



HUD No. 10-071
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HUD CHARGES SEATTLE-AREA APARTMENT COMPLEX WITH HOUSING DISCRIMINATION
Charge alleges property manager discriminated against African Americans, Hispanics, Asian Americans, and families with children

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development today announced that it has charged a King County, Washington, landlord with violating the Fair Housing Act. HUD contends that Summerhill Place LLC, the owners of Summerhill Apartments in Renton, WA, its management company GRAN Inc., and on-site manager Rita Lovejoy, engaged in a pattern of adverse treatment of African Americans, Hispanics, Asian Americans, and families with children, in violation of the Fair Housing Act. **The Fair Housing Act** prohibits housing discrimination based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status, and disability.

“No one should be denied a place to live based on where they’re born, whether they have children, or whether they speak English,” said HUD Deputy Secretary Ron Sims. “To discriminate against any person is to discriminate against all people.”

John Trasviña, Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity, added: “The discriminatory treatment of African Americans, Hispanics, Asian Americans and families with children we found was both rampant and deplorable. Housing discrimination is illegal and unacceptable and HUD works to eliminate it.”

HUD’s charge of discrimination alleges that Lovejoy treated testers who posed as prospective tenants differently based on race, color, national origin and familial status. Specifically, HUD charges that Lovejoy, among other things, offered a higher rent to African-American and Hispanic testers than a white tester for the same apartment, gave earlier availability dates and offered apartments with newer amenities to white testers as compared to African-American testers, asked Hispanic applicants if they illegally purchased social security cards, and made numerous discriminatory statements to non-white testers, including telling the African-American tester that she would not tolerate loud parties or “weed smoking” and that he was “one of the good ones because you wear your pants up on your buttocks.”

HUD’s investigation also found evidence that Lovejoy instructed her staff to show minority applicants apartments with less desirable amenities, such as worn carpet and older appliances, steered minority applicants away from the building in which she lived, and banned her assistant manager from speaking Spanish to Hispanic applicants, saying, “We speak English here.” Lovejoy also allegedly told an Asian American tenant to “go back to India if you can’t use the appliances properly.” To another Asian American tenant, Lovejoy allegedly said, “For God’s sake, you come from a country with no running water and cook over an open flame.”

Also, according to the charge, testers were told that children could not play or ride their bicycles on the grounds of the complex and would instead need to go to a nearby park. The tests were completed by the Fair Housing Center of Washington at the request of King County’s Office of Civil Rights.

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 is the nation’s housing agency committed to sustaining homeownership; creating affordable housing opportunities for low-income Americans; and supporting the homeless, elderly, people with disabilities and people living with AIDS. The Department also promotes economic and community development and enforces the nation’s fair housing laws. More information about HUD and its programs is available on the Internet at www.hud.gov and espanol.hud.gov.

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