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HUD CHARGES OHIO LANDLORDS WITH DISCRIMINATING AGAINST HISPANIC WOMAN

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) today announced that it has charged two Cleveland-area landlords with violating the Fair Housing Act for allegedly refusing to rent a house to a woman because she is Hispanic. Furthermore, HUD contends that Kathy Parker and Deryl Gibson, the African-American owners of the Warrensville, Ohio, house asked the woman, "Why do you want to live in a black neighborhood," and informed her that she might not feel comfortable there.

The Fair Housing Act prohibits housing discrimination based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status, and disability, including discouraging a person from living in a neighborhood.

"A property owner, and in this case a real estate agent, does not have the right to deny housing to a person because of their race or where they come from," stated John Trasviña, Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity. "When they do it is unacceptable and unlawful. The Fair Housing Act guarantees equal housing opportunities for all and HUD is committed to enforcing the law."

According to HUD's charge, the Hispanic woman and fair housing tester each attempted to rent a three-bedroom house owned by Parker, who is a licensed real estate agent, and Gibson. When Parker showed the Hispanic tester the home, Parker asked the woman why she wanted to live in a black neighborhood and remarked that it was not a good idea. After the woman expressed her interest in renting the house, Parker allegedly told her that she would have to consider it while she continued to show the house to other prospective renters.

During HUD's investigation, Parker told the investigator that she had "problems" with races other than African American when the dominate race of the community is black. The house was eventually rented to an African-American family.

The HUD charge will be heard by a United States Administrative Law Judge unless any party to the charge elects to have the case heard in federal district court. If an administrative law judge finds after a hearing that discrimination has occurred, he may award damages to aggrieved persons for the damages caused them by the discrimination. The judge may also order injunctive relief and other equitable relief to deter further discrimination, as well as payment of attorney fees. In addition, the judge may impose fines in order to vindicate the public interest. If the matter is decided in federal court, the judge may also award punitive damages to aggrieved persons.

FHEO and its partners in the Fair Housing Assistance Program investigate more than 10,000 housing discrimination complaints annually. People who believe they are the victims of housing discrimination should contact HUD at 1-800-669-9777 (voice), 800-927-9275 (TTY).

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HUD's mission is to create strong, sustainable, inclusive communities and quality affordable homes for all. HUD is working to strengthen the housing market to bolster the economy and protect consumers; meet the need for quality affordable rental homes; utilize housing as a platform for improving quality of life; build inclusive and sustainable communities free from discrimination; and transform the way HUD does business. More information about HUD and its programs is available on the Internet at www.hud.gov and espanol.hud.gov.

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