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Real estate trade and non-profit homeownership organizations to launch first-of-its-kind collaboration to shine a spotlight on legacy of racism in housing policies, drive equal access to homeownership in California

Sacramento (May 25) – Identifying precisely how and why California’s housing crisis has been shaped by a legacy of racist federal, state and local laws is the focus of a major collaborative effort being launched today.

The drive, aiming to educate and inform lawmakers and officials, is being championed by three leading organizations – the [California Building Industry Association](#), [Habitat for Humanity California](#), and the [California Association of Realtors](#)® -- with a deep understanding of the housing landscape in the state.

It underscores, according to the groups, the toll that these historic practices have taken on Black and Latinx communities in particular: creating barriers that prevent access to homeownership and impede families’ ability to accumulate the financial security enjoyed by the majority of white households.

“Homeownership is key to building generational wealth and has long been associated with the California dream,” the organizations noted in a letter to policymakers. “The dream of homeownership historically was systematically and explicitly denied to Black families and other people of color through policies and laws enacted by local, state and federal governments – a shameful history that has very real repercussions to this day. This racist legacy, coupled with a dwindling supply of housing, limits Black families from purchasing homes at the same rate as their white counterparts.”

“California’s housing crisis is widely recognized. Many middle-class families of color in our majority-minority state are priced out of the market of available homes, an issue exacerbated by lagging housing production. This leaves these families with a choice of remaining a forever renter with no opportunity to build equity or enduring unreasonably long commutes to a job in a community in which they cannot afford to live.”

As part of the initiative, the three organizations are providing each member of the California Legislature and each Constitutional Officer with a copy of [The Color of Law](#), by Richard Rothstein, a book that details

how historic and current segregation in America is a byproduct of explicit government policies at the local, state, and federal levels.

This is accompanied by additional material that gives policymakers facts about California's housing crisis, and the state of homeownership by Black and Latinx families, including:

- Black families have around one-quarter the median wealth of white families because of a lack of access to homeownership;
- Black and Latinx Americans are twice as likely to rent as whites, and more than twice as likely to report being behind on housing payments during the pandemic;
- Homes in California cost nearly double the nationwide average;
- California's high housing costs are responsible for two-thirds of people placed below the poverty threshold across the U.S.

"We must see concerted action in Sacramento to embed these profound truths about our housing policy past in California's plans to create a housing policy future that works for everyone," said Debbie Arakel, Executive Director Habitat for Humanity CA.

"We are determined to devise and develop policy proposals and advocate for funding shifts to affordable homeownership opportunities to address these issues and to make sure that we raise up the voices of those who are still too often shut out of homeownership."

The goal of the collaborative effort is to establish a common understanding about the history of racist housing policies and open up a productive and long-awaited dialogue to address California's housing shortage and in particular homeownership gaps by race, especially for Black and Latinx households. CBIA, Habitat CA, and CAR are committed to learn from the past and support policy solutions that increase equity in homeownership and address the need for housing for all.

About California Building Industry Association

The California Building Industry Association is a statewide trade association based in Sacramento representing thousands of member companies including homebuilders, trade contractors, architects, engineers, designers, suppliers and industry professionals in the homebuilding, multi-family and mixed-use development markets.

About Habitat for Humanity California

Habitat for Humanity California is a statewide coalition of independent Habitat affiliates that serve communities across California. Habitat affiliates bring people together to build homes, communities, and hope. Habitat California advocates for affordable housing with specific focus on homeownership opportunities for families with limited-incomes.

About the California Association of REALTORS®

Leading the way...® in California real estate for more than 110 years, the CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® (www.car.org) is one of the largest state trade organizations in the United States with more than 200,000 members dedicated to the advancement of professionalism in real estate. C.A.R. is headquartered in Los Angeles.

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