HOPE FORUM

A publication of Housing Opportunities Project for Excellence (HOPE), Inc.

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Housing Opportunities Project for Excellence (HOPE), Inc. fights housing discrimination to ensure your civil rights.

We have a three-tiered strategy of (1) Education & Outreach, (2) Intake & Counseling, and (3) Private Enforcement. Thanks to federal, state and local funding, all of our services are **free to the public**. We are here to honor the legacy of the civil rights movement by striving for a truly just and equal society.

To become a tester or volunteer, please call (305) 651-4673 in Miami-Dade or (954) 742-3778 in Broward.

Thank you!

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HUD Moves to Advance Fair Housing in the 55th Year of the Fair Housing Act

On January 19, 2023, HUD announced the release of a new proposed Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) rule. The proposed rule implements the Fair Housing Act mandate that HUD ensure that recipients of its funding affirmatively further fair housing. This mandate requires the agency and its program participants to take meaningful actions to overcome patterns of segregation, promote fair housing choice, eliminate disparities in opportunities, and foster inclusive communities free from discrimination. Specifically, HUD program participants are mandated under the Act to take proactive measures to ensure that members of protected classes have equitable access to affordable housing opportunities.

The importance of the proposed rule is monumental, especially given that Ben Carson, Secretary of HUD under the Trump administration, repealed the 2015 Obama-era AFFH rule which provided a clear and robust framework for program participants to analyze fair housing issues in their jurisdictions and set goals for overcoming identified barriers to fair housing. Trump tweeted that suburbanites would not be troubled by low income housing in their neighborhoods, housing prices would go up and crime would go down because he rescinded the Obama rule. The Trump administration's "Preserving Community and Housing Choice" rule eviscerated the former AFFH by allowing communities to comply with AFFH requirements without actually doing anything to eliminate segregation or promote fair housing.

In contrast, HUD's current, proposed rule is designed to simplify the required fair housing analysis, emphasize goal-setting, increase transparency for public review and comment, foster local commitment to addressing fair housing issues, enhance HUD technical assistance to local communities, and provide mechanisms for regular program evaluation and greater accountability, among other changes. Under the proposed rule, program participants would be required to identify fair housing issues facing their communities, using both data provided by HUD and local knowledge, and then commit to taking responsive actions.

The rule would require that program participants would submit to HUD, for review and acceptance, an Equity Plan every five years. Equity plans would include an analysis of fair housing issues, goals and strategies to remedy those issues in concrete ways, and a description of robust community engagement. Goals and strategies from accepted Equity Plans would subsequently be incorporated into planning documents, such as Consolidated Plans, Annual Action Plans, and Public Housing Agency Plans.

The effects of decades of discriminatory policies and practices and historic disinvestment from communities of color are still felt 55 years after passage of the Fair Housing Act. Highly segregated communities, discriminatory housing practices, disparities in access to community resources, and a large racial wealth gap continue to exist. HOPE, Inc. is encouraged by and applauds HUD's action as it is vitally important for redressing inequities that continue to plague this county's housing markets and looks forward to working with its local partners to affirmatively further fair housing in communities in its service area.

HOPE, Inc.
Housing Opportunities Project for Excellence, Inc.

HOPE Inc.'s mission is to fight housing discrimination in Miami-Dade and Broward Counties and to ensure equal housing opportunities throughout Florida.

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Join the fight against discrimination! Become a tester!

Please join us in this movement (and make some extra cash as well!) - become a civil rights investigator! Interested people should contact HOPE's Testing Coordinators. Training consists of a paid training session, and after training, available testers are contacted as needed. Each assignment pays $65-$100.

Call today! Miami-Dade: (305) 651-4673, Broward: (954) 742-3778.

Applicant must:
-Be 18 years of age or older
-Have no convictions of a misdemeanor involving truth, veracity or honesty or of any felony
-Have good observational and writing skills
-Be able to donate approximately 4 hours for each test
-Be punctual with reliable transportation

Suspect Housing Discrimination, Harassment, or Predatory Lending?

Call HOPE TODAY!

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(305) 651-4673

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(954) 567-0545

Would you like to get this newsletter via e-mail?

Please e-mail rob@hopefhc.com to be added to our list, and receive *HOPE Forum* in your inbox each quarter!

Bias Against Voucher Holders Leads to Highest US Housing Discrimination Settlement Ever

At $10 million, a recent settlement amount was heralded as the largest in US history for a housing discrimination case. In Washington, D.C., three real estate companies agreed to pay that amount to close a case where they'd been charged with discriminating against housing voucher users. On October 20, 2022, Washington, D.C. Attorney General Karl Racine announced this outcome.

Washington, D.C. Attorney General Karl Racine said that there were "mountains of evidence" in the housing discrimination case that led to the nation's highest-ever settlement in such a case.

The fine comes after a 2020 lawsuit where Racine accused DARO Management Services, DARO Realty, and Infinity Real Estate of charging extra fees to residents with Section 8 vouchers and other housing subsidies. The lawsuit also alleged that the three related companies — which own and manage units in 15 buildings — posted ads that specifically discriminated against voucher holders.

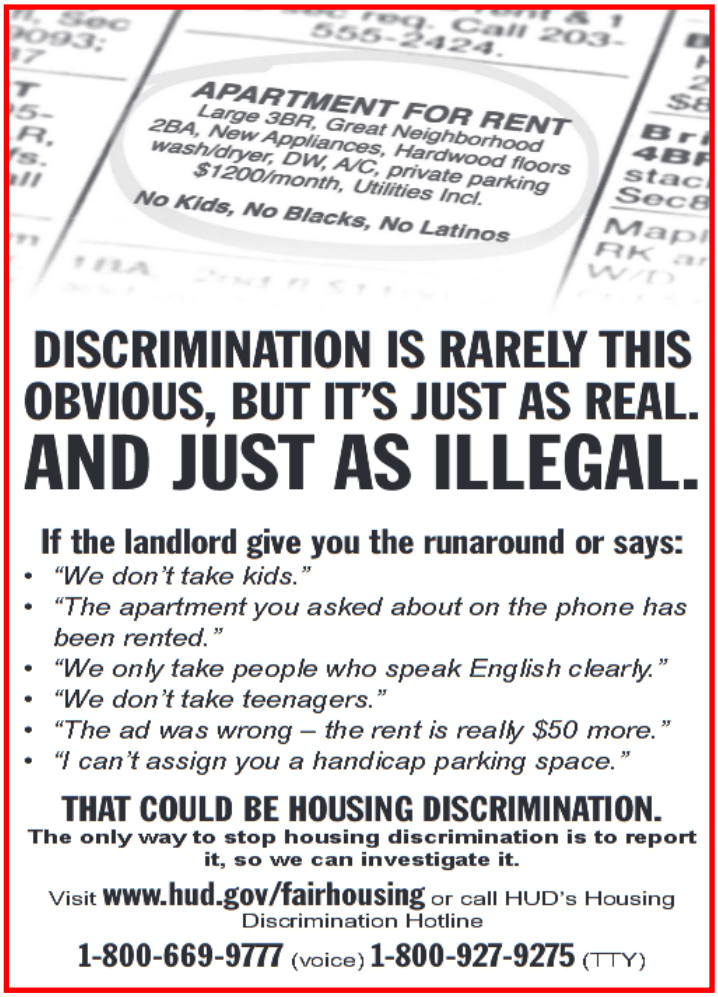
Under terms of D.C.'s limited status as a non-state, Racine's office does not have authority to prosecute felonies or several categories of serious misdemeanor crimes. Those cases are handled by the U.S. Attorney's Office. However, Racine was able to bring the lawsuit under city law. Both the added fees and the discriminatory advertising violated the Washington, D.C. Human Rights Act, which prohibits discriminating against house-seeking residents based on the source of their income, as well as the city's consumer protection laws.

Racine said his investigation uncovered "mountains of evidence," including multiple emails between company executives indicating a clear intent to block prospective renters using vouchers from the city's Housing Choice Voucher Program, generally known as Section 8. "When landlords break the law and refuse to accept vouchers, it's reminiscent of Jim Crow-era housing discrimination policies intended to restrain opportunities for Black residents," he added. "We're sending a message to all landlords: If you follow this playbook, you will face consequences."

As part of the settlement, the companies have agreed to stop managing residential properties in the city and will hand over management of its properties within 18 months. In addition, DARO Management President Carissa Barry will relinquish her local real estate license for 15 years.

"Vouchers are a critical tool that help our vulnerable residents," Racine said. "Too many residents, especially people of color, face serious obstacles in finding safe and affordable housing. This displacement is not just the result of market forces. Instead it's often caused ... by a deliberate, illegal and unethical business model."

~From US News and DCist



Miami Beach Bans Discrimination on the Basis of the Texture or Style of Hair

On October 26, 2022, the City of Miami Beach announced a new ordinance that would protect against discrimination because of one's hair. A statement from the City read, "The Miami Beach City Commission voted unanimously to prohibit discriminatory practices in housing, employment, public services, funding or use of city facilities based on the texture or style of a person's hair. The new ordinance applies in cases where hair is commonly associated with a particular race or national origin, such as Black communities."

"It's unacceptable in 2022 that Black Americans and other minorities still face discrimination based on something so trivial as whether or not they have textured or curly hair," said Miami Beach Vice Mayor Alex Fernandez. "This serves to protect cultural identity and not have to worry about sacrificing who you are in Miami Beach."

The city's human rights ordinance already prohibited discrimination on the basis of various characteristics, including weight and height. The commission expanded those protections to now include hair texture associated with race, such as braids, locks, afros, curls and twists. A 2020 Michigan State University study found about 80% of Black women say they alter their hair from its natural state because they consider it essential to social and economic success, CNN has reported.

"Race-based hair discrimination stems from a perception that straight hair is clean, neat and professional while the opposite belief applies to textured or curly hair types," said Alan Fishman, who chairs the city's Human Rights Committee. "In reality, this is just another way to discriminate based on racial stereotypes."

The new ordinance stems from a motion made by the committee during an April 2021 meeting, according to a city agenda. In a May 2021 letter to the mayor and commission, the city manager informed officials of the motion and said, "a growing number of state and local legislatures are enacting laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of natural hair style and texture."

This current wave of laws on the subject was started in California. The CROWN Act was introduced by then-California State Senator Holly Mitchell in 2019, with CROWN standing for "Create a Respectful and Open Workplace for Natural Hair". The law outlawed hair-based discrimination in employment and in schools. It passed the state congress unanimously and was signed into law July 3, 2019, becoming the nation's first such law at the state level.

Versions of the CROWN Act have been signed into state law in more than a dozen states, including New York, New Jersey, Virginia, Colorado, Washington, Maryland, Illinois, Connecticut, New Mexico, Delaware, and Nebraska. At least 28 municipalities have also adopted similar laws. That list now includes Miami Beach, of course, but Broward County actually adopted a CROWN Act in 2020. Like California's 2019 landmark law, that Broward ordinance prohibits hair-based discrimination in employment and in schools. As mentioned before, the Miami Beach law expands the prohibition to touch more areas of life, including housing.

At the state level in Florida, a version of the CROWN Act failed in March of 2020. At the federal level, multiple attempts — going back to 2019 — to enact a similar law have failed at various stages along the way. Actually, as the Pew Research Center reports it, "The campaign to pass the CROWN Act in every state and Congress began in 2019, when Dove, which makes shampoo and other personal care products, and advocacy groups the National Urban League, Color of Change and the Western Center on Law and Poverty co-founded a coalition to press for the hair anti-discrimination law. The law clarifies that Black people should be allowed to wear their hair as it grows naturally and not be forced to use chemicals to relax or straighten it."

During this campaign, countless people across the country have come out with specific stories of their tribulations due to their hair. Dina Neal, the first African-American woman to be elected to the state legislature of Nevada, has recounted how, in 2013, a White staff member told her that her braids were "unprofessional" and "inappropriate" for state congress. In Chicago in 2021, 4-year-old (yes, 4) Gus "Jett" Hawkins violated school policy and was in trouble on consecutive days for how he wore his hair to school — braids on one day and an afro puff on another. Baltimore Mayor Brandon Scott, who took office in 2020, reported being told that his afro was "disrespectful" to his position, and talked about cutting his braids after college, feeling that he had to do so in order to conform.

Finally, then-18-year-old Naika Belizaire was among those who testified to the Nevada Senate in 2021 about the need for a hair discrimination law (which has since passed). When Belizaire was 13, she wore an afro on the first day of school and was promptly sent to the principal's office by her White teacher, who called her hair a "distraction." Belizaire told the Senate, "I do not want any other young Black child or Black person to feel the way I did—to have their pride stripped from them and be forced to feel insignificant just because their hair is different."

The California Association of Realtors Acknowledges its Past Overtly Racist Efforts

The California Association of Realtors (CAR) is apologizing for its role in pushing policies that drove racial segregation in the state. In October 2022, the organization admitted that it "once played a leading role in segregation and exclusionary practices in housing. California communities still grapple with wealth and homeownership inequities. For decades, [We] promoted policies that encouraged discrimination and the idea that neighborhood integration would negatively impact property values. The Association endorsed racial zoning, "redlining" and racially restrictive covenants."

Then known as the California Real Estate Association, the organization paid for a campaign to add an amendment to the state constitution in 1950 forcing the government to get voter approval before spending public money on affordable housing. In more recent decades, the group has supported repealing the amendment. In 1964, the association put its money behind a proposition to invalidate the Rumford Act, a law aimed at protecting people of color from discrimination while they were searching for a home.

"The Association was wrong. We not only apologize for those actions, we strongly condemn them, and we will continue working to address the legacy of these discriminatory policies and practices," said CAR President Otto Catrina. In addition to the public acknowledgment of its role in perpetuating segregation and inequality, CAR has pledged to assist with homeownership funding, to partner with housing nonprofits working in underserved and historically divested communities, and to be involved in legislative efforts that promote inclusion and integration. The organization also seeks to increase cultural training for people in the real estate industry and help give more options to people who suspect bias in appraisals.

CAR joins a growing list of real estate professional organizations making similar apologies, including groups in Minnesota, Illinois, Georgia, and Missouri. To be sure, the apologies can never correct the injustice that has been done to tens of millions of people and families. But at least these organizations are coming forward to address this issue. Sadly, the world will likely never hear from the vast majority of like organizations whose members were, and are, driving forces of decades-long racism in housing policies and practices.

Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing

The concept of "affirmatively furthering fair housing" is based on Section 808 (e) (5) of the federal Fair Housing Act which states that the Secretary of HUD shall administer housing and community development programs in a manner that affirmatively furthers the purpose of the Fair Housing Act. We dedicate this space to Miami-Dade and Broward jurisdictions that receive Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds and partner with HOPE to implement the following outreach.

Broward Area Outreach

The following jurisdictions were impacted by Broward area outreach activities during the quarter: Broward County, Davie, Fort Lauderdale, Tamarac, and other Broward locations.

Fair Housing and Predatory Lending Presentations: These presentations consist of PowerPoint visuals, formal lectures, question and answer periods, and informational packages. All presentations are modified to meet the individual needs of the sponsor. The following presentations were conducted (in English, unless otherwise noted):

- Amazing Community Partners, Lauderhill: 10/1/22, 11/12/22
- Broward County Housing Authority, Lauderdale Lakes: 10/8/22, 11/12/22
- Housing Foundation of America, Pembroke Pines: 10/8/22, 10/22/22, 11/12/22, 11/19/22
- Oasis of Hope, Pompano Beach: 10/15/22, 11/19/22, 12/17/22
- Urban League of Broward County, Fort Lauderdale : 10/1/22, 10/8/22, 10/22/22, 10/26/22, 11/19/22, 12/14/22

Housing Provider Rights and Responsibilities Presentations: Presentations designed for the specific needs of local housing providers.

Community, Cultural, Health, and Job Fairs: Local community events to diversify outreach efforts, counseling members of the general public on their rights and responsibilities.

- 24th Annual ArtFest in the Pines, Pembroke Pines,: 11/6/22
- Broward County Housing Authority Toy Drive, Lauderdale Lakes: 12/16/22

BROWARD COUNTY FLORIDA

TOWN OF DAVIE FLORIDA

CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE

TAMARAC The City For Your Life

HOPE in the community! On the left is Charmaine Williams, HOPE's Education & Outreach Coordinator for Broward County, at the 24th Annual ArtFest in the Pines event in Pembroke Pines on November 6, 2022. Below (in the mask) is Rob Collins, Esq., HOPE's Education & Outreach Coordinator for Miami-Dade County, with a great student volunteer at a health fair at Southridge High School near South Miami Heights on November 15, 2022.

Miami-Dade Area Outreach

The following jurisdictions were impacted by Miami-Dade area outreach activities during the quarter: the Cities of Miami, Miami Beach, and North Miami, as well as other Miami-Dade locations.

Fair Housing and Predatory Lending Presentations (conducted in English, unless otherwise noted):

- Centro Campesino (English & Spanish), Florida City: 10/8/22, 10/22/22, 11/5/22, 11/19/22, 12/3/22, 12/17/22
- Cuban American National Council (English & Spanish), Little Havana: 10/14/22, 10/19/22, 10/28/22, 11/4/22, 11/10/22, 11/18/22, 12/2/22, 12/16/22, 12/21/22
- Experts Resource Community Center/NID (English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole), Miami Gardens & North Miami: 10/8/22, 10/22/22, 11/12/22, 12/10/22, 12/17/22
- Healthy Little Havana, Little Havana: 11/1/22
- Haitian American CDC, Little Haiti: 10/21/22, 12/9/22
- Housing Foundation of America (English & Spanish), Miami Gardens & Palmetto Bay: 10/15/22, 10/22/22, 11/5/22, 12/3/22, 12/10/22, 12/17/22
- (City of) Miami Beach Parents Meetings, North Beach & South Beach: 12/6/22, 12/8/22
- Neighborhood Housing Services (English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole), Little Havana: 10/6/22, 10/13/22, 10/22/22, 11/10/22, 11/17/22, 12/8/22, 12/10/22, 12/15/22, 12/17/22
- Opa-locka CDC (English & Spanish), Opa-locka: 10/29/22, 11/19/22, 12/17/22
- Real Estate, Education and Community Housing (English & Spanish), Kendall: 10/15/22, 11/5/22
- Southridge High School, South Miami Heights: 10/18/22
- Trinity Empowerment (English & Spanish), Goulds: 10/15/22, 11/19/22, 12/17/22
- University of Miami School of Law, Coral Gables: 11/14/22

Provider Presentations:

- Miami-Dade Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce, Doral: 10/6/22
- Neighborhood Assistance Corporation of America, North Miami: 11/18/22

Community Fairs:

- Jackson High School, Health Fair, Allapattah: 11/17/22
- Jan Mann School, Health Fair, Opa-locka: 10/25/22
- MacArthur South, Health Fair, Homestead: 10/10/22
- Miami Beach Police Athletic League, Thanksgiving Event, North Beach: 11/19/22
- Miami Beach Regional Library, Community Tabling, South Beach: 11/16/22, 12/13/22
- (The) Mortgage Firm, Homebuyer Event, Miami Gardens: 10/29/22
- Norland High School, Health Fair, Miami Gardens: 10/21/22
- Northwestern High School, Health Fair, Liberty City: 11/9/22
- Sisters In Spirit, Community Love Fest, Overtown: 12/3/22
- South Shore Community Center, Community Tabling, South Beach: 11/16/22, 12/19/22
- Southridge High School, Health Fair, South Miami Heights: 11/15/22

Interested in having us visit your group or organization?

We offer FREE fair housing education to both housing providers and any potential home-seekers, rentals or sales!

Please call
(305) 651-4673 in Miami-Dade
or
(954) 567-0545 in Broward

Or ask about being a paid tester and helping us uncover discrimination RIGHT HERE in our community!

Department of Community & Economic Development
City of Miami

MIAMIBEACH

NORTH MIAMI
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HOPE FORUM

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EQUAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITY

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Yes, I want to invest in the future of my community by becoming a member of HOPE!

Please fill out this membership application and mail with your TAX-DEDUCTIBLE contribution to:

HOPE
Attn: Membership
11501 NW 2nd Ave
Miami, FL 33168

NAME: _____

COMPANY: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY:_____ **ST:**_____ **ZIP:**_____

PHONE: _____ **FAX:**_____

EMAIL: _____

_____ Individual ($35.00)
_____ Family ($75.00)
_____ Friend ($100.00)
_____ Non-Profit ($250.00)
_____ Corporate ($500.00)
_____ Good Neighbor ($1,000.00)
_____ Sustaining Partner ($10,000.00)
_____ Juniors For Justice ($5.00) (13-18 years old)
_____ Pennies from Heaven (children 12 and under)
_____ I am unable to contribute but please send me *HOPE Forum*

There are laws against discrimination in the rental or sale of housing on the basis of:

- ◊ **Race or Color**
- ◊ **National Origin**
- ◊ **Religion**
- ◊ **Marital Status**
- ◊ **Pregnancy**
- ◊ **Familial Status (as in whether you have children)**
- ◊ **Disability**
- ◊ **Sex (Gender)**
- ◊ **Veteran Status**
- ◊ **Age**
- ◊ **HIV Status**
- ◊ **Sexual Orientation**
- ◊ **Gender Identity**
- ◊ **Gender Expression**
- ◊ **Political Affiliation**
- ◊ **Source of Income**
- ◊ **Ancestry**
- ◊ **Being a victim of domestic violence or human trafficking**

Do you suspect that you have been a victim of housing discrimination? Help is available; don't delay!

Call the HOPE DISCRIMINATION HELPLINE!
Miami-Dade: 305-651-HOPE (4673) Broward: 954-742-3778
TDD: 800-955-8771
or file a complaint at www.hopefhc.com