

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 12, 2005

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Fair Housing Center Settles Discrimination Lawsuit Against Metairie Landlord

On April 12, 2005, the Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center, Inc. ("GNOFHAC") and an individual plaintiff settled a discrimination lawsuit against a Metairie landlord. The lawsuit, filed in December of 2002, settled for both monetary relief in the amount of \$9,000 and affirmative relief ensuring that the landlord will not engage in future discriminatory acts.

In 2000, the plaintiff, a white female, alleged that when she sought to rent an apartment on Transcontinental Drive for both she and her husband, who is African-American, the landlord, a white male, stated that he only rented to single white tenants.

Following the defendant's refusals, the plaintiff contacted GNOFHAC. In response to the complaint, GNOFHAC undertook a series of tests in 2000 and 2002 to investigate the defendant's rental practices. In these tests, individuals seeking housing ("testers") inquired with the defendant about renting available units. GNOFHAC's testing documented a pattern and practice of discrimination based upon race, national origin, and sex. *See attached narrative for testing details.*

After conducting its investigation, GNOFHAC referred the complaint to cooperating attorneys Jim Logan of LOGAN & SOILEAU and Robert McKnight of MURPHY & MCKNIGHT, who filed the lawsuit and helped negotiate the settlement. Stacy Seichsnaydre and students from the Tulane Law Clinic assisted in representation of the individual plaintiff.

According to James Perry, GNOFHAC's Executive Director, "Refusing housing opportunities based on race, national origin, and sex is simply illegal. We always hope that landlords' hearts will lead them to comply with the law. But if they refuse, as in this case, we will aggressively pursue legal remedies for victims of housing discrimination."

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The Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center (GNOFHAC) is a private non-profit organization. The Center was established by a group of concerned New Orleanians in 1995 with the help of the National Fair Housing Alliance and a grant from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. GNOFHAC is dedicated to eliminating housing discrimination and furthering equal housing opportunities through education, outreach, advocacy, and enforcement of fair housing laws across the metro New Orleans and Baton Rouge areas.

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GNOFHAC Testing Narrative

GNOFHAC's testing documented a pattern and practice of discrimination based upon race, national origin, and sex. The defendant misrepresented available dwellings as unavailable when FHAC testers inquiring about availability at 314 Transcontinental Drive were other than white females and when the testers inquiring about 4928 Wabash Street were other than white. For example, the defendant asked an African American tester for her nationality and told her "you sound Hispanic." The defendant then told this tester that he had no rooms, both before and after his pointed question about her ethnic background. One hour later, he told a white tester that she could come by and fill out an application and that he could hold a room for her. The defendant also told the tester that he would rather rent to women.

In addition, the defendant asked a white female tester, "what is your complexion?" When she answered that she was pretty fair-skinned, the defendant inquired whether she was "olive skinned." After the tester informed the defendant that she was a light-skinned person of French-Portuguese background, the defendant invited her to look at the property. During the property visit, the defendant told the tester that most of his tenants were women. In follow-up testing by a male tester, the defendant never invited the male tester to see the rental property, kept him on hold for over 15 minutes, and never returned a telephone message that included a name and phone number.