

**Remarks by Attorney General John Ashcroft
Commemorating the 33rd Anniversary of the Fair Housing Act
April 11, 2001
at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development**

Without equal access to housing, there is no equal access to the American dream. Housing is both a dream in its own right and it is a stepping stone to better opportunities for employment, education, economic development, and empowerment.

Illegal discrimination deprives communities of diversity and it perpetuates cultures of segregation and exclusion. When a landlord turns away a family because of the color of their skin, or when the configuration of a poorly designed apartment building keeps away a person with a disability, the discrimination hurts not only that family or individual; it affects the entire community.

I am committed to removing illegal discrimination barriers to housing wherever they occur and in whatever form they take.

That means that we are continuing our efforts to make fair lending a reality. We will not tolerate predatory lending practices, which too often target minorities and the elderly. Predatory lending practices can result in people being robbed of equity in their homes, or even losing their homes altogether.

We will also continue to enforce those provisions of the Fair Housing Act that require new multi-family housing to include basic features of accessible design. We believe the work of the Justice Department and of HUD have let the building industry know that we are serious about making housing available to persons with disabilities.

To further stamp out discrimination, we are committed to the highly successful testing enforcement program, which has exposed discrimination on the basis of race, national origin, and against families with children in communities throughout the country.

We have made great strides in guaranteeing equal access to housing, equal access to mortgage loans, and in making housing accessible for persons with disabilities. I look forward to working with Secretary Martinez, and to continuing the Justice Department's successful partnership with HUD to enforce fair housing laws and to ensure that every person in this country enjoys the same opportunity to fair housing.