



For Immediate Release  
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## **Danville Man's Racially Discriminatory Housing Practices Cost Him \$25,000 in Court.**

Housing Opportunities Made Equal was awarded \$25,000 this month in a case in the Circuit Court for the City of Danville against John Sylvania Matthews III.

Mr. Matthews, a landlord of multiple properties in the Danville area, has been held accountable for discriminating against African-American home seekers. When he advertised one of his units for lease in September, an African-American woman called and was told it was already rented. Within the hour, a white applicant called the same number about the same unit and was told it was indeed still available.

HOME then investigated and confirmed the allegations of housing discrimination. Mr. Matthews told HOME's white tester that the property was move-in ready and located in "a good neighborhood" that was nice and quiet. He discouraged the African-American tester from renting the same property. He then steered her to other properties that were not yet available as he was still cleaning them out because "a bunch of damn n\*\*\*\*\* were living in 'em."

The court held that Mr. Matthews violated two counts of the Federal Fair Housing Act. 42 U.S.C. § 3604(a) prohibits any person or entity from refusing "to negotiate for the sale or rental of, or otherwise make unavailable or deny, a dwelling to any person because of race, color, religion, sex, familial status, or national origin." And, 42 U.S.C. § 3604(c) prohibits any person or entity from making any statement "with respect to the sale or rental of a dwelling that indicates any preference, limitation, or discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status, or national origin, or any intention to make any such preference, limitation, or discrimination."

Judge James J. Reynolds found that HOME established that Mr. Matthews discriminated based on race by saying,

*“Obviously, one of the hallmarks of our society is we adopted a creed that all men are created equal, and what that means is that everybody, regardless of race, regardless of gender, is to be given the same opportunity. That’s not to be construed with guaranteeing results, but rather opportunity. The opportunity to rent or acquire housing is well established in both federal and state law, and it is something that has to be diligently protected, because there have been in the past certainly well-known instances where individuals’ right to obtain housing has been denied, based solely on an improper discriminatory purpose.”*

HOME is represented by the law firm of Clement Wheatley in Danville. Contact: W. Huntington Byrnes at (434) 793-8200 or [byrnesh@clementwheatley.com](mailto:byrnesh@clementwheatley.com).

Housing Opportunities Made Equal of Virginia, Inc. (HOME), founded in 1971, is a statewide fair housing non-profit. HOME's mission is to ensure equal access to housing for all people. HOME investigates housing discrimination and provides support for discrimination victims. You can learn more about HOME and all of its services at [www.HOMEofVA.org](http://www.HOMEofVA.org)