

FAIR HOUSING CENTER OF WASHTENAW COUNTY



PO BOX 7825 • ANN ARBOR, MI 48107 • (313) 994-3426

Two-Year Housing Investigation Ends in Race Discrimination Suit Against Congress Park Apartments

Martha Taylor, her granddaughter Karrynn Taylor, and Karrynn's mother Sunshine Welsh filed a race discrimination suit against Congress Park Apartments. Taylor is African-American and Welsh is white. "You people come in here to co-sign and can't even afford your own household, let alone co-sign for someone else!" said rental agent Flossie Bennett, according to the suit.

These comments were made when Taylor and Welsh arrived at Congress Park Apartments to look at a unit. The suit also claims that Flossie Bennett asked if Sunshine's boyfriend, an African-American man, would be moving in with her. Bennett, according to the suit, went on to say "You people just have baby after baby and then come

in here expecting me to accommodate you." Ultimately Bennett refused to rent them the two-bedroom unit.

Taylor contacted the Ann Arbor Tenants Union and was referred to FHC-Washtenaw where she made a complaint of race discrimination against the Ypsilanti Township complex. Testing over a two-year period by the FHC supports the discrimination claim. Taylor & Welsh are represented by FHC Cooperating Attorney's Jonathan Weber and Jonathan Rose of Rose, Weber, and Pappas. The case, is filed in Washtenaw County Circuit Court and assigned to Judge Melinda Morris.

\$10,000 Settles Disability Suit

Brannan v The Fourmidable Group

When a water pipe burst in Phyllis Brannan's apartment she asked the manager at Pine Valley Apartments to repair the damage one room at a time to accommodate her disability. They refused and Brannan, who had lived at Pine Valley for twenty-one years, was forced to move. The owners of Pine Valley, The Fourmidable Group, then sued Brannan for over \$500 of her security deposit blaming her for the damage caused by the frozen water pipe. "It's unfair when a landlord uses a bad situation to line their own pockets" commented Brannan.

Brannan called the Ann Arbor Tenants Union who in turn referred her to the Fair Housing Center of Washtenaw County. FHC Cooperating Attorneys



Phyllis Brannan

Jonathan Rose and Jonathan Weber filed suit in Washtenaw County Circuit Court on behalf of Brannan, a retired teacher, claiming that Pine Valley refused to reasonably accommodate Brannan's disability. The case was assigned to Judge Donald E. Shelton.

JUNE 1996

Pines of Cloverlane Sued Over Wheelchair Accommodation Issue

Patterson v The Pines of Cloverlane

Deborah Patterson is suing The Pines of Cloverlane apartment complex, run by Insignia Management, for refusing to accommodate her disability. Patterson first requested modifications to the sidewalk and door to outside her building in December of 1994.

One year later an electric door was installed; however Patterson has been unable to make full use of the door because of an improperly mounted remote control device and lack of modifications to the sidewalk.

Fair Housing Center Cooperating Attorneys Gayle Rosen, of Michigan Protection & Advocacy Service, and Kathy Peterson filed the law suit in Washtenaw County Circuit Court alleging violations of the Michigan Handicappers' Civil Rights Act.

The case is assigned to Judge Patrick J. Conlin.

Conlin was also the judge in the FHC-Washtenaw assisted case *Franke v McKinley*. Natasha Franke, a teenaged wheelchair user, asked that McKinley remove a set of stairs to her ground floor apartment. Attorneys for McKinley attempted to have Circuit Court Judge Conlin dismiss the case, claiming that under the Michigan Handicappers Civil Rights Act they were required to make the premises accessible only at the Franke's expense. Judge Conlin denied McKinley's request. In a written opinion citing law and legislative intent Judge Conlin concluded that the "...Defendant must accommodate Natasha if it would not pose an undue hardship." The Franke case settled for \$18,500.

FHC-Detroit Joins Mortgage Discrimination Suit

The Fair Housing Center of Metropolitan Detroit filed a motion before Judge Avern Cohn to join the suit against Flagstar, formerly known as First Security Savings. FHC-Detroit is being represented by Cooperating Attorney Victoria A. Roberts of Goodman, Eden, Millender & Bedrosian. The original suit, Carson et al. v First Security Savings, was filed in U.S. District Court by FHC-Detroit Cooperating Attorney Stephen R. Tomkowiak. Testing by FHC-Detroit supports the claim of discrimination based on race.

The Fair Housing Center Needs Testers



As the numbers of fair housing complaints grows, our need for testers also increases. If you or someone you know would like to be trained as a tester please contact the Fair Housing Center at 994-3426.

Woman Sues for Race Discrimination in Housing

Wright v Eastwood Terrace

Margaret Wright filed a race discrimination suit against Eastwood Terrace Apartments. Wright, an African-American woman, contacted the Fair Housing Center of Washtenaw County in August of 1995 with a complaint of race discrimination against the complex located in Ypsilanti Township.

In her complaint to the Fair Housing Center Wright stated that she believed she was being given false and incomplete information about the

availability of units. Testing conducted by the Fair Housing Center supports Wright's charge of discrimination based on race. Ms. Wright moved into Eastwood Terrace after new staff took over for manager Louise Pearson. FHC-Washtenaw Cooperating Attorney Steven Reed filed suit on behalf of Wright in Washtenaw County Circuit Court. The suit alleges violations of the Michigan Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act. The case is assigned to Judge Karl V. Fink.

The Harbor Family Settles

Harbor v Nam

After their baby boy was born in 1995, the Harbors received an eviction notice. The Harbors were told, in writing, that because the new child was a boy, unlike their two older children, they would have to move. Tenants of Arbordale Apartments owned by Sang Y. Nam, the Harbors called the FHC with a complaint of

discrimination based on sex and familial status. FHC Cooperating Attorneys Jonathan Rose and Jonathan Weber filed in Washtenaw County Circuit Court on behalf on the Harbors. The case, claiming violation of the Michigan Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act was assigned to Judge Timothy P. Connors.

Yma Johnson Accepts \$8,500 to Settle Race Case

Y. Johnson v University Management

Yma Johnson settled a race discrimination suit against University Management Inc. In June of 1994 Ms. Johnson and a white friend contacted the Fair Housing Center of Washtenaw County with a complaint of housing discrimination.



Yma Johnson

The white friend told the FHC that the manager stated that he wouldn't rent to Ms. Johnson because of her race. FHC-Washtenaw County Cooperating Attorney Michael J. Steinberg filed suit on behalf of Ms. Johnson in Washtenaw County Circuit Court. The case was assigned to Judge Patrick J. Conlin.

"Hand me a Pen!"



Dorothy Rose Carpenter

It's time to renew my FHC membership.!

Family of Five Settles Two-Per-Bedroom Case

Schiller v McKinley

Scott and Candi Schiller have three children—one too many according to the rules of Meadowbrook Village Apartments in Ann Arbor. The Schillers contacted the FHC with a complaint of discrimination based on familial status after they inquired about an apartment at Meadowbrook Village, a McKinley Properties complex. According to the Schillers, they were told that the complex had a limit of two

people per bedroom. The FHC investigation found Meadowbrook units that were, according to the City of Ann Arbor housing code, large enough for five people. The suit was filed in Washtenaw County Circuit Court by FHC Cooperating Attorneys Jonathan Rose and Jonathan Weber. The case was assigned to Judge Ann Mattson. The amount of the settlement was undisclosed.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Verna Spayth
President

Lauretta Codrington
Vice President

Michael Appel
Secretary/Treasurer

Ray Chauncey

Paul Haynes

Bob Liston

Evette D. Lutman

Pamela J. Means

Mark Mitshkun

Raymond Mullins

Ann Routt

STAFF

Executive Director
Pamela A. Kisch

Coordinators of Investigations
Mary Bejian

Special Projects Coordinator
Ruth L. Kraut

If you were robbed, you'd report it...

But most victims of housing discrimination don't.

Why? Because today housing discrimination is subtle and sophisticated, which makes it harder to detect. Know your housing rights. According to the federal Fair Housing Act, it's illegal to consider race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability or family status in rental, sales, lending or homeowner's insurance decisions.

Don't let them rob you of your civil rights.



The only way to stop discrimination is to fight it. If you suspect unfair housing practices, contact The Fair Housing Center at 313-994-3426.

FHC says Goodbye to Jordan-Rahman

After two years of Co-Coordinator of Investigations, Amy Jordan-Rahman is leaving the FHC to concentrate on her doctoral thesis. Amy is working on a Ph.D. in History from the University of Michigan. Her work has taken her to Mississippi this summer where she is interviewing those involved in the early stages of the welfare rights movement. Amy recruited and trained countless testers, assigned many, many tests, and supervised most of our student interns. We will miss Amy's skill, humor, and good advice.

FAIR HOUSING CENTER OF WASHTENAW COUNTY

PO Box 7825
Ann Arbor, MI 48107



We need testers!

See inside for details