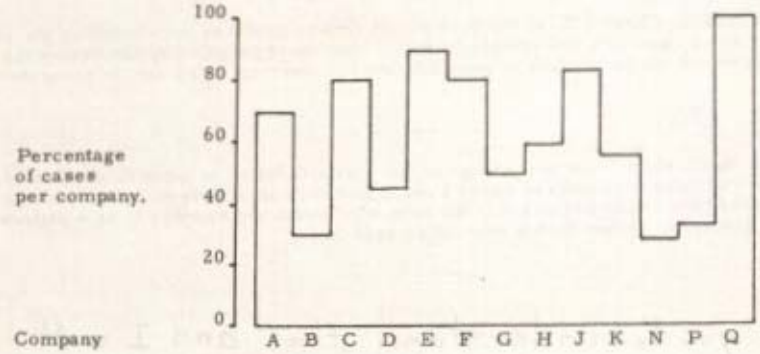


Chart # 2

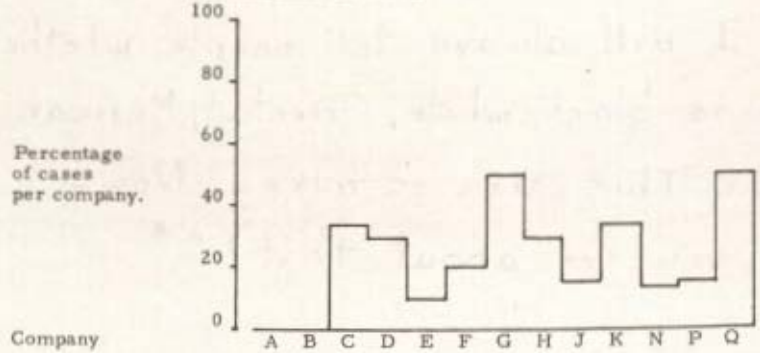
COMPANIES INVOLVED IN STEERING

Obvious Steering



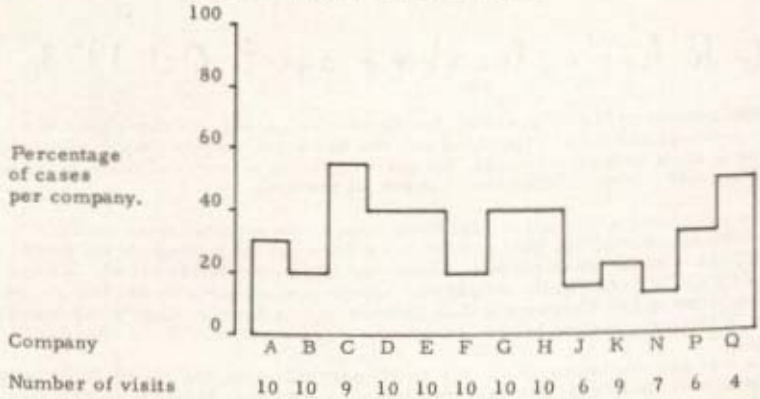
There were 66 cases, out of a possible 111.

Racial Remarks Made



There were 25 cases, out of a possible 111.

Negative Neighborhood Comments



There were 36 cases, out of a possible 111.

Chart # 3

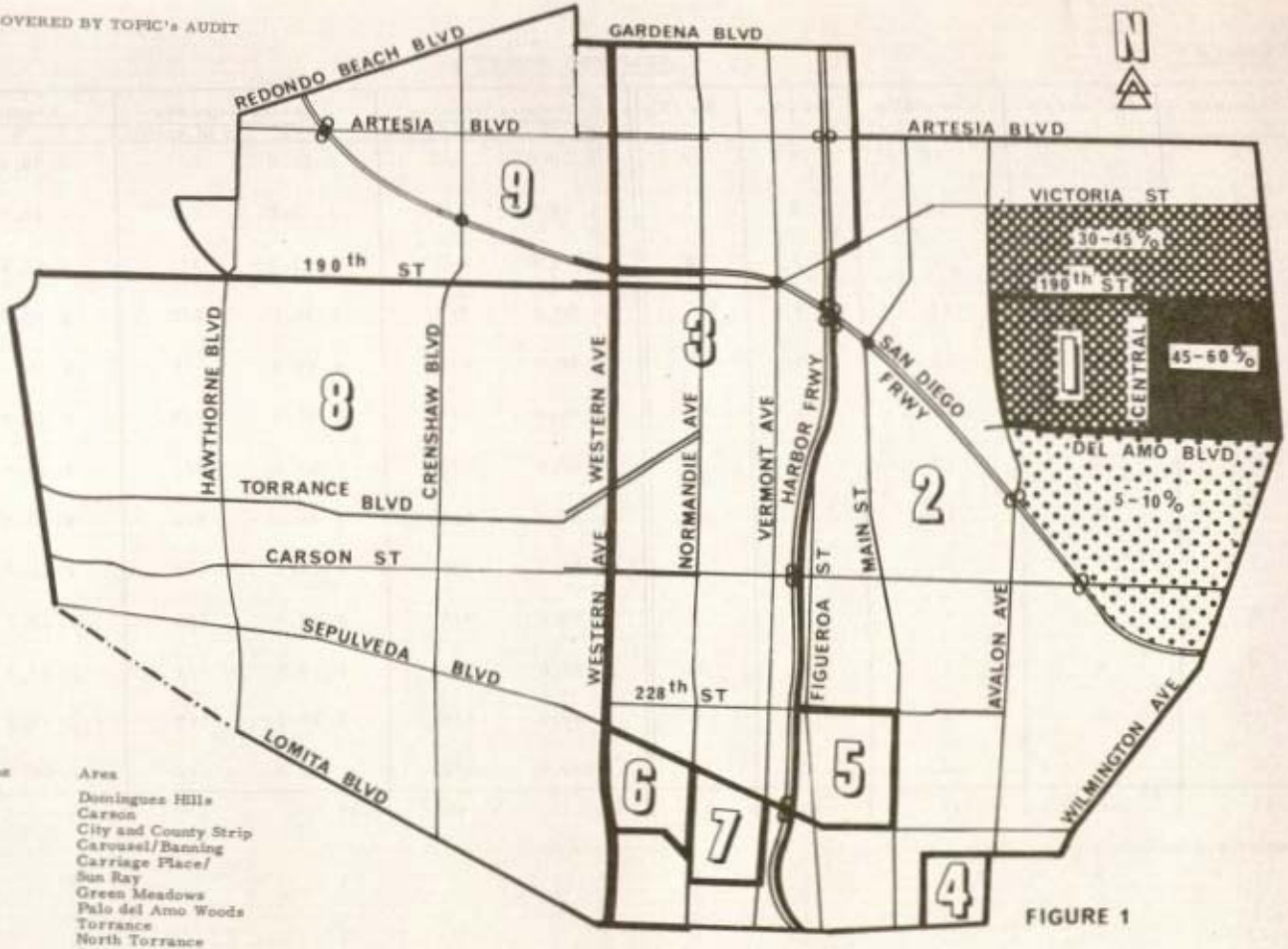
SUMMARY SHEET

Company	# of agents	# of visits	By (W)	By (B)	Obvious Steering #	Obvious Steering %	Obvious Steering # of agents	Racial Remarks #	Racial Remarks %	Racial Remarks # of agents	Negative Comments #	Negative Comments %	Negative Comments # of agents
A	7	10	5	5	7	70.0	5/7	0	00.0	0/7	3	30.0	3/7
B	2	10	5	5	3	30.0	1/2	0	00.0	0/7	2	20.0	2/2
C	5	9	5	4	4	44.4	3/5	3	33.3	3/5	5	55.6	4/5
D	8	10	5	5	9	90.0	7/8	3	30.0	2/8	4	40.0	4/8
E	6	10	5	5	8	80.0	6/6	1	10.0	1/6	4	40.0	4/6
F	7	10	5	5	5	50.0	5/7	2	20.0	2/7	2	20.0	2/7
G	2	10	5	5	6	60.0	2/2	5	50.0	2/2	4	40.0	2/2
H	8	10	6	4	6	60.0	5/8	3	30.0	3/8	4	40.0	4/8
J	5	6	3	3	5	83.3	4/5	1	16.7	1/5	1	16.7	1/5
K	5	9	5	4	5	55.6	4/5	3	33.3	2/5	2	22.2	2/5
N	4	7	4	3	2	28.6	1/4	1	14.3	1/4	1	14.3	1/4
P	5	6	3	3	2	33.3	1/5	1	16.7	1/5	2	33.3	2/5
Q	2	4	2	2	4	100.0	2/2	2	50.0	2/2	2	50.0	2/2
Total 13	66	111	58	53	66		46	25		20	36		33

Companies not included:

L	2	2	1	1	1	1	0
M	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
Add-1	2	1	1	0	2	0	0
Add-2	1	1	1	0	1	1	0

AREA COVERED BY TOPIC's AUDIT



Zone	Area
1	Dominguez Hills
2	Carson
3	City and County Strip
4	Carousel/Banning
5	Carriage Place/ Sun Ray
6	Green Meadows
7	Palo del Amo Woods
8	Torrance
9	North Torrance
10	Other

FIGURE 1

Unshaded areas - less than 5% black population

FOLLOW - UP

One of the most challenging aspects of the audit is the decision-making concerning what to do with the results, once the fact-gathering stage is finished. That decision-making needs to take place prior to the actual audit because much of the technique is determined by what one wishes to achieve.

From the beginning, the volunteer teams agreed that legal action would follow the audit if the results indicated that would be appropriate. Therefore, certain safeguards were taken to make sure that the evidence would be admissable in court.

The teams also agreed that public information and education relating to discriminatory showing of homes would be a desirable follow-up activity.

A third course of action was also determined at the beginning of the audit. The teams felt that local community government involvement would be necessary if the audit discovered in fact that the area was being victimized by racial steering. Thus, in the case of TOPIC's audit, three categories of activity were clearly established: 1) legal action; 2) education; and 3) local government involvement. The following paragraphs outline some of the projects undertaken in each of these area.

Legal Action: The first step taken at the close of fact-gathering and analysis was to send a comprehensive packet of documentation to the U.S. Department of Justice, along with an accompanying cover letter asking that an investigation be conducted. At a somewhat later date, after a rather extensive search for a competent and committed constitutional lawyer, we retained NAACP Legal Defense Fund attorney Lowell Johnston as counsel. In addition, at the present time, HUD Violation Complaints are being prepared. It is the determination of TOPIC that legal activity, on all levels, is mandated both by the extremely high number of incidents and salespersons involved, and by the various categories of violations which were reported on the audit data sheets. One action does not necessarily preclude another, and decisions in different areas of law have great potential as discouragers of further violations.

Education: As part of a broad goal of achieving equal housing opportunity, a program of disseminating the information of the audit has been initiated. A community meeting is planned so that area residents can be aware of manipulation and exploitation when they experience it, and so that they will be fully knowledgeable about where and how to report such incidences. A series of articles for local newspaper publication is being prepared, the first of which has been accepted for printing. One of the audit coordinators is available for workshop sessions on the audit and racial steering, and has participated in a regional HUD E O Seminar to relate the specifics of TOPIC's audit and its implications. Communications regarding the audit have been sent to such groups as League of Women Voters, L.A. Senate of Priests, National Assembly of Women Religious, Episcopal Social Action Committee, Common Cause, fair housing groups throughout the country, city human resources commissions, and others too numerous to mention. A schedule of presentations for public information has been set up, and positive response to all groups requesting a program is being attempted. The demands for more information have been high, due in part to extensive coverage by local press, radio stations, and TV channels at the time the results of the audit were released to the public. A workshop on the audit will be presented at the 1974 National Neighbors Conference in Atlanta. A symposium is being planned at California State College, Dominguez Hills, and sociology students will participate in studies of the audit and of TOPIC, and in further studies in Phase II of the audit. TOPIC's position in regard to education about the audit and racial steering can be stated in two words: We're Available.

Local Government Involvement: Shortly after the fact-gathering and analysis stages of the audit were completed, TOPIC made two presentations of the results. The first was to the Carson City Council; the second was to the Torrance City Council. The emphasis of the first presentation was on the negative image being superimposed on the city of Carson and the area of Dominguez Hills by the real estate agents in the area. The emphasis of the second presentation was on the unavailability of housing for the minority black community in Torrance and the steering of blacks into already integrated or predominantly black communities, such as Palo del Amo Woods and Dominguez Hills, among others. TOPIC was granted a workshop session with the Carson City Council in response to its request. Although the Torrance City Council was invited to that session, only one Torrance councilman was in attendance. As might be expected, the Carson City Council was concerned, seriously disturbed, and determined to take action to see that such activities ceased immediately. As also might be expected, the Torrance City Council, with two exceptions, received the report with apathy.

They did not know why TOPIC has chosen to come to them, and stated that they could do nothing about such practices. After a bit of fruitless exchange between the coordinators of the audit and the councilmen, the mayor abruptly adjourned the council meeting.

TOPIC has sent a letter to the Human Resources Commission of the city of Torrance, with specific proposals for action that could be taken by that commission in following up the results of the audit. At the time of publication of this booklet, no response of any type has been received by TOPIC.

A second workshop session is being scheduled with the Carson City Council, and once again the Torrance City Council will be invited to participate. An invitation is also being issued to the Torrance - Lomita Board of Realtors, the organization to which 16 or the 17 firms in the audit belong. That workshop session will address itself to five specific proposals made at the first session by TOPIC. Those proposals deal with five major points:

1) Human Resources: TOPIC requests the formation of a Human Resources Commission for the city of Carson. TOPIC also asks that the city enter into dialogue with interested faculty of Cal State Domingues College on the formation and function of such commission.

2) Image of Carson: TOPIC requests a city membership in National Neighbors, as a symbol of support for the national effort to make equal housing opportunity a reality in the United States. TOPIC also asks for a publicity policy which will emphasize the desirability of multi-racial community, the city concerns for equal opportunities, and the activities engaged in by the city in the pursuit of freedom and equality.

3) Law: TOPIC requests a thorough review of ordinancing - city, state, and federal, with regards to fair housing; and a city program to make that information readable, understandable and available to the community. TOPIC also asks for an examination of existing law and pre-emption, in order to discover a way to city control over racial steering, and an effective way to enforce, at the city level, violation. In addition, TOPIC asks for the establishment of a real estate practices commission.

4) Communications: TOPIC requests a newsletter from city hall, to be distributed at least every other month, having a section devoted to to specific concerns of individuals or organizations, and current information as to how those concerns are being dealt with or resolved. TOPIC also asks for written response to all correspondence.

5) Follow-Up: TOPIC requests that the council set a date for a second workshop session concerning racial steering, the audit, and solutions.

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There may be a question in the reader's mind about the response of the realty firms, the salespeople, the Board of Realtors itself. Interestingly enough, no one at any time challenged the validity of our statistics or questioned the audit. Also interestingly, no realtor or representative talked to TOPIC directly. Responses were made to the press, demanding the release of the names of the offending individuals so that they could properly dealt with. They accused TOPIC, in the press, of defaming the entire industry, and filed a motion for perpetuation of testimony in Superior Court. Legal Defense Fund filed a removal petition to Federal Court on grounds that the intention of the original proceeding was harassment. At the time of publication, TOPIC is waiting for a decision on that petition. The full legal story will not be told for some time to come, undoubtedly. However, this does not particularly impede further progress in other areas.

Since so many individuals - real estate agents, newspaper reporters, councilmen, residents, and homeowners - felt strongly that the names of individuals ought to be released to the public, a formal response was drafted and read publicly at the first TOPIC workshop session. For general information, a copy of that letter follows.

December 13, 1973

Ed Furnee, President
Torrance - Lomita Board of Realtors
22833 Arlington
Torrance, CA

Dear Mr. Furnee:

The purpose of this letter is to respond to your queries regarding the audit and our follow-up procedures.

The audit, from the very beginning, was designed as a discovery procedure - that is, it was to help us identify a problem, not a person. The fact that certain individuals or realty firms were discovered, that they happened to be real people with names, operating within the framework of an industry, is, for the purposes of what we wish to accomplish at this time of the proceedings, nothing more than incidental. If we had wanted to nail down specific people in public, we would have done something quite different from the audit. I myself could have simply gone from firm to firm until I found one in violation. I could have then shouted, "Gotcha!" and turned in that person. The direction of the audit, however, made such activity irrelevant.

We do not wish to play Crime and Punishment with the Board. We have not asked for a tribunal to determine guilt of individuals. We have rather addressed ourselves to effecting long-range, far-reaching solutions to a problem of tremendous magnitude.

Had we, in our audit, found one or two or three or seven or twelve individuals operating in an anti-social, unethical fashion, perhaps we would have decided that the best course of action would be to turn them over to a board of their peers; perhaps we would have decided that there was no problem existing here, and that we needed to look elsewhere to pinpoint just what was happening. Perhaps we would have found that, on the whole, the real estate industry was totally in accord with fair housing principles and turned elsewhere to begin a new discovery procedure.

But we did not find one or two or three or seven or twelve individuals operating in an anti-social, unethical fashion. We found time after time, agent after agent, firm after firm, in violation of Federal law, state law, city ordinancing, and human decency. It is the cumulative effect of such violations that we seek to remedy.

All of us are members of a class. I am white. When a black man cries out, "Whitey is a bigot, patronizing, selfish, the enemy!" I do not ask to be declared personally innocent, nor do I need to ask him to name specific people in order that I may be cleared of the charge. My life will bear out the facts. I am middle-class. When the poor cry out that the middle-class are callous, greedy, uncaring, ungenerous, I don't need a declaration paper which puts a stamp of approval on me and exempts me from the charge. My life will bear out the facts. I am Catholic. If a social reformer does a study of the Catholic Church and finds it unresponsive to the needs of the oppressed and to social issues, I do not ask to be singled out as being an exception so that I may prove my innocence to the world. My life will bear out the facts.

All members of society bear responsibility for practices which victimize man and deprive him of his freedom. The Board could be of invaluable aid in building a constructive program of education for the individual agent, for the brokers, for the general public. It could come forward to offer to work in this manner, rather than spend all its energies attempting to obtain names of individuals. For the realtor or agent or board to demand the release of names so that the innocent may be known is ludicrous at best, and vicious at worst. The appropriate arena for listing specifics, names, dates, and bringing charges against individuals is in the courts. We are not, at this time, dealing with that aspect.

The members of the TOPIC General Coordinating Committee agreed on a constructive action program based on the findings of the audit as they applied to broad social goals. We considered what we had identified as the problem to be dealt with, and we arrived at what we deemed the most appropriate course of action. It is our belief today that we have not lost sight of our goals and that our procedures have been fitting and proper.

I sincerely hope that the letter will help the board to grasp the significance to the audit and the purpose of our activities to date. We are most open to continuing dialogue with the board in an effort to reach a solution to the problem. We consider the release of names a dead issue

and will not engage in further discussion in regard to that matter.

If the board would like a meeting with TOPIC, please foward a proposed agenda to me, and I will refer the matter to the TOPIC General Coordinating Committee.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Patty Mortl, TOPIC
Open Housing Coordinator

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The Torrance - Lomita Board has not responded to our letter.

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The Housing Delivery System

One of the most frequently-used tools for making housing "otherwise unavailable" to the minority home-seeker was, in our audit findings, the multiple listing book. The book is printed for distribution to members of the multiple listing service which the local board of realtors provides.

The multiple listing service is exclusive and confidential, and in many cases carefully guarded information regarding availability of homes in the area sought by the potential home-buyer was given out quite arbitrarily, according to color. The service is somewhat antiquated, in light of technological advances and the computer age. The updating of information apparently is a problem area since most agents found it necessary to call to find out whether or not properties were still on the market. Possibly some of the calls were made as empty gestures, to avoid showing homes; but it is entirely possible that many of them were actually required. In a great number of cases, the homes were already sold, although the current issue of the book had just been delivered. In any event, outmoded or not, the service available from the multiple listing book was not equitable.

It appears that enforcement of equality of options in the multiple listing service would be difficult, if not impossible, to achieve. According to the findings of the audit, what is probably necessary, at least in the greater Los Angeles metropolitan area, is a radical restructuring of the housing delivery system as it currently exists. Such restructuring might require registration of homes for sale, in a central bureau for instance. At the time of registration, information regarding particulars of the home would be recorded and stored. There would be regional terminals to which the information could be transmitted when requested.

At the regional terminals, a home-seeker would define his qualifications and needs for housing. Those homes which suited the home-seeker in both categories would be selected through a computerized sorting system. The home-seeker would then determine which, among the available selections, he wished to see. He would be referred to the agent listing the home. He would have immediate recourse, at the regional terminal, if he felt he had been the victim of steering or discrimination. Thus complete availability of options would be guaranteed, and monitoring of compliance would be built into the delivery system.

Obviously the brief explanation above is oversimplification of a rather complex project; but if the registration of automobiles is possible, the registration of homes ought to be child's play by comparison.

The information in the central registration bureau could be used by local, state, and federal government in a variety of applications that would avoid much duplication of effort and expenditure currently existing. Comprehensive and accurate surveys would be facilitated, with regard to marketing of homes in the area. The agent would have a vastly increased potential for showing his homes. More thorough research is currently being done in feasibility and design of such a system. Although the efficiency and widespread use of a housing delivery system as described would be desirable fringe benefits, its major importance would lie in its capability for insuring equal housing opportunity. For the fair housing volunteer, that's the heart of the matter.

It is entirely possible that if and when corporations begin to address themselves to providing a fair housing market for their employees, corporate budgets could absorb the costs of developing a system such as the one just discussed. It is also possible that local and state officials could begin to study viable alternatives to the monopolistic multiple listing service.

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There is, within the real estate industry, a tremendous need for education in matters regarding equal housing opportunities, Civil Rights law, and ethics and responsibility in business. A revision of the real estate classes, according to the findings of the audit, would be of value in training the agent to serve both the seller and the buyer fully. Such revision would certainly include a number of hours with constitutional lawyers, administration persons from HUD Equal Opportunities offices, and/or dialogue with fair housing volunteers, sociologists, and others interested in the quality of life in the community. Such training might reduce the sales volume, although figures are not available to support that assumption. Such training would certainly improve the service provided.

Conclusion and Beginning

To conclude: to bring to an end. The real estate visits of forty volunteer auditors in this project have been concluded. The facts have been gathered, written down, recorded, translated, analyzed, charted, graphed, programmed. The reports have been made.

To conclude: to judge; to decide. The weight of the statistical information brings us to the conclusion that, in the Torrance - Carson area of the Los Angeles complex, racial steering is a widespread practice which serves to perpetuate segregation of identifiable groups of people and which prevents those people from coming together in community. We conclude that racial steering vitiates the quality of life and thwarts our efforts to achieve full brotherhood. We conclude that the picture is grim, but not hopeless.

It is interesting to note that, when the results of the audit were released to the public, very few people got the point. One homeowner's association in the area, located in an integrated tract of extremely expensive homes, accused TOPIC of being more of a threat to the stability of their community than were the real estate agents who were so heavily steering blacks into the tract. The basis for this accusation was that the president had received many phone calls from frightened whites who said that if that really was the case, if more and more blacks were buying in the area, they were going to sell now and get out. The association was very obviously on a different wave length than the fair housing group. While we were talking about freedom of options, they were talking about what one real estate agent termed "the black wave." While we were publicly stating facts relating to unequal opportunity, they were counting.

It is unfortunate that, nearly six years after the passage of strong national legislation regarding the condition of minority freedom in this country, we are still in the business of counting. It is unfortunate that counting is still a necessity in assuring compliance with the law. It is difficult to talk in terms of equality when one needs to be preoccupied with skin color. And it is the firm belief of many people committed to equal housing opportunity that when all men and women are truly free to make their own choices of suitable homes, counting - in employment, in schools, in organizations - will become obsolete. We look with great hope toward that future moment.

To begin: To start; to set about. The audit was designed, from the inception, to be a starting point. The follow-up program is being fully implemented, and a few small results are being realized. But looking down the long road of work which lies ahead, one certainly feels, that after all the months already consumed in the audit, the first step is just now being taken.

For many of us, home is the source of life, the center of love. Home is the heart. One can speak of legislation, suspension, fines, damages. One can talk about incentives, tax write-offs, profit motive. But it is when we move from the intellect to the heart that we really experience the power that can change men's lives. And if home, in this country, reflects where the heart is, we know wherein lies the deepest challenge of all.

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BRIGHT MORNING STARS ARE RISING —
AND DAY IS BREAKING IN MY SOUL!

APPALACHIAN FOLK SONG

Topic Resource people: Patty Martl
Elizabeth Bowers

Audit Technique
checking on

↓

"Racial steering" — way of discouraging showing black buyer homes in white area & vice versa

Covered under '68 Civil Rights act
illegal —

Those who help when complaints need to be prosecuted

NAACP Legal Defense Fund
Hud
Justice Dept.

Blumer - rentals

Fair Housing Coop — all are part of fair housing

Real Estate
City planning
Financial inst

Illegal for lenders to refuse to give loans in a particular section of city - Co.

new decl. — over 4 units must display Hud poster

Realtors must display in business

"A person without options cannot be free to choose"

Audit's purpose is "equal opportunity."

Before audit is started there should be a plan for what you are going to do with it.

Sun. April 21 - Fair Housing Fair in L.A. Regional oppor. Center - ~~att~~

idea Computerized listing of all houses in greater areas that meet individ.'s qualifications. Then potential buyer would be referred to broker which listed prop he/she was interested in.

14 wks Topic 10 couples of each

Audits

117 R.E. visits

17 firms

72 sales (pr.)

visit a firm by 4 white couples + 4 black couples (matched)

Complaints take only one visit but to establish a pattern need repeats -

Dual housing market cheats seller, too.

Double escrow is illegal (Time limit?)

279-8940

Joanne Smith (Mrs. Bob)

Coordinator

Training Schedule

May 10, 17, 24 Fri. nights

Audit visits over 12 wks

with one ~~mt~~ mtg. in

the middle of the period.

Sat. morning session

Recruitment of black couples should probably be done by a black person or couple.

If you are going to do legal action with results send all info in to Dept of Justice before any publicizing is done. No need to contact lawyers before audit but ok to do so.

Be sure not to do anything in the nature of "entrapment" but let realtors act as they will.

Use term "study" instead of audit in report to councils etc. All statements should be written out. Brief & to the pt.

Only do these things for which you have a purpose. Not because it sounds like a good idea.

Best to target people who are members of multiple Listing Service (Bd of Realtors)

They asked for: specific things

1. acknowledgement of all written requests
2. citizens group to promote positive image other than seeking industry
3. more effective enforcement of city ordinances
4. accessibility to ordinances & review to evaluate them

workshop session (a guide item)

"Must Do Your Homework"
What laws are on the bks?
address yourself to whether
they are being followed.

Choose realtors which seem
to be most active
(look for signs, etc.)

Stress that teams go within
a short time span of each
other.