

JUSTICE NEWS

Department of Justice

Office of Public Affairs

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**Justice Department Files Fair Housing Lawsuit Alleging
Discrimination at Apartment Complex in Renton,
Washington**

WASHINGTON – The Justice Department today filed a lawsuit against the owner, management company and former manager of Summerhill Place Apartments, a 268-unit apartment complex in Renton, Wash., for violating the Fair Housing Act by discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin and familial status in the rental of apartments.

The lawsuit, filed in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Washington, names as defendants Summerhill Place LLC (the owner of Summerhill Place Apartments), GRAN Inc. (the management company) and Rita Lovejoy (the former on site manager). The suit alleges, among other things, that the defendants steered Indian tenants away from one of the five buildings at Summerhill, treated tenants from India less favorably than other tenants, and discouraged African Americans, Hispanics and families with children from living at Summerhill.

"Equal access to housing in the United States is a fundamental right, and this nation will not tolerate discrimination in housing," said Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division Thomas E. Perez. "The Justice Department will continue its vigorous enforcement of Fair Housing laws along with its partners at the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)."

"Few things are more fundamental to success and happiness than having a safe place to live. Fair and equal access to housing is a cornerstone of our society," said U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Washington Jenny A. Durkan. "Apartment owners must ensure that their managers treat all tenants, and potential tenants, in a fair and equitable manner without regard to race, national origin or whether they have children. The U.S. Attorney's Office will actively pursue these cases with the goal of fairness and equity for all."

As alleged in the complaint, two Summerhill employees contacted the King County Office of Civil Rights (KCOCR) in 2007 and complained of discriminatory housing practices at Summerhill. KCOCR then contracted with the Fair Housing Council of Washington to conduct testing at Summerhill. After testing was conducted, KCOCR referred the matter to HUD. After an investigation, the Secretary of HUD determined that there was reasonable cause to believe that discriminatory housing practices had occurred and issued a charge of discrimination. The defendants elected to have the matters asserted in the HUD charge heard in federal court.

"Housing discrimination is illegal and unacceptable," said Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity John Trasviña. "HUD and the Justice Department work to eliminate it."

The suit seeks monetary damages for those harmed by the defendants' actions, civil penalties and a court order barring future discrimination.

Fighting illegal discrimination in housing 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.usdoj.gov/crt. Individuals who believe that they have been victims of housing discrimination can call the Housing Discrimination Tip Line at 1-800-896-7743, e-mail the Justice Department at fairhousing@usdoj.gov, or contact HUD at 1-800-669-9777.




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

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Civil Rights Division

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