

FAIR HOUSING CENTER of Washtenaw County



P.O. Box 7825 • Ann Arbor, MI 48107 • (313) 994-3426

Race and Disability Bias Suit Settled

Sarah Tankson has accepted \$5,000 to settle her suit against Thomas Robert Allmand, owner of Arbor Apartments. Tankson sued Allmand in 1995, claiming discrimination based on disability and race. Arbor Apartments are located at 3310 Packard at Fernwood.

According to the suit, Arbor Apartments' agents violated the Michigan Handicappers' Civil Rights Act by refusing to rent an apartment to Tankson because she receives Supplemental Security Income (SSI). All recipients of SSI are people with disabilities or elderly. Tankson is African-American and has a hereditary condition known as myoclonus.

The Fair Housing Center of Washtenaw County investigated Tankson's claim after she contacted

the organization. The FHC investigation found differences in treatment between testers saying they had a disabled family member and those without a disabled family member. FHC testing and a witness statement supported Tankson's claim of discrimination based on disability and race.

According to the suit, after being denied housing at Arbor Apartments, Tankson was forced to move to another complex outside the City of Ann Arbor where she was not eligible for subsidized transportation services.

FHC Cooperating Attorney David Cahill filed the suit in Washtenaw County Circuit Court on behalf of Sarah Tankson. The case was assigned to Judge Richard E. Conlin.

Tankson also filed a complaint with the City of Ann Arbor claiming discrimination based on source of income. The claim was forwarded to the City Attorney's office where the case was dismissed.



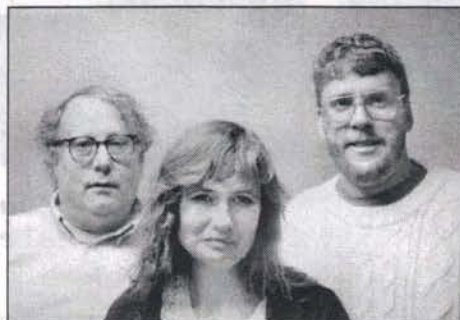
Sarah Tankson

\$17,500 Settled Helm v Mancherian

Cheryl Helm accepted \$17,500 to settle her fair housing case against Chuck Mancherian, the former owner of Stimson Apartments, for discrimination based on age. Helm claimed she was denied housing at the Ann Arbor complex because of her then three-year-old son. Mancherian is the former Assistant Director of Planning for the City of Ann Arbor. He retired in 1991.

"The owner told me that they had students and professionals living there" said Helm. "It really infuriated

me, I told him that I happen to be both." At the time Helm worked full-time and attended Eastern Michigan University on a part-time basis.



Testing conducted by the Fair Housing Center produced evidence to support Helm's claim of bias against families with children. Filed in Washtenaw County Circuit Court, the case was assigned to Judge Kurtis Wilder. FHC Cooperating Attorneys Jonathan Rose and Jonathan Weber filed the case on Helms behalf. From the settlement, Helm donated over \$500 to the FHC. The case settled in 1994; a three-year non-disclosure agreement prevented earlier reporting.

From left: Jonathon Rose, Cheryl Helm, and Jonathon Weber

June 1997

Three New Suits Filed in First Quarter 1997

Two suits claiming discrimination based on familial status and one disability discrimination case have been filed with the aid of the Fair Housing Center of Washtenaw County.

Faulk v Holiday Star

Cooperating Attorney Michael J. Steinberg has filed suit on behalf of Stacey Faulk. According to Ms. Faulk, she was denied the rental of an apartment at Holiday Star Apartments in Ypsilanti near the Eastern Michigan University campus because she has a child. According to the suit, the owner stated that no children were allowed in the building and that the apartments were for students. Faulk says she told the owner that it was illegal for him to discriminate against families with children and that the owner told

Faulk to go ahead and sue him. Filed in Federal District Court, the case is assigned to Judge Paul V. Gadola. Testing by the FHC supports Faulk's claim of discrimination based on familial status.

Pike v Harbour Club Ltd.

Attorney David Michael Stokes of Michigan Protection & Advocacy Service filed suit on behalf of Larry Pike when Harbour Club refused to provide a flashing doorbell. Pike is deaf and is unable to hear the buzzer for the building's common entrances. Mr. Pike is therefore unaware when someone is trying to visit him at his second floor apartment. Filed in Wayne County Circuit Court, the case is assigned to Judge Marianne Battani. The suit claims violation of the Michigan

Handicappers' Civil Rights Act. Harbour Club Ltd. is located in Belleville off I-94.

Thomas v Parkhill Apartments

Pamela Thomas is suing Parkhill Apartments in Ypsilanti. Thomas, the mother of two children, claims she was denied a unit because children are not allowed above the first floor and there were no first floor units available. Thomas is being represented by Paul A. Callam of Cooper, Walinski & Cramer. Testing by the FHC supports her claim of discrimination based on familial status. Filed in Federal District Court, the case is assigned to Judge Horace Gilmore. Parkhill Apartments are located on Washtenaw Avenue near Eastern Michigan University.

100 Dinners for Fair Housing

On March 15, 1997, supporters hosted fundraising dinners for the Fair Housing Center. Each guest made a contribution to the FHC. The event raised over \$1,700. Special thanks to our hosts: Lynn D'Orio, Audrey Wojtkowiak, Shani Lasin, Danny Rosen, Andy Sugerman, Gayle Rosen, Michael Appel, Ruth Kraut, Verna Spayth, Lisa S. Powers, Paul Sher, Michael J. Steinberg, Jon Weber, Debbie Calvert, Ellen Rabinowitz, and Dave DeVarti. Would you like to host a dinner next Spring? Call the FHC and we'll sign you up.

Thanks to following local businesses for their support of 100 Dinners:

- ☛ Big City Bakery
- ☛ Amer's
- ☛ Metzger's
- ☛ Exotic Bakery
- ☛ The Earle
- ☛ Zingerman's Bakehouse
- ☛ Cafe Zola
- ☛ Stucchi's Ice Cream and Yogurt
- ☛ Merchant of Vino



100 Dinners for Fair Housing guests of Lynn D'Orio and Audrey Wojtkowiak were treated to:

- ☛ scallop cerviche
- ☛ lobster-shrimp-avocado bisque
- ☛ stuffed portabella mushrooms
- ☛ chicken breast stuffed with apple and gorgonzola
- ☛ wild rice pilaf
- ☛ tomatoes rockefeller
- ☛ steamed asparagus

\$500-A-Day is Fine with Us

Ann Arbor Strengthens Human Rights Ordinance

Ann Arbor City Council voted in November to significantly strengthen the City of Ann Arbor Human Rights Ordinance. The changes could lead to more meaningful settlements for those discriminated against because of their sexual orientation, student status or legal source of income.

Important changes:

The Right to Private Action

The right to hire an attorney and go directly to Circuit Court is now available to those who have been discriminated against because of their sexual orientation, student status or legal source of income. Others covered under the ordinance already

have this right under state and/or federal law.

Before the change, those not covered under state or federal law had to depend on the City Attorney's office for all litigation. If they won, the maximum fine would be \$500. No fair housing case has ever been taken to court by the City Attorney's office.

\$500-A-Day Fine

Not only does the new fine set a community standard for all fair housing cases, but a fine of up to \$500-A-Day gives complainants new leverage in fighting discrimination cases. The previous \$500 maximum provided little incentive for violators to change their behavior.

1996 Statistics

Total Complaints: 170

Basis of Complaints*

Race:	74
Physical Disability:	39
Familial Status:	37
Sex:	18
Mental/Emotional Disability:	15
National Origin:	10
Marital Status:	9
Income Source:	7
Age:	7
Sexual Orientation:	2
Student/Non-Student Status:	0

*complaint may have more than one basis

FHC-Washtenaw and the National Lawyers Guild Host John Relman for Attorney Skills Seminar

National fair housing expert John Relman spent the day in Ann Arbor sharing his vast expertise with attorneys and advocates from across the state. Relman is well known for his work on the Denny's race discrimination case and more recently a \$200,000 settlement for a woman claiming sexual harassment by the superintendent of her apartment complex. John Relman works with the Washington Lawyers' Committee of Civil Rights and Urban Affairs where he is the Director of the Fair Housing Project. The March, 1997, Skills Seminar was held in conjunction with the National Lawyers Guild Mideast Regional Conference. Thanks to Washtenaw County for funding this valuable seminar.



Above, FHC-Detroit staff members Laura Graham, Darleen Taylor and Helen Ice attend John Relman's Skills Seminar in March.

Congratulations to the Fair Housing Center of Metropolitan Detroit on 20 Years of outstanding work!

Since 1977, FHC-Detroit has aided in settlements worth over \$6,000,000.

Housing Advocates Training

FHC-Washtenaw staff teamed up with Legal Services of Southeastern Michigan and the Ann Arbor Tenants Union to offer a one-day training for local housing advocates. The November, 1996, training included participatory workshops on landlord/tenant law, fair housing, legal aid, and housing subsidy programs. The next training will be held Thursday, November 6. Hold that date!

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Women's Studies intern Amy Zandarski spent fall term volunteering with the FHC as part of the Women in the Community course at U-M. Thanks, Amy, and congratulations on your graduation from the University of Michigan!

Over 30?

The Fair Housing Center needs testers — especially those of you over 30.

Call Mary Bejian at **994-3426**

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