



For Immediate Release  
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For Further Information Contact:  
Tim Bennett-Smyth: 860.247-4400 x 0728  
Erin Kemple: 860.247.4400 x 0723

## **Federal District Court Awards Over \$110,000 for Denial of Housing Based on Race**

When DeMechia Wilson, an African-American single mother of two, saw an opportunity to sublease a house in Windsor Locks, she jumped at the chance. The home was close to her job and would have allowed her children to attend the good public schools nearby. Unfortunately, Ms. Wilson was summarily rejected because of her race.

The Windsor Locks home was available because the tenants, Jermaine and Taika Bilbo, an interracial married couple with three children, had decided to purchase their own home after Mr. Bilbo was approved for a mortgage loan through the Department of Veterans Affairs.

After Ms. Wilson contacted Mrs. Bilbo to inquire about the property and express her interest in moving her family there, Mr. Bilbo asked his landlord, Mr. Hylton, for permission to sublet the property. Mr. Hylton initially agreed, but then asked Mr. Bilbo about the race of the proposed sub-tenant. When Mr. Hylton learned that Ms. Wilson was black, Mr. Hylton withdrew permission to sublet and told Mr. Bilbo that he did not want "too many black people" in his house and that Mr. Bilbo should find some "good white people." When Mr. Bilbo replied that he (himself) was black, Mr. Hylton explained that he only rented to them because Mrs. Bilbo is white and he thought "it was a good mix." Mr. Hylton's conduct prevented Ms. Wilson from moving to Windsor Locks, and, instead, she remained in the North End of Hartford.

Mrs. Bilbo contacted the Connecticut Fair Housing Center, whose attorneys filed a complaint with the Department of Housing and Urban Development. The case ultimately made its way to federal court, where the Center's attorneys tried it with the United States Attorneys Office. The Court awarded over \$110,000 in damages and attorneys fees to the plaintiffs, including damages of \$20,000 to Ms. Wilson specifically as compensation for the lost opportunity to live in a neighborhood of lower crime, higher educational opportunities and greater upward mobility. Ms. Wilson explained that even today, years later, "In the back of my mind, I remain apprehensive about looking for a home, even though I am intelligent, have good credit and a good job, because I am black and have two kids."

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“Where you live often determines the quality of education your children receive, the employment options and health services you enjoy, the availability of child care, and access to other important life opportunities. Housing discrimination prevents individuals from making decisions about where they want to live for themselves. It is wrong, it is illegal and it is expensive,” said lead attorney Timothy Bennett-Smyth.

Mrs. Bilbo noted that “When it first happened, we were just shocked, we knew what he said was wrong, but did not really know the law.”

The Center’s legal director, Greg Kirschner, stated, “The Center and its clients are grateful for the commitment shown by HUD, the Department of Justice and United States Attorney’s Office to enforcement of the Fair Housing Act.”

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**About the Connecticut Fair Housing Center** The Connecticut Fair Housing Center is a statewide nonprofit fair housing organization dedicated to ensuring that all people, and principally those with scarce financial resources, have equal access to housing opportunities in Connecticut. We are located on the web at [www.ctfairhousing.org](http://www.ctfairhousing.org).