



**For Immediate Release**

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**U.S. Bank Accused of Housing Discrimination**

*Civil Rights Organizations Add Dallas, Hampton Roads, Va., New Haven and New Orleans and New Evidence in D.C. Area to Complaint against U.S. Bank*

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Today, the National Fair Housing Alliance and four of its member organizations announced new evidence of housing discrimination by U.S. Bank, N.A. The civil rights groups allege that U.S. Bank continues to maintain and market foreclosed homes in white neighborhoods in a much better manner than in African-American and Latino neighborhoods. Failing to maintain and market homes because of the racial or ethnic composition of the neighborhood violates the federal Fair Housing Act.

The organizations are adding **Dallas, Hampton Roads, Va., New Haven, and New Orleans** to their pending federal complaint filed with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). NFHA has also provided HUD with new evidence in the **Washington, D.C. metro area** supporting their allegations of a continuing violation of the Fair Housing Act by U.S. Bank. The four member organizations that filed the complaint in conjunction with NFHA are the Connecticut Fair Housing Center, Inc., Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center, Housing Opportunities Made Equal of Virginia, Inc., and the North Texas Fair Housing Center.

“U.S. Bank ought to be concerned that it is contributing to blight and creating health and safety risks in communities of color,” said Shanna L. Smith, President and CEO of the National Fair Housing Alliance. “Instead, U.S. Bank turns a blind eye to its responsibility to the neighborhoods and local governments that are losing millions of dollars as property values decline because of the Bank’s poorly maintained and marketed REOs. The Bank is also ignoring its responsibility to the trusts that hired the bank to maintain their assets.”

“The Fair Housing Act makes it clear that as the trustee and owner of record, U.S. Bank is responsible for the maintenance of these properties,” continued Smith. “When confronted by the City of Oakland, Calif. about its blighted REOs, for example, U.S. Bank immediately instructed

its servicers to clean up the REOs. But then with regard to this complaint, U.S. Bank turns around and issues statements saying it has no control over its bank-owned homes. They can't have it both ways."

**The complaint now brings the total to 35 cities in 15 metropolitan areas where U.S. Bank is alleged to have discriminated in the maintenance and marketing of its bank-owned homes and homes for which it is the owner of record as the trustee.** 79 new properties were added to the complaint, bringing the total number of properties to 352.

The organizations evaluated the maintenance and marketing of bank-owned foreclosed homes for 39 different types of deficiencies, including broken windows and doors, broken and obstructed gutters and downspouts, accumulation of trash, overgrown lawns, no "for sale" signs, and other issues that affect curb appeal, the security of the home, and the value of the home.

U.S. Bank properties in communities of color had excessive trash, unsecured locks and windows, overflowing mail, and overgrown lawns. All of these problems are easy to fix and are the responsibility of the bank and its contractors. Trash is an eyesore, a health and safety risk, and makes a home unappealing to buyers. **In New Haven, 89 percent of U.S. Bank REO properties in the communities of color inspected had substantial amounts of trash, as did 84 percent in New Orleans, 78 percent in Dallas, and 67 percent in Hampton Roads, Va.**

"U.S. Bank has failed Dallas residents by not maintaining REO properties and contributing to neighborhood blight," said **Frances Espinoza, Executive Director of the North Texas Fair Housing Center**. "U.S. Bank should step up and repair the damage it has done to our communities."

"The city of New Haven has been hit particularly hard by the foreclosure crisis as evidenced by one of the highest rates of foreclosure in Connecticut," said **Erin Kemple, Executive Director of the Connecticut Fair Housing Center**. "The fact that U.S. Bank has failed to maintain its REO properties has exacerbated the problems already facing the city. The people of New Haven deserve better."

Having secure locks and windows on an uninhabited home is essential for community safety and protecting the asset. **In Dallas, 65 percent of properties in the communities of color inspected had broken or unsecured doors, as did 33 percent in New Haven, 22 percent in Hampton Roads, Va., and 11 percent in New Orleans.**

"Giving all residents a fair shot to rebuild is a fundamental part of our approach to the Katrina recovery process," said **James Perry, Executive Director of the Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center**. "We predicted that the barriers to recovery would be plentiful but we were shocked to find that U.S. Bank was thwarting the heroic efforts of residents fighting to rebuild their neighborhoods by refusing to properly care for foreclosed homes in Black neighborhoods."

"It is absolutely unacceptable that U.S. Bank refuses to maintain and market its properties in communities of color to the same standards as it does in predominantly white communities," said

**Heather Crislip, President and CEO of Housing Opportunities Made Equal of Virginia, Inc.** “Such discrimination is dragging down property values in neighborhoods of color, continuing the disinvestment that has long plagued those communities. HOME is proud to be a part of this complaint to hold U.S. Bank accountable for its race-based discrimination.”

Nearly two years after NFHA filed its first complaint against U.S. Bank, new evidence shows that the bank continues to discriminate in communities of color in the Washington, DC metro area. The majority of the new properties investigated had unsecured doors, overgrown grass, and missing “for sale” signs. One property added to the complaint in the **Washington, D.C. Metro** area had uncut grass, overgrown shrubbery, mail that flowed out of the mailbox and a tool shed with a door left wide open.

NFHA has pending federal complaints against U.S. Bank, Bank of America, and Deutsche Bank. “These banks are discriminating in many of the same neighborhoods of color,” continued Smith. “They are compounding the damage and blight to these communities already caused by the big banks during the foreclosure crisis, and making it even harder for these neighborhoods to bounce back.”

The original complaint against U.S. Bank was filed with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development on April 17, 2012 and includes Atlanta, GA; Dayton, OH; Miami/Fort Lauderdale, FL; Oakland/Richmond/Concord, CA; and Washington, DC. The complaint was then amended on October 15, 2013 to include the following cities: Baton Rouge, LA; Chicago, IL, Indianapolis, IN; Memphis, TN; and Milwaukee, WI.

NFHA and its member agencies are represented by Relman, Dane & Colfax PLLC in Washington, DC.

Additional statistics and photos are available at [www.nationalfairhousing.org](http://www.nationalfairhousing.org).

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

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**DALLAS, TX** - 100 percent of U.S. Bank-owned homes in Dallas communities of color had five or more maintenance or marketing deficiencies, and 96 percent had 10 or more maintenance or marketing deficiencies.

**HAMPTON ROADS, VA** - 67 percent of U.S. Bank-owned homes in Hampton Roads communities of color had 10 or more maintenance or marketing deficiencies.

**NEW HAVEN, CT** – 100 percent of U.S. Bank-owned homes in New Haven communities of color had five or more maintenance or marketing deficiencies, and 56 percent had 10 or more maintenance or marketing problems.

**NEW ORLEANS, LA** - 100 percent of U.S. Bank-owned homes in New Orleans communities of color had five or more maintenance or marketing deficiencies, and 68 percent had 10 or more maintenance or marketing deficiencies.

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### **[The National Fair Housing Alliance](#)**

Founded in 1988, the National Fair Housing Alliance is a consortium of more than 220 private, non-profit fair housing organizations, state and local civil rights agencies, and individuals from throughout the United States. Headquartered in Washington, D.C., the National Fair Housing Alliance, through comprehensive education, advocacy, and enforcement programs, provides equal access to apartments, houses, mortgage loans, and insurance policies for all residents in the nation.

### **[The Connecticut Fair Housing Center](#)**

The Connecticut Fair Housing Center is a statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to ensuring that all people have equal access to housing opportunities in Connecticut. Our work is grounded in the belief that individual choice, not discrimination in the housing or lending markets, should determine where people live in Connecticut.

### **[Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center](#)**

The Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center (GNOFHAC) is a private, non-profit civil rights organization that was established in the summer of 1995 to eradicate housing discrimination throughout the greater New Orleans area through education, investigation, and enforcement activities. GNOFHAC is dedicated to fighting housing discrimination not only because it is illegal, but also because it is a divisive force that perpetuates poverty, segregation, ignorance, fear, and hatred.

### **[Housing Opportunities Made Equal of Virginia](#)**

Housing Opportunities Made Equal of Virginia, Inc. (HOME) was founded in 1971 with its core mission of ensuring equal access to housing for all people. HOME investigates housing discrimination and provides support for discrimination victims. HOME is a HUD-approved housing counseling agency that helps first-time homebuyers and assists homeowners to avoid foreclosure. HOME also conducts policy and research initiatives that expand housing opportunity.

### **[North Texas Fair Housing Center](#)**

The North Texas Fair Housing Center was formed in 2010 to provide vital fair housing services to North Texas communities. Before NTFHC opened its doors, the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex was the largest metropolitan area in the country without the benefit of a private fair housing organization. NTFHC's services include intake and investigation of discrimination complaints, housing counseling, and fair housing education programs.

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