



U. S. Department of Justice

United States Attorney
Northern District of Illinois

Patrick J. Fitzgerald
United States Attorney

Federal Building
219 South Dearborn Street, Fifth Floor
Chicago, Illinois 60604
(312) 353-5300

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MONDAY SEPTEMBER 20, 2010
www.usdoj.gov/usao/iln

PRESS CONTACTS:
AUSA Patrick Johnson (312) 353-5327
Randall Samborn (312) 353-5318

U. S. SUES BRIDGEPORT COUPLE AND THEIR REALTORS FOR REFUSING TO SELL HOME TO AFRICAN-AMERICAN FAMILY

CHICAGO — The United States filed a civil lawsuit today alleging that a Bridgeport couple, their realtor and a realty company racially discriminated against an African-American family and their real estate agent by refusing to sell a single-family home that had been on the market for approximately two years. After the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development issued an administrative charge of discrimination in early August, the lawsuit was filed a month after the complainants, George and Peytyn Willborn, elected to have the HUD charge resolved in a federal civil lawsuit.

The case, filed in U.S. District Court in Chicago, names as defendants **Daniel and Adrienne Sabbia**, a white couple who owned the residence at 3300 South Normal Ave.; their real estate agent, **Jeffrey Lowe; The Lowe Group Chicago, Inc.**; and **Midwest Realty Ventures, LLC**, doing business as Prudential Rubloff Properties. The filing was announced by Patrick J. Fitzgerald, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois.

Filed on behalf of the Willborns and their agent, Dylcia Cornelious, the government's lawsuit seeks a court order that declares the defendants' conduct violated the Fair Housing Act and prohibits

future discrimination by the defendants, as well as seeks unspecified compensatory and punitive damages for the Willborns and Cornelious. Separately, the Willborns filed their own private civil lawsuit last month in Federal Court.

“The government is bringing this lawsuit to vindicate the right under federal law of all citizens to choose where to live in the Chicago area, free of illegal discrimination,” Mr. Fitzgerald said.

According to the lawsuit, in January 2008, the Sabbias, through Lowe, listed their five-bedroom, 8,000 square-foot, single family home for a sale price of \$1.99 million. In November 2008, they briefly took the home off the market and relisted it in April 2009 at a reduced price of \$1.799 million. While Lowe represented the Sabbias, Daniel Sabbia advised Lowe that he would prefer not to sell his home to an African-American, but clarified that if it was for the right price, he did not care who bought the house, the lawsuit states. Daniel Sabbia has several family members who live in Bridgeport, including a sister and brother-in-law directly next door.

On Jan. 2, 2010, the Willborns toured the Sabbias’ home with their agent, Cornelious. Daniel Sabbia, who was sitting in his car in the driveway, waived to the Willborns as they left. Later that day, the Willborns, who were financially qualified to buy the home, made an offer, which the Sabbias countered. After exchanging proposals, on Jan. 5, Cornelious conveyed to Lowe the Willborns’ acceptance of the Sabbias’ final counteroffer of \$1.7 million and an April 1, 2010, closing date. After not receiving a signed contract, Lowe told Cornelious on Jan. 9 that the Sabbias were reconsidering selling their home, and two days later Lowe told Cornelious that they were taking the home off the market because Adrienne Sabbia had changed her mind about moving; the Sabbias

could not find a suitable new home; and they wanted to keep their children in their current schools, the suit alleges.

On Feb 1, a few days after receiving the complaint that the Willborns had filed with HUD, the Sabbias allegedly directed Lowe to offer the Willborns the home, with furnishings, for the full asking price of \$1.799 million, which the Willborns rejected. On March 8, Lowe relisted the home with an asking price of \$1.799 million, and the suit alleges that the Sabbias still had not found a suitable home and their children were still attending the same schools.

The government is being represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Patrick Johnson.

In civil cases, the government has the burden of proving the allegations by a preponderance of the evidence.

###