



Housing Center Block Party for Housing Justice!

The Housing Center celebrated Fair Housing Month with a Block Party for Housing Justice! The event welcomed partners, dignitaries and friends for pizza, music and fair housing information. Coordinated by Volunteer Coordinator Khalid Ali and Director of Community Engagement & Development Mike Floreth, the Block Party for Housing Justice kicked off with

opening remarks from founding board member Peter Lawson Jones and featured councilwoman Phyllis Cleveland, local radio talk show host Mansfield Frazier and Councilman Zach Reed. The Block Party also marked the official release of the annual publication, *The State of Fair Housing in Northeast Ohio: April 2015*. The event was sponsored by Cleveland Chapter

of The Girl Friends, Inc., Realtor Ernie Cahoon, Civil Rights Attorney Diane Citrino, Esq., Kondik Advertising Inc., AR DJaudiiorhino, Crooked River Coffee Co., Third Federal Savings & Loan, and Costco. The Housing Center would like to thank the sponsors, Tunes for Time, and the hardworking volunteers who made this event a success!



L-r, Mansfield Frazier, Hilary King & Zach Reed



L-r, Michael Lisman, Ken Smith & Peter Lawson Jones



L-r, Julian Wilson, Keisha Matthews, Greg McCoy & Khalid Ali

Housing Center, Shaker Heights Host Home Expo 2015

In celebration of Fair Housing Month, and in partnership with the City of Shaker Heights, the Housing Center coordinated the event, Home Expo 2015: Spring into the Home Improvement

Season! Shaker residents visited with local vendors, non profit agencies and City representatives. The expo featured workshops on neighborhood safety, fair housing, consumer rights and aging in place.

This fall, Shaker Heights will host another housing event with the Housing Center, on September 10, 2015 at the Stephanie Tubbs Jones Community Building.



Mark Wiseman presents on Consumer Courage



Guests visit with local vendors



Judith Engene presents on Planning for Accessibility

Fair Housing Advancement

Housing Center, Others File HUD Complaint Against Fannie Mae

The National Fair Housing Alliance (NFHA) and 19 local fair housing organizations, including the Housing Center, announced the filing with HUD of a housing discrimination complaint against Fannie Mae, one of the largest owners of foreclosed homes in the United States.

The civil rights groups allege that Fannie Mae maintains and markets its foreclosures (also known as real estate owned or “REO” properties) in White neighborhoods consistently better than in middle- and working-class African American and Latino neighborhoods, a practice that violates the federal Fair Housing Act. The complaint is the result of a five-year investigation. “Fannie Mae is wreaking havoc on middle- and working-class communities of color nationwide through a pattern of neglect that is frankly appalling,” said Shanna L. Smith, President and CEO of NFHA. “Fannie Mae’s failure to take care of its massive foreclosure inventory in African American and Latino neighborhoods further destabilizes the communities hardest hit by the foreclosure crisis, in clear contradiction of its congressional charter, federal fair housing laws, and its obligation to affirmatively further fair housing. This systematic failure also creates health and safety hazards, contributes to blight, and places an unfair burden on neighbors and city governments to clean up the problem.”

Evidence gathered from 2010

through April 2015 documents an ongoing pattern and practice of discrimination by Fannie Mae and its asset management contractors. Currently, NFHA and its partners have investigated 2,106 REO properties owned by Fannie Mae in 34 metropolitan areas encompassing 129 cities across the United States. NFHA is joined in this complaint by 19 of its member organizations.

The fair housing organizations investigated the maintenance and marketing of REOs for 39 different types of deficiencies that affect home value, curb appeal, the security of the home and the marketability of the property. The deficiencies assessed by investigators include: broken, boarded or damaged windows and doors; unlocked doors and windows; damaged and obstructed gutters and downspouts; safety hazards; accumulated trash; overgrown lawns and shrubs; lack of “for sale” signs; and others.

Fannie Mae properties in communities of color had broken doors and windows, unlocked doors and windows allowing access to the home, excessive litter, dead or overgrown lawns, dead animals or live animals on the property, and other major deficiencies. Conversely, most Fannie Mae properties in predominantly White communities did not. These problems are simple to fix and are the responsibility of Fannie Mae and its contractors.

Since 2009, NFHA has made efforts to work with

the Government Sponsored Enterprises (“GSEs”) to correct their practices. The GSEs have a legal responsibility to treat all neighborhoods fairly. Smith said, “Freddie Mac looked into its practices and made good faith efforts to correct its business model, but Fannie Mae refused to take responsibility for its neglect in communities of color. The difference between Freddie and Fannie properties is striking. We now rarely find disparities in Freddie Mac’s inventory. Fannie has to take responsibility.” Smith added, “Fannie Mae has not only ignored the problem but has continued to award millions of dollars in new contracts to the same asset management companies that engaged in this discriminatory behavior. We have filed this complaint after having exhausted every possible means we could think of to get Fannie Mae to abide by the law and work with us to re-stabilize the damaged communities.”

The Fair Housing Act makes it illegal to discriminate based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, or familial status, as well as on the race or national origin of residents of a neighborhood. This law applies to housing and housing-related activities, which includes the maintenance, appraisal, listing, marketing, and selling of homes.

For the Housing Center’s full report, national statistics and data for individual cities visit www.nationalfairhousing.org and www.thehousingcenter.org.

Highland Hills Amends Fair Housing Ordinance

The Village of Highland Hills Council voted in May to amend its fair housing ordinance. The Council voted to add military status and age as protected classes. This is particularly significant to the Village of Highland Hills because

one third of its residents (31%) are seniors. Executive Director Hilary King made a requested presentation to the Council’s Rules Committee on fair housing and protected classes to inform their decisionmaking. The presentation

was made possible under a contract with Cuyahoga County Department of Development to provide Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) technical assistance to urban county communities in Cuyahoga County.

Housing Research & Advocacy Center

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Mission:

We promote fair housing and diverse communities, and work to eliminate housing discrimination in Northeast Ohio by providing effective research, education, and advocacy.

Values:

Equality, Respect, Honesty, Attention,
Acceptance, Commitment, Dedication,
Knowledge, and Understanding

Housing Center Staff Changes Mike Floreth to Director

The Housing Center is very pleased to announce that Michael Floreth has been promoted to Director of Community Engagement and Development. Mike joined the Housing Center staff earlier this year and worked as Fair Housing Investigator – advocating on behalf of individuals who have experienced housing discrimination. He also teamed with Volunteer Coordinator Khalid Ali and the volunteers to make the Housing Center's Block Party for Housing Justice a success! Mike Floreth brings a passion for civil rights advocacy and unique combination of experience in business and community development to this new position. We are glad that Mike is working with the Housing Center to help build new relationships throughout the community to support our mission to ensure equal opportunities in housing for everyone.



Previously, Mike performed medical case management for the HIV population in Arizona and housing case management for Nueva Luz in Cleveland. Mike is proficient in Spanish and has a special interest in serving the Latino community as a result of his missionary work in Haiti and also time spent in Nicaragua. Mike earned his Bachelor of Theology and Master of Divinity degrees from the University of Notre Dame and his Master of Economics degree from Cleveland State University, where he served as a teaching assistant in that department. Prior to joining the Housing Research & Advocacy Center, his most recent position included qualitative and quantitative research and forecasting for various industries in the private sector.

Welcome Laura Swiney

Laura Swiney joined the Housing Center as an Enforcement Intern this spring and was promoted to Investigations Coordinator in May. Her responsibilities include conducting intakes of fair housing complaints and fair housing testing, as well as researching local housing patterns and laws to assist with reports dealing with housing discrimination, and helping to direct community members with housing complaints to the appropriate resources. Laura recently graduated from Cleveland State University with a Master of Arts in clinical psychology, and also holds a Bachelor of Arts in psychology from Ursuline College as well as an Associate of Science in human services from Lakeland Community College, where she currently teaches sociology and psychology courses part-time. She has previously been employed in a number of positions in the social services, including a research assistantship for Cleveland State's Diversity Management Program, a Victim Advocate for the Lake County ADAMHS Board, and a Community Psychiatric Support Worker for Pathways, an outpatient mental health facility.



Welcome Ryan Meisner

Ryan Meisner joined The Housing Center in May 2015 as a Fair Housing Intern working with the Director of Community Engagement and Development on volunteer coordination, special events, and affirmatively furthering fair housing issues. Ryan is a senior at Cleveland State University in the Maxine Goodman Levin College of Urban Affairs and the Jack, Joseph, and Morton Mandel Honors College. He is studying Urban Studies with a concentration in Public Management, and he begins his course of study for his accelerated Master of Public Administration this Fall. Prior to working at The Housing Center, Ryan volunteered on a congressional campaign as a Finance Intern and was highly active in Cleveland State University's Honors Program, serving as a student representative on multiple committees. In the future, Ryan hopes to attend law school and remain in the Cleveland area.



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ATTENTION!!

Soon, the Housing Center will transition to a **digital newsletter only**. Please reaffirm your subscription to *Connect!* newsletter by signing up via our website, **www.thehousingcenter.org**. Printed editions will be available by request only.



FAIR HOUSING EVENTS

Fair Housing & Landlord Tenant Law

Tuesday, July 28, 2015
6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
Police Training Classroom
6184 Pearl Road, Parma Heights, Ohio 44130
To register, contact Doris Honsa, 216-361-9240
or dhonsa@thehousingcenter.org
1.5 FREE CEUs for Real Estate Professionals

Fair Housing Law for Real Estate Professionals

Thursday, August 20, 2015
1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Cuyahoga County Library--Mayfield Branch
500 SOM Center Road,
Mayfield Village, Ohio 44143
To register, contact Doris Honsa, 216-361-9240
or dhonsa@thehousingcenter.org
3 FREE CEUs for Real Estate Professionals

Shaker Heights Housing Event

Thursday, September 10, 2015
2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.
Stephanie Tubbs Jones Community Building
3450 Lee Road, Shaker Heights, OH 44120

**Civil Rights Walking Tour
Save the Date!**

Saturday, September 26, 2015
9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Beginning and Ending at Constantino's Market
– Uptown (University Circle)
11473 Euclid Avenue, Cleveland Ohio