



PRESS RELEASE

HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES MADE EQUAL

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“I CAN’T SELL YOU THIS HOUSE ‘CAUSE YOU’RE COLORED”

Housing Opportunities Made Equal (HOME) announced today that it has filed a fair housing complaint alleging discrimination based on race against a homeowner in Chesterfield County who refused to sell a house to an African-American woman. Ruffus T. Matthews of 2925 West Strathmore Road told the prospective purchaser and later a tester sent out by HOME “I can’t sell you this house ‘cause you’re colored.”

After being turned down by the owner, the purchaser came to HOME, which conducted an investigation, sending out first an African-American and then a white tester to see the house and ask about availability. Mr. Matthews also told the African-American tester that there was a deed restriction on the house that would allow him to sell it to a Mexican or a Chinese, but prevented him from selling it to “a regular colored person”.

HOME has assisted the purchaser in filing a complaint with the state Fair Housing Office, and has filed one on its own behalf as well.

According to Constance Chamberlin, HOME’s President, “People don’t believe that this kind of thing still happens in the 21st century – and certainly not in a major metropolitan area - but it does. Attitudes like those displayed by Mr. Matthews pull all of us back to an

era most people thought was past. Deed restrictions like this have been unenforceable for more than fifty years.”

The Virginia Fair Housing Office (a division of the Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation) will investigate the complaints and a board made up of real estate professionals and citizen members will determine whether or not to bring a charge of discrimination against Mr. Matthews.

Housing Opportunities Made Equal, Inc. is a private, non-profit comprehensive housing counseling agency based in Richmond which has been helping Virginians with housing problems for more than 30 years. In addition to its work to eliminate housing discrimination, HOME provides rental and landlord-tenant counseling, including outreach to the homeless; homeownership counseling including pre-purchase, credit, and budget counseling; mortgage default counseling; and counseling for housing choice voucher holders to help them move to economically advantaged neighborhoods. HOME also administers a number of financial assistance programs providing down payment assistance for home buyers, assisting individuals and families in avoiding eviction or foreclosure, and providing housing assistance for persons with HIV/AIDS. HOME conducts outreach and educational activities for consumers and housing providers, and provides technical assistance and training on fair housing issues to landlords, property managers, real estate professionals, local government officials and others.

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