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NFHTA Fair Housing Leadership: Building an Equitable Future Conference

FHANC Executive Director Caroline Peattie and Supervising Attorney Julia Howard-Gibbon presented on investigating race discrimination in home appraisals at the National Fair Housing Training Academy Conference on *Fair Housing Leadership: Building an Equitable Future* at the end of August 2023 in Denver, Colorado.

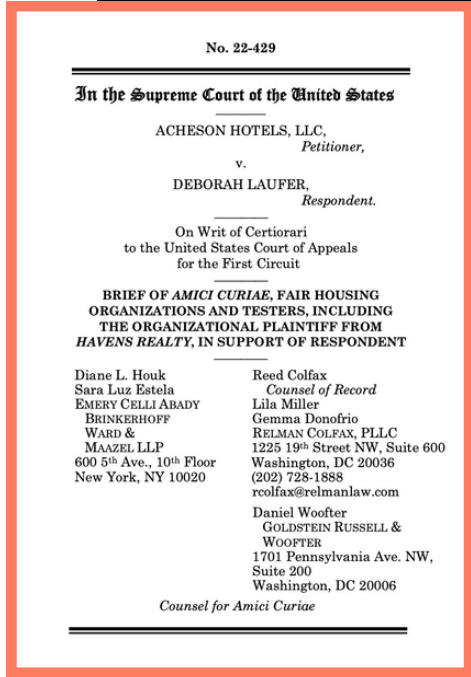
Caroline and Julia presented with Liza Cristol-Deman on a variety of topics related to appraisal investigations, touching on the documentary “Our America: Lowballed,” the story of Black and Latine families fighting for fair home values after lower than expected appraisals, the history of the almost entirely white appraisal industry and its discriminatory policies, and what barriers still exist for people of color today. The presentation specifically cited the FHANC/Tate-Austin case, an appraisal discrimination case in Marin City. The three presenters also provided tips for appraisal investigations including investigation tools, enforcement options, and the values and drawbacks of appraisal testing.



Relman Colfax

On December 5, the United States Supreme Court disposed of the Acheson Hotels, LLC v. Laufer case, finding the case to be moot. The case examined whether testers – people who investigate housing providers for illegal discriminatory practices – have standing to pursue claims under a specific provision of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The case had carried significant implications for the ability of testers to bring lawsuits, potentially threatening the long-standing precedent allowing for testers to uncover unlawful discrimination in the housing market and contribute to full enforcement of fair housing laws.

FHANC, as well as many other fair housing groups, regularly work with and rely on testers to investigate and uncover housing discrimination in areas we serve. To inform the Court of the fair housing perspective, FHANC and other fair housing organizations signed an amicus brief submitted by Relman Colfax in support of Plaintiff-Respondent Deborah Laufer. FHANC celebrates the Supreme Court’s decision to dispose of the case, and remains committed to using all available tools, including testers, to work to uncover and eliminate housing discrimination in our neighborhoods.



NFHA 2022 Fair Housing Trends Report

The 2022 National Fair Housing Alliance Fair Housing Trends Report featured an appraisal discrimination case represented by FHANC. Tenisha and Paul Austin, a Black couple in Marin City, had their house appraised, the initial value of which came in at \$995,000. This surprised the Austins since their home had previously been appraised for much higher, so the couple asked for a second appraisal.

Before the next inspection, the plaintiffs removed any evidence of their racial identity from their home and replaced family photos with pictures of the family of a white friend. This friend was also the only person present in the house at the time of the second appraisal. This time, their home was appraised at \$1,482,500, almost \$500,000 more.

FHANC and the individual plaintiffs sued the appraisal management company and the appraiser, alleging that race was a motivating factor in the initial appraisal of the home. The case settled for an undisclosed amount of money and additional terms.

To read more about the settlement, click the following link.

<https://bit.ly/3Do4zxxg>



2023 NFHA National Conference

FHANC was honored to have 3 presenters speak at the 2023 National Fair Housing Alliance (NFHA) conference in Washington, D.C. in July 2023. FHANC's Supervising Attorney Julia Howard-Gibbon presented on the appraisal industry and the structural corrections required to make the system equitable. Caroline Peattie, FHANC's Executive Director, addressed how the affirmatively furthering fair housing (AFFH) provision of the Fair Housing Act can be a vehicle for strengthening ties with local allies, building a stronger relationship with local and state agencies, and aligning the government - at all levels - in favor of fair housing. FHANC's Senior Staff Attorney and Investigations Coordinator Ursula Lindsey spoke of her experience navigating gender discrimination in its various forms, such as domestic violence, sexual harassment, and pregnancy and parenting discrimination using legal, administrative, and policy based solutions.



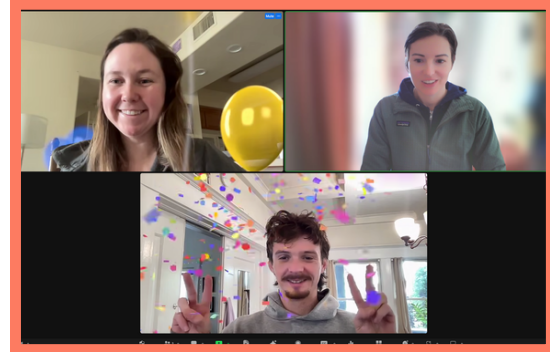
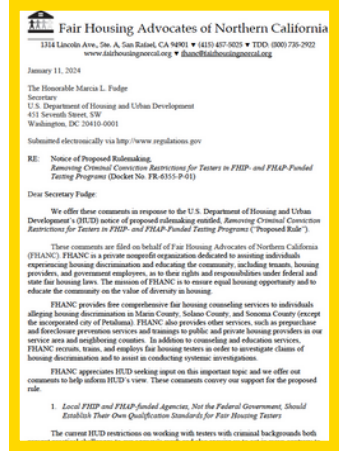
C.A.R. Fair Housing and Diversity Forum

FHANC's Development Director Audrey Perrott presented on the panel *Using Allyship and Vote to Further Fair Housing* on September 19, 2023 at the California Association of Realtors REImagine Conference and Expo in Anaheim. Audrey's presentation centered on allyship, actions that focus on uplifting the voices of others and utilizing the resources available to focus on others, advocate for change, and support their needs. Audrey went on to provide examples of how realtors can engage in allyship, both personally as well as with colleagues, clients, and society as whole. The presentation ended with updates on how support for allyship goes hand in hand with voting to further fair housing.



Removing Criminal Convictions Restrictions for Testers

Last October, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) proposed a rule that would eliminate HUD’s restrictions on the use of fair housing testers with prior felony or certain other convictions by Fair Housing Initiatives Program (FHIP) grantees. As a FHIP grantee, FHANC has been subject to these restrictions, preventing us from hiring individuals with criminal backgrounds who would be excellent testers. This has presented obstacles in recruiting effective testers, especially for our systemic investigations that test housing providers in our region for discrimination based on an applicant’s criminal background. FHANC joined NFHA and other fair housing agencies in submitting comments to HUD in support of this rule change, which will allow agencies like ours to tailor our tester qualifications based on our unique goals and the characteristics of our housing market, and conduct tester recruitment and hiring in alignment with our values



ISTEP Convention

The ISTEP convention was hosted by the Metropolitan Milwaukee Fair Housing Council in October 2023. In attendance were FHANC Housing Counselor and Investigations Coordinator Quinn McFeeters and FHANC Executive Director Caroline Peattie. Caroline was an invited speaker who shared her ongoing advocacy to create an exception in California’s existing law requiring all parties to consent to recording their conversations, to allow fair housing testers to record their investigations when talking with housing providers.

Other presentations addressed the process of lending, sales, and rental testing; the history of testing, including some of the first coordinated housing tests in U.S. history, prior to the passage of the Civil Rights Act; novel legal arguments in fair housing lawsuits based on testing evidence; and the future of testing as it relates to current legal challenges approaching the Supreme Court.

The conference gave attendees a chance to network and share ideas and investigative strategies.

Successfully Housing People with Disabilities

Join FHANC for the 2024 Reasonable Accommodations Conference *Successfully Housing People with Disabilities*. The conference will be held in person from 9:30a - 3:00p February 28, 2024 at Unity in Marin in Novato. Pre-registration is required by February 22, 2024. The registration fee is \$65 per person with scholarships for tenants with disabilities and group discounts available. Register today as space is limited!

Click here to register for the 2024 Reasonable Accommodations Conference

For more information, to request a scholarship, or if you have special needs, please contact us in advance: adriana@fairhousingnorcal.org.

Register today! Space is limited!

SUCCESSFULLY HOUSING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES



An interactive in-person conference on fair housing law and reasonable accommodations

- ✓ Date: Wednesday, February 28, 2024
- ✓ Time: 9:30 am to 3:00 pm PST
- ✓ Location: Unity in Marin, 600 Palm Drive, Novato, CA



Registration fee: \$65 per person (Scholarships for tenants with disabilities and group discounts are available.)

SUCCESSFULLY HOUSING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Conference description: An overview of federal and state fair housing laws, followed by small group discussions to help find practical solutions to commonly asked questions from housing providers, service providers and tenants on reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities during the application, occupancy, and eviction stages. The break-out sessions are interactive, and attendees are expected to actively participate.

Conference is appropriate for:

- Rental housing providers in the public and private sectors
- Resident & property managers
- Staff of assisted living facilities
- Service providers and advocates, including fair housing staff
- Persons with disabilities
- Attorneys and legal services staff
- Anyone who works with persons with special needs



Registration:
To register, please visit: www.fairhousingnorcal.org/events-workshops. Pre-registration is required. Registration deadline: February 22nd. Full refunds for cancellations up to February 22nd. Scholarships for tenants with disabilities and group discounts are available. A boxed lunch is included with the registration price.

Information:
For more information, to request a scholarship, or if you have special needs, please contact us in advance: adriana@fairhousingnorcal.org.

Presented by: Fair Housing Advocates of Northern California
In partnership with: Disability Services and Legal Center, Disability Rights California, Marin Center for Independent Living, NAMI Marin

Note: This material is based on work supported by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) under HUD EEO grant #F501220009. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of HUD.

Check out the FHANC Annual Report



Are you interested in helping end housing discrimination? Become a fair housing tester today!

Testers assist with a wide range of investigations, from in-person investigations to email and phone inquiries. Help FHANC uncover and change discriminatory housing policies and practices.

Click here for more information on becoming a fair housing tester

FHANC Highlights

FHANC is committed to providing professional development opportunities for its staff and encouraging them to pursue advanced degrees and specialized training. We celebrate Maria and John, who are the most recent FHANC staff members to have passed the California State Bar exam.



John Froggatt

**Passing
the Bar!**



Maria Callahan

Behind the Scenes: FHANC Data

As data administrator at FHANC, Noelle works largely with managing our client data using Salesforce. Salesforce is a cloud-based customer relationship management software. FHANC's housing counseling team supports clients who need help with housing discrimination, pre-purchase homebuyer education, and mortgage foreclosure prevention. With this impactful work comes the need for client data to be imported, stored, quantified, and reported. She runs reports for several of our grants, configures our platform to best reflect our agency needs, performs systems integrations between Salesforce and third party applications, and handles any system issues on the back end of Salesforce.



Noelle Ticman

“I contacted MCIL and staff referred me to Fair Housing [Advocates of Northern California]... once I was able to obtain an attorney who saw the merits of my ask, my reasonable accommodation request, it gave me a great sense of hope... And that happened to be a senior attorney... by the name of Ursula Lindsey. And it was the first time in years that I felt like I no longer had to explain myself over and over. She understood, she dug in to obtain all the information about my medical situation and then there were two aspects of it. One was her knowledge was so helpful. She knows the law which you can be an empowered resident but you don't know the law and the caring that came across.”

- FHANC Client Sara Aguilar (a pseudonym)

FHANC Success Story

FHANC Donations

FHANC relies on donations from individual donors to help support our investigation, education, training, and advocacy programs. Whether you make a one-time gift or recurring monthly donations, your support enables us to carry out our mission of ensuring equal housing opportunity and educating our communities on the value of diversity in our neighborhoods.

MAKE AN ONLINE DONATION TODAY!

Thank you!



FHANC Staff