

**Department of Justice**  
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**Justice Department Files Lawsuit Against Wisconsin Landlord for Discriminating on the Basis of Race**

WASHINGTON— The Justice Department announced today a lawsuit against the manager and owner of the Geneva Terrace Apartments in La Crosse , Wisc., alleging discrimination against African-Americans who were seeking to rent apartments at the complex.

The complaint, filed in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Wisconsin, alleges that the manager and owner of Geneva Terrace, Nicolai Quinn, told prospective African-American renters that apartments were not available when they were, while telling prospective white renters that there were apartments available.

“Every person, regardless of race, should be given the opportunity to live and rent an apartment of their choice free from discrimination,” said Thomas E. Perez, Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights. “Today’s lawsuit demonstrates our commitment to ensure equal housing opportunities for all.”

“This office will work to ensure that the residents of this district have the opportunity to rent and live where they choose. Violations of the Fair Housing Act will not be tolerated in this district,” said John W. Vaudreuil, the U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Wisconsin.

“Today’s lawsuit stems from the partnerships between government agencies, HUD and Justice, and between private fair housing councils and HUD to enforce the Fair Housing Act,” stated John Trasviña, HUD Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity. “This civil rights law enforcement network begins, however, with individuals reporting when they believe they may have been subject to housing discrimination.”

As alleged in the complaint, in 2009 and 2010, Quinn told an African-American couple who were interested in renting an apartment in Geneva Terrace that there were no apartments available, even though the complex had posted a sign advertising vacancies. The couple found it suspicious and asked a white friend to contact the complex. Quinn told the white friend that he had available apartments. The couple then reported their experience to the Metropolitan Milwaukee Fair Housing Council (MMFHC), a nonprofit fair housing organization. MMFHC conducted fair housing tests, which confirmed that Quinn was telling African Americans that apartments were not available when they were while showing available apartments to white persons.

The couple also filed a complaint with the Department of Housing and Urban Development, which conducted an investigation and, after issuing a charge of discrimination, referred the matter to the Department of Justice.

The lawsuit seeks an order prohibiting the defendants from engaging in future unlawful discrimination. It also seeks payment of a civil penalty and monetary damages for the persons who were refused the opportunity to rent at Geneva Terrace because of their race.

Fighting housing discrimination is a top priority of the Justice Department. The federal Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in housing on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, familial status, national origin and disability. More information about the Civil Rights Division and the laws it enforces is available at [www.justice.gov/crt](http://www.justice.gov/crt). Individuals who believe that they have been victims of housing discrimination or have information related to this lawsuit can call the Housing Discrimination Tip Line at 1-800-896-7743, e-mail the Justice Department at [fairhousing@usdoj.gov](mailto:fairhousing@usdoj.gov) or contact the Department of Housing and Urban Development at 1-800-669-9777.

The complaint is an allegation of unlawful conduct. The allegation must be proven in federal court.

11-1414

Civil Rights Division