



Department of Justice

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OPERATION HOME SWEET HOME **RESULTS IN DISCRIMINATION LAWSUIT AGAINST** **ROSEVILLE, MICHIGAN APARTMENT OWNER AND MANAGER**

WASHINGTON - The Justice Department announced today that it has filed a lawsuit alleging that the owner and operator of Regent Court Apartments, in Roseville, Mich., has engaged in a pattern or practice of discrimination against African-American home-seekers, in violation of the federal Fair Housing Act. The lawsuit is based in part on evidence generated by the Department's Fair Housing testing program, which has been an integral part of the Department's recent fair housing initiative, Operation Home Sweet Home.

"This lawsuit seeks to ensure equal access to housing for African-Americans," said Grace Chung Becker, Acting Assistant Attorney General for the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division. "The Department will continue its vigorous enforcement of all the fair housing laws."

U.S. Attorney Stephen J. Murphy added, "To discriminate against a person because of the color of their skin or race is to deny that person their rightful share of the American dream."

The complaint, filed today in the U.S. District Court in Detroit, alleges that Regent Court Apartments LLC and Donna Harrison, the owner and manager, respectively, of the Regent Court Apartments at 18830 East 14 Mile Road in Roseville, Mich., have engaged in a pattern or practice of denying apartments to African-Americans and falsely telling African-Americans that no apartments are available.

The complaint alleges that when the Department sent testers to Regent Court in 2007, the defendants falsely told African-American testers that no apartments were available, while at the same time telling white testers that apartments were available. The lawsuit seeks an injunction against further discrimination, money damages for victims of the unlawful discrimination, and civil penalties to be paid to the United States. The lawsuit is only an allegation of unlawful conduct by the defendants. The United States will bear the burden of proving the allegations at trial.

Fighting illegal housing discrimination is a top priority of the Department of Justice. In February 2006, the Department announced *Operation Home Sweet Home*, a

concentrated initiative to expose and eliminate housing discrimination in America. This initiative was inspired by the plight of displaced victims of Hurricane Katrina who were suddenly forced to find new places to live. *Operation Home Sweet Home*, however, is not limited to the areas hit by Hurricane Katrina, but targets housing discrimination all over the country, including Michigan.

A key part of the initiative has been expanding the productivity and effectiveness of the Fair Housing testing program, which the Civil Rights Division has operated since 1991 to uncover housing discrimination. The program is conducted primarily through paired tests, an event in which two individuals — one acting as the “control group” (e.g., white male) and the other as the “test group” (e.g., black male) — pose as prospective buyers or renters of real estate for the purpose of determining whether a housing provider is complying with the fair housing laws. The initiative has already yielded significant success. During fiscal year 2007, the Department conducted more paired tests than it had ever conducted in any other year, and filed 30 cases to enforce the Fair Housing Act, including four based on evidence generated by the testing program.

Persons who believe they experienced housing discrimination at Regent Court Apartments should contact the Housing Discrimination Tip Line (1-800-896-7743, mail box #3), or email the Department at fairhousing@usdoj.gov. Persons may also contact the U.S. Attorney’s Office at 313-226-9727. Persons who believe they experienced housing discrimination anywhere in the United States may also call the Tip Line, email fairhousing@usdoj.gov, or contact the Department of Housing and Urban Development at 1-800-669-9777.

The federal Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in housing on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, familial status, national origin and disability. Since Jan. 1, 2001, the Civil Rights Division has filed 242 cases to enforce the Fair Housing Act, 67 of which have alleged discrimination based on race. For more information about the Division and the laws it enforces, go to <http://www.usdoj.gov/crt>.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Judith Levy and Civil Rights Division Trial Attorney Burtis M. Dougherty will litigate the case on behalf of the United States.

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