

VISALIA TIMES DELTA

Replay: Tulare County Voices forum focuses on racism and housing on Tuesday

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By: Staff

Since January, Tulare County Voices — a coalition of community groups and the Times-Delta/Advance-Register — have been having monthly conversations about race, privilege, and discrimination.

The coalition thought the first step in our community conversation about race and prejudice should be simple: Shed light on how racial discrimination affects the daily life of people of color by giving people a forum to tell the stories.

Over the last six months Tulare County Voices' focus on racism, privilege, and oppression. The coalition then plans to hold other community forums to explore racism affects people in their daily life, health care, education while seeking solutions on making our community more equitable.

Our last community forum will focus on systemic racism in housing.

Among the panelists scheduled to appear :

- Miguel Perez, for the Housing Authority of the County of Tulare
- Blanca Escobedo, the policy advocate for the Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability
- Marcos Segura, staff attorney with National Housing Law Project,
- Patricia Fink, Legal Director- Fair Housing and Foreclosure Project, California Rural Legal Assistance
- Tom Collishaw, president of Self-Help Enterprises

The forum, which will include questions from the audience, will be streamed starting at 7 p.m. Tuesday at www.VisaliaTimesDelta.com and the Times-Delta's Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/vtdnews>

Housing experts and historians say residential real estate has been historically marred by discrimination. Across the nation, homes owned by people of color are significantly undervalued next to homes in comparable white neighborhoods, according to a study by Brookings.

Appraisals for homeowners are not the only issues facing people looking for equitable housing. For those struggling to afford housing, a Section 8 voucher is a ticket into the private housing market. But after receiving a voucher, renters frequently encounter apartment listings with caveats like "No Section 8" and "Section 8 not accepted."

A state law aims to address that by banning landlords from denying potential tenants based on Section 8 status or posting "No Section 8" advertisements. However, landlords are still posting "No Section 8" advertisements weeks after the law took effect on Jan. 1. But a recent Craigslist search found more than a dozen listings that banned Section 8 applicants in Visalia and Tulare areas.

Potential tenants who experience housing discrimination can file a complaint with the California Department of Fair Employment and Housing. State law provides several remedies for victims of housing discrimination, including access to the denied housing, damages for emotional distress, attorney's fees and civil penalties.