

Discrimination Lawsuit Costs Owners \$25,000!
by Jan Leasure

The California Department of Fair Employment and Housing [DFEH] has reported that the owners of an East Palo Alto apartment community settled a lawsuit by paying \$25,000.

The lawsuit alleged the only prospective residents the owners contacted were white women. In its lawsuit, the DFEH alleged that two landlords discriminated against black men by ignoring their applications and phone calls, while responding to the applications and phone calls from white females. Without admitting liability, the landlords settled the suit out of court by agreeing to pay \$25,000.

The lawsuit was triggered in November 2004, when the landlord ignored a resident application and multiple telephone calls from a 64-year-old black male. The applicant had had the same job for eleven years and had a good credit report.

Testers were subsequently sent to the apartment complex to investigate the validity of the complaint. The first tester was a black male. He telephoned the complex manager eleven times in a two and one-half week period. Other black male and female testers also made calls which were not returned. However, when a white woman tester called and was leaving a message, the manager picked up the phone. All five white female testers "received active encouragement from one of the owners," according to the DFEH.

[Editor's Note: Project Sentinel sent a total of eleven "testers" to the apartment complex posing as potential tenants to investigate the allegations of housing discrimination. The services of Project Sentinel are funded by cities and counties in the greater Bay Area and Central Valley and are available to anyone who feels that they have been a victim of discrimination.]

It is illegal to discriminate based on a person's race, religion, familial status, marital status, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age, source of income and some arbitrary physical characteristics. Educate your resident managers and don't let this happen to you!]

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