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*We believe the best lawyers know who the best lawyers are.*



**John Relman**  
**Civil Rights Law**  
**Washington, D.C.**

The fight for equality has been a long one and continues today. John Relman, Washington D.C.'s 2021 "Lawyer of the Year" for Civil Rights Law, is passionate about the issues of racial justice and institutional racism.

"Racial and economic justice go together in this country," Relman said. "They have always been connected. You can't really understand how to address one without addressing the other."

Relman, the founder and managing partner of Relman Colfax, has done extensive work in fair housing and fair lending cases that has widened the scope and reach of the Fair Housing Act. "Where we live matters," he explained. "It determines outcomes and opportunities. Discrimination in many of our cases is made possible because there is a defined minority community to target or exclude. If we could figure out how to maintain stable, integrated communities, it would go a long way toward reducing both economic and racial inequalities."

And with the problem of fair housing, many consequences that follow can be attributed to the racial inequality that has plagued the country.

"Where one lives affects where you go to school, opportunities for jobs and connections, the right to vote, health outcomes, and so much more," he said. "We need to protect that law. It is under attack as we speak."

There are many rewarding aspects in practicing this type of law, but for Relman, it's the idea of changing for the better.

"We like to think that we have the opportunity to change the law," he said. "We have the opportunity to open people's eyes and change the way people think. When you empower people and you allow them to affirm their own dignity, their own self-worth, their right to live in our society with the same rights and privileges as everybody else, it's tremendously satisfying."

With this line of work, there's never a finish line. There is always something to work on.

"It's not a problem that just gets fixed," Relman said. "It's an ongoing struggle. I think there's the opportunity to have a more fair and just society, but the need for civil rights lawyers is never going to disappear. The work will never be done." **B**

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