



CT FAIR HOUSING CENTER

Special points of interest:

- **Pro Bono Efforts Support the Center's work**
- **Foreclosure Prevention Clinic Schedule**
- **Loving Dinner 2012 a Success**

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Connecticut Choices

Pro Bono Efforts Help Client With Disability Case

In 2009, Donna Parris' deteriorating health caused her to lose partial sight in one eye and made it difficult for her to live on her own. Donna requested that the owner of her mobile-home park permit her to have a live-in aide. Instead of granting that request, the landlord retaliated against Donna by refusing to repair her septic system causing it to require servicing roughly fourteen times in two years.

After the Connecticut Federal District Court heard about the horrendous conditions endured by Ms. Parris, it awarded her \$350,000 in damages. That was the easy part. Instead of obeying the Court order, the mobile home

park owners claimed that they had no money. Since the Center's attorneys have little experience with collecting a judgment, they turned to Michael J. Coolican from the law firm of Bracewell & Giuliani, LLP and Ben M. Krowicki from Bingham McCutchen LLP (pictured at right with CFHC Legal Director Greg Kirschner).

Pro Bono counsel assisted the Center's staff attorney Timothy Bennett-Smyth in conducting post-judgment debtor examinations. These examinations revealed, among other things, that the defendants had surreptitiously sold property and hid tens of thousands of dollars from the plaintiff and

the federal court. Pro Bono counsel has also appeared in an appeal in this case, a foreclosure matter, continues to monitor a related malpractice action, and have taken the lead in litigating recently filed bankruptcy petitions by both named defendants. Bracewell and Bingham's dogged pursuit of full vindication for Ms. Parris, across multiple forums, is a testament to their commitment to the Center and its work.



The Center Turns Its Attention to Zoning

The Connecticut Fair Housing Center has begun examining zoning ordinances and their effects on housing opportunities. A detailed study of the zoning ordinances of Connecticut's 169 towns assessing the effects that zoning regulations have on both affordable housing development and racial integration should be completed by March 2013. Our findings will help define and drive future advocacy.

Our preliminary research results are surprising. Only 4.73% of Connecticut towns allow multifamily housing development without requiring the developer to go through a special permitting

process. And 27 of Connecticut's 169 towns don't allow multifamily housing at all, despite state laws requiring them to do so. Thus, is it hardly surprising that only 28 of Connecticut's 169 towns meet the 10% affordable housing threshold set by state law.

The racial impact of these zoning restrictions are striking. Of the towns that don't permit any multifamily housing, 92.6% have populations that are at least 90% White. Eighty eight percent of towns banning multifamily housing are outside areas of "lower opportunity" (areas where schools are struggling and poverty and crime rates are

high among other factors) according to the Center's 2010 study, *People, Place and Opportunity: Mapping Communities of Opportunity in Connecticut*.

But there is much we can do to promote *inclusionary* zoning – zoning that allows for appropriately scaled, architecturally pleasing, mixed-income housing with an affordable housing component. Local efforts to promote such housing is already underway in Old Saybrook, Simsbury and other Connecticut towns. More are planned.

If you are interested in advocating for fair zoning in your town, please contact Melvin Kelley at the Center.

Foreclosure Prevention Clinics

Who Can Attend: The clinics in Hartford and Fairfield County are open to any homeowner facing foreclosure. No pre-registration is required. There is no charge.

What: The clinics will offer homeowners information about the judicial foreclosure and mediation process along with guidance on how to prepare and what documents to bring to court and referrals to housing counseling agencies. Homeowners will have the opportunity to meet one-on-one with volunteer attorneys and paralegals to discuss their situation.

When and Where:

In *Fairfield County*, usually, but not always, the third Wednesday of every month from 6:00-8:30 p.m. at a city government building, rotating between Norwalk, Bridgeport and Stamford.

In *Hartford*, usually, but not always, the third Tuesday of every month from 5:30-8:00 p.m. at the University of Hartford.

Please call the Center at (860) 247-4400 or (888) 247-4401 for more information or go to www.ctfairhousing.org for a complete list of clinics, locations and directions.

The Center Welcomes New Foreclosure Prevention Staff

We are proud to announce the arrival of two new members of our foreclosure prevention staff. Their arrival will enable us to expand our outreach and educational efforts, including our self-representation foreclosure prevention classes, as well as increase our ability to respond to the growing number of calls from homeowners facing foreclosure. Our foreclosure team has been a presence in 162 of the 169 towns in the state.

Loretta Martina



Paralegal

Ms. Martina (pictured above) joined the Center in July as a paralegal specializing in foreclosure prevention. She is a recent graduate of the University of Hartford where she received a Bachelor of Science degree, Summa Cum Laude in Paralegal Studies. She has worked at the Foreclosure Prevention

Clinics sponsored by the Center and the University of Hartford since their inception in 2008. She has been responsible for organizing and publicizing the clinics and helped train scores of volunteers. She is a member of the Central Connecticut Paralegal Association and sits on the American Bar Association Advisory Board for the University of Hartford's Paralegal Studies program. Prior to joining the Connecticut Fair Housing Center, Ms. Martina worked at Pratt & Whitney as an account manager working with several major airlines and served as an export representative ensuring compliance with U.S. export regulations.

Lorraine Martinez Foreclosure Prevention Attorney

Ms. Martinez (pictured above, right) joined the Center this fall as a foreclosure prevention staff attorney. Prior to coming to the Center, Ms. Martinez worked as an attorney advisor for the Social Security Administration, Office of Appellate Operations in Washington, D.C. During law school, she interned with the Community Law Center in Baltimore,



Maryland and worked closely with the Director of Research and Policy in gathering and analyzing foreclosure data in an effort to identify neighborhoods being targeted by financial predators. She also assisted in developing foreclosure materials for community outreach events and researched novel issues in foreclosure law in order to assist in providing legal assistance to other nonprofit organizations. Ms. Martinez received a B.S. with honors in Management and International Business from the University of Connecticut and a J.D. from the University of Maryland School of Law.

To get a copy of *Representing Yourself in Foreclosure: A Guide for Connecticut Homeowners*, in English or Spanish, call Letty at (860)247-4400 or go to www.ctfairhousing.org.

Foreclosure Prevention Helps Save Homes

During the last 12 months, the Center has:

- Provided legal advice to more than 200 Connecticut residents in foreclosure;
- Distributed more than 2,000 copies of the Center's foreclosure manual in English and Spanish;
- Presented information on foreclosure issues to more than 1,000 Connecticut residents at 52 classes;
- Trained more than 50 private attorneys on how to represent homeowners in foreclosure;
- Assisted the Judicial Branch with its New Haven and Bridgeport foreclosure advice tables.

“...the level of racial anxiety that some feel about our changing demography is misplaced and diminishes our collective will for public investment... our disconnection by race and income, by geography and generation, is preventing us from seeing and forging our common national future.” —Professor Manuel Pastor

Assisting Connecticut’s Most Vulnerable Citizens

People with disabilities, Connecticut’s most vulnerable citizens, often seek assistance from the Connecticut Fair Housing Center when threatened with the loss of their housing as the result of their disabilities. The state and federal fair housing laws prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability and also requires housing providers to make reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities. A reasonable accommodation is a change in a generally applied rule, policy or practice that will ensure persons with disabilities have access to housing go their choice. . Some of the recent cases where the Center assisted clients in securing reasonable accommodations include:

A young woman in a nursing home wanted to move back into the community. Unfortunately, she was denied an apartment because the landlord did not want to accept someone who was disabled nor did he want to accept her rental assistance voucher. After an investigation, one of the Center’s attorneys was able to

settle the case with an agreement that included the landlord giving our client the next available unit.

A woman in a wheelchair contacted the Center because the management company for her building notified her and several other tenants with disabilities that their parking spaces were being re-assigned. The new parking places required the woman to get in and out of her accessible van into a line of traffic coming in to the parking garage. The Center requested the woman’s parking spot be relocated to a safer location. The request was granted and the woman was able to use her van without fear of getting hit by a car.

A single father, raising his son with disabilities, contacted the Center because although he had a rental assistance voucher, he was having trouble finding an apartment that accommodated his son’s disabilities. As a result, the housing authority administering his voucher was threatening to take it away.

The Center contacted the housing authority to secure an extension of time for our client to use the voucher. The housing authority granted the request and this family is now settled in their new home.

A woman contacted the Center for assistance for her husband who is in a wheelchair. In July 2012, the couple, who own a condominium, requested that the condominium association grant them permission to widen the doorway to their unit and extend the concrete pad outside their front door to accommodate the husband’s wheelchair. They were staying in a hotel with an accessible room when they called us because the condominium association had not granted them permission to make the modifications. The Center sent a demand letter to the condominium association asking that the couple be permitted to do the work as quickly as possible. As a result of the Center’s advocacy, the work was completed by August and the couple was able to live in their home again.

Fourth Annual Loving Civil Rights Award Dinner Honors Housing Activists and Advocates

Manuel Pastor, Professor of American Studies and Ethnicity at the University of Southern California, Founding Director of the Center for Justice, Tolerance, and Community at the University of California, Santa Cruz was awarded the fourth Mildred and Richard Loving Civil Rights award at the Center’s Annual Dinner on May 31st.

Professor Pastor spoke about issues of racial justice, regional inclusion and the social and economic impact of the dramatically changing racial and ethnic demography. His recent book, *Uncommon Common Ground: Race and America’s Future*, documents the gap between progress in racial attitudes and racial realities, and offers a new set of strategies for both talking about race and achieving racial equity.

This year also marked the inaugural George and Patricia Ritter Pro Bono Award, which was given to the law firms of Bingham McCutchen, Bracewell & Guiliani, and Shipman & Goodwin for their remarkable contributions to two complex civil rights cases that the Center undertook.

John Brittain returned to the state from Washington, D.C. to pay homage to the memory of four housing advocates and activists. He recognized George and Patricia Ritter, Judge Robert Satter, and Terry Tondro, all of whom played crucial roles in the history of progressive housing advocacy.



Hartford Mayor Pedro Segarra (l) and John Brittain (r) enjoy the rhythms of the Inter-District Steel Pan Ensemble at the 4th Annual Loving Civil Rights Award Dinner

Connecticut Fair Housing Center

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Text by the Staff of the Connecticut Fair Housing Center

The Connecticut Fair Housing Center is a statewide non-profit fair housing organization dedicated to ensuring that all people, and principally those with scarce financial resources, have equal access to housing opportunities in Connecticut.

To accomplish its mission, the Center provides legal assistance and investigative services to the Connecticut residents who believe they may have been the victim of housing discrimination, education and outreach on the fair housing laws, strategic planning and advice on how to comply with the fair housing laws to cities and town, and foreclosure prevention legal assistance. To learn more about our organization, go to www.ctfairhousing.org.

Visit us on-line at
www.ctfairhousing.org

Many Thanks to the Volunteers and Interns Who Worked with Us in 2012

Jessica Rivera	Samia Kemal
Jennifer Cioffi	Jenna Veronneau
Lisa Drabrowski	Lauren Mansfield
Tyron Teryll	Emma Rotondo
Pat Horgan	Evan Buchberger
Adam Taub	Shanese Caton

Fair Housing Facts

- Opened up 3,151 units of housing to members of the protected classes;
- Obtained relief for more than 50 Connecticut households alleging housing discrimination;
- Provided more than 2,500 hours in legal assistance to the victims of housing discrimination;
- Trained more than 1,500 Connecticut residents landlords, managers, and other housing providers on the fair housing laws;
- Performed 28 tests in response to complaints;
- Won more than \$548,637 in damages and attorneys' fees for the victims of housing discrimination.

Thank You to Our 2012 Loving Dinner Sponsors

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