



CT FAIR HOUSING CENTER

Special points of interest:

- **Foreclosure Prevention Class Schedule**
- **Testing Projects Show Discrimination**
- **Recent Fair Housing Victories**

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Connecticut Choices

2011 Loving Civil Rights Award Dinner—May 19, 2011

On May 19th, the Connecticut Fair Housing Center will honor Ted Shaw, former Director-Counsel and President of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, and now a Professor at Columbia Law School. Professor Shaw will speak on “The Place of Fair Housing in ‘Post Racial’ America”, a look at how race and class has affected the manner in which housing policy is determined.

In addition, the Center will honor Jeffrey Freiser, who recently retired as Executive Director of the Connecticut Housing Coalition, for his decades of service to the state’s housing and civil rights community.

This is the Center’s Third Annual Loving Civil Rights Award Dinner. The dinner is named for Mildred and Richard Loving, the couple who suffered the ultimate form of housing discrimination when Virginia banned them from residing together in the state because of their interracial union. Eventually, Mildred and Richard Loving challenged Virginia’s prohibition on interracial marriages and their historic victory before the United States Supreme Court inspired generations of civil rights lawyers.

In addition to an evening of cocktails, dinner, music from the Artist’s Collective African Collection, a challenging and honest look at race in America and a

chance to honor the people who make Connecticut a better place in which to live and work, you will have the chance to bid on a writers’ workshop on Martha’s Vineyard, a Hartford cultural package that includes tickets to the Bushnell and the Hartford Stage as well as a children’s birthday party at the CT Science Center and much more. For tickets and reservations go to www.ctfarhousing.org



Woman Relates Problems With Mobile Home Park

In 2009, Donna Parris’ (pictured right) deteriorating health caused her to lose partial sight in one eye and made it difficult for her to live on her own. In accordance with the fair housing laws, 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 clean out her

septic system causing it to overflow fourteen times in two years.

The Center assisted Ms. Parris in filing a federal fair housing complaint, to which the landlord failed to respond. The Court held that Donna had won on all of her claims. During April 2011, the Center conducted a hearing on damages in Federal District Court. To date, the Fair Housing

Center succeeded in forcing the mobile home park to fix Ms. Parris’ septic system and obtaining the withdrawal of a retaliatory eviction proceeding against Ms. Parris. The parties await the federal court’s final damage calculation.



Foreclosure Clinic Class Schedule

Hartford

Classes are held every 3rd Tuesday at the University of Hartford Handel Performing Arts Center Community Room, 35 Westbourne Parkway in Hartford, beginning at 5:30 p.m.

The Center's Foreclosure Prevention Staff Attorney, one of the court's foreclosure mediators, and a representative from the State Department of Banking present information and answer questions about the foreclosure process.

Those interested may then meet with a volunteer attorney, paralegal, law student, or paralegal student to discuss their situation and obtain general advice about the foreclosure process.

Fairfield County

Classes are held on the 3rd Wednesday of every month rotating between Norwalk, Bridgeport, and Stamford. The classes begin at 6:00 p.m. For a complete list and the locations, call the Center at (860) 247-4400 or go to www.ctfairhousing.org to find the schedule of foreclosure prevention classes in Fairfield County.

Legislators Publicize Foreclosure Resources

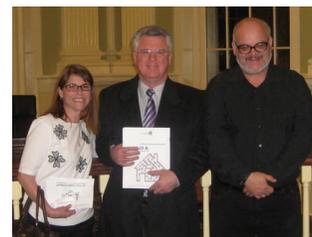
In a series of forums in March legislators and the Connecticut Fair Housing Center publicized the resources available to Connecticut homeowners in Connecticut.

Representative Larry Butler and House Speaker Chris Donovan held a meeting on February 10, 2011 in Waterbury to discuss the resources and assistance available to homeowners in foreclosure through the State Mediation Program and the Connecticut Fair Housing Center. The event was attended by more than 20 Waterbury residents as well as Representatives Jeffrey Berger and David Aldarondo .

This event was followed by one in Danbury on March 21. Representatives Bob Godfrey and Joseph Taborsak joined Speaker Donovan to urge homeowners to get help if facing foreclosure. Too often homeowners are discouraged by a lender's refusal to agree to a modification. The speakers emphasized that even if this happens, there is still hope. Homeowners participating in the State's foreclosure mediation program are more likely to modify their mortgages and keep their homes than homeowners who do not participate.

On March 29, Speaker Donovan appeared in

Norwalk along with Representatives Bruce Morris and Chris Perone. The event was attended by more than 30 homeowners including one family who were headed to mediation the next day.



Speaker of the House Christopher Donovan (center) spoke with homeowners Debra and Mark Bertrand at a forum on resources for homeowners in foreclosure in Waterbury.

Put Mediation First

Since beginning our foreclosure prevention work in 2008, the Center has spent countless hours explaining the arcane legal process associated with foreclosure to homeowners with little legal training who were facing foreclosure.

Currently, Connecticut has a dual-track court process. This means that in addition to dealing with financial hardship and, quite frequently, obstinate mortgage servicers. Homeowners in foreclosure face simultaneous litigation while participating in the Court's mediation program.

During this legislative session, the Center has

concentrated its efforts on changing this system. The Center has been working with several legislators, including Speaker Donovan and the Co-Chairs of the Banks and Housing Committees, to "put mediation first." The "mediation first," bill would put litigation on hold while mediation continues.

Putting mediation before litigation would lower court costs and save valuable court resources while easing the stress on self-represented homeowners. At the same time, lenders and servicers would be able to pursue uncontested foreclosures quickly.

As the legislative session winds down, the Center will continue its work on this important piece of legislation.

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



Picture Our Success!



Pedro got a new apartment because the old carpeting in his previous apartment severely aggravated his asthma leading to numerous doctor visits.



Estella and her son prevailed in a national origin discrimination case against a Newington landlord.



Toye McKissick was told to leave her apartment because the landlord thought she had too many children.

Recent Fair Housing Victories

Olayos v. Woodward Hill, et al. (Update) In the fall of 2010, we reported that a Federal Court judge had granted Ms. Olayos' request for a reasonable accommodation of a parking space close to her condominium unit. In December, the parties settled this dispute when the defendants agreed to pay \$45,000 in damages and attorneys' fees.

McKissick v. Three Deer Limited Associates: Toye McKissick (third from left above) brought a federal court complaint alleging family status discrimination because the defendant refused to allow her and her children to continue renting a large two-bedroom apartment. The case settled for \$22,000 in damages and attorneys' fees as well as fair housing training and an agreement not to discriminate in the more than 250 units managed by the defendant in the future.

Stoner, et al. v. Hampshire House Associates, et al.: In August 2004, Ms. Stoner asked that the manager of her condominium complex assign her a parking place close to her unit because Ms. Stoner suffers from disabilities that make it difficult for her to walk. The case recently settled for \$15,000 and an agreement that the management company give Ms. Stoner the parking place she requested.

Recent Testing Investigations Reveal Discrimination

During 2010, the Center performed random testing to determine if African-Americans seeking housing were experiencing discrimination. Our testing revealed significant differences in treatment.

One testing project was designed to see if single African-American mothers were denied housing more often than single white mothers. In more than half of the tests, the African American testers were either told that units cost more than the prices given to

white testers or that there were no units available.

In a second project which looked at whether people of color with housing vouchers were experiencing higher rates of discrimination than whites with housing vouchers, African-Americans were denied housing 87% of the time.

Given the downturn in the economy, the Center also examined whether African-Americans with bad credit were denied housing more often than white people with

bad credit. In 66% of the tests, African-Americans were denied housing even though the white tester also had bad credit.

Finally, the sales test results were even more dramatic. In every test the African American testers were steered to buy a home in an area with high rates of poverty and lack of access to jobs, even though the African American tester had more income and had been pre-qualified for a higher mortgage than their white counterparts.

Make a Difference, Fight Housing Discrimination

What is fair housing testing?

Testing is designed to determine whether people looking for housing are treated differently.

Can anyone apply?

Yes, so long as you have voicemail or an answering machine, and are thorough and objective.

Do I need training?

The Connecticut Fair Housing Center will provide training in advance of any testing.

What is the time commitment?

The time commitment can vary depending on your schedule and interest, and the Center's testing needs.

Will I be paid for my work?

Yes. The Center provides its testers with a small stipend and provides reimbursement for mileage.

How do I apply?

Contact:

Maria Cuerda at mcuerda@ctfairhousing.org

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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

Mobility Project Moving Forward

Since the release of its groundbreaking report "People, Place and Opportunity" in 2009, the Center has been examining the effect of housing location on an individual's life choices.

The role played by housing location received dramatic illustration recently when a woman was arrested in Norwalk for "stealing education." According to recent news articles, the woman lived in Bridgeport but enrolled her child in Norwalk to get her son a better education.

In an attempt to assist people in moving to the neighborhood of their choice, the Center has launched a mobility project

in conjunction with the mobility housing counseling programs. As an initial effort, the Center and its partners advocated for the passage of Senate Bill No. 1146, which sets aside 10% of the Security Deposit Guarantee Program for families using government housing subsidies to move to higher opportunity areas.

The lack of security deposits is cited by Connecticut's three mobility counseling agencies as a major reason families attempting to use Section 8 and RAP to move to lower poverty areas with thriving schools are unable to make such moves. This bill died in the Human Services Committee. The Center will revive this effort next year.

Loving Dinner Sponsors

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