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Illegal Online Housing Ads Ask for Sex

They prey on the vulnerable

Housing Opportunities Made Equal of Virginia, Inc. (HOME) has filed twenty complaints with the federal and state government alleging that advertisements on **Craigslist** and other online housing sites discriminated on the basis of gender, race, color and national origin. In several of the filed complaints, housing providers advertised for females only and demanded sex from women in exchange for rent or indicated that sex for rent would be required or desired for residency. In others, they expressed a preference for a particular race, color or national origin.

These advertisements were for housing in **Richmond and vicinity, Virginia Beach, Hampton, Fredericksburg, and Newport News**. According to Amy Nelson, HOME's Director for Systemic Investigations and Enforcement, "This is not sex between consenting adults. When sex is demanded as part of a housing transaction, someone who needs the housing may be desperate and feel that they have no choice but to agree. The effect on the victim can be devastating and last for years."

One ad read "*free rent for female...must be very attractive female because it's rent free, preferably a light-skinned female or a Spanish female.*" Another offered a room for a dollar: "*\$1 Live-in housekeeper: Hoping to find a nice, open-minded, willing female for a live-in housekeeper/lover. It would be a monogamous arrangement where you would have your own room at no charge. I am nice looking, 49, white, slender and healthy.*" (Copies of the complaints are available upon media request.)

Sexual harassment in a housing transaction is a form of housing discrimination, and can include inappropriate or sexual comments by a landlord to a tenant or prospective tenant, inappropriate touching, propositions of sex for rent or a security deposit or threats of eviction if sexual contact is not provided. According to Ms. Nelson, "People often don't know that they are protected against this kind of treatment, but HOME can help." She encouraged anyone who feels that they have experienced sexual harassment in housing to call HOME at 804-354-0641, or email fairhousing@phonehome.org

HOME was founded in 1971 and investigates housing discrimination and provides support for discrimination victims. HOME also helps first-time homebuyers; assists homeowners to avoid foreclosure; and supports policy initiatives that expand housing opportunity. Visit www.phonehome.org

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