



Department of Justice

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FORMER MANAGER OF RENTAL APARTMENTS IN ALABAMA FOUND GUILTY OF RACE DISCRIMINATION

WASHINGTON – Milburn Long, a former apartment manager in Boaz, Ala., was found guilty by a judge in federal court, of engaging in race discrimination due to his refusal to rent apartments to African-Americans, the Justice Department announced today. He was ordered to pay a civil penalty of \$10,000 to the government.

In an opinion issued on Aug. 16, U.S. District Judge Lynwood Smith ruled that in 2003, Long repeatedly violated the federal Fair Housing Act by refusing to rent apartments to African-Americans at the Park Place Apartments complex and telling others that he would not rent to African-Americans. Judge Smith declared that district courts “should not tolerate the loathsome act of discriminating among citizens on the basis of race,” and that the civil penalty sends “a message to other apartment owners and leasing agents that violation of the Fair Housing Act entails serious consequences.”

The Department conducted an investigation of Park Place Apartments through the use of fair housing testers – individuals who pose as renters for purposes of gathering information about possible discriminatory practices in the rental of apartments. The Department filed a lawsuit against Mr. Long and his employer, Dawson Development Co., in 2005 claiming that the defendants had refused to rent to African-Americans. Earlier this year, Dawson Development settled its part of the case, agreeing to pay \$17,000 for a civil penalty and \$32,700 to compensate individuals who were subjected to the alleged discriminatory housing practices. The case against Mr. Long proceeded to trial where the Department presented evidence that Long had offered apartments at Park Place to the white testers but not to the African-American testers.

Fighting illegal housing discrimination is a top priority of the Justice Department. In February, Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales announced Operation Home Sweet Home, a concentrated initiative to expose and eliminate housing discrimination in the United States. This initiative was inspired by the plight of displaced victims of Hurricane Katrina who were

suddenly forced to find new places to live. Operation Home Sweet Home is not limited to the areas affected by Hurricane Katrina and targets housing discrimination all over the country.

More information about Operation Home Sweet Home, can be found at <http://www.usdoj.gov/fairhousing>. Individuals who believe that they may have been victims of housing discrimination can call the Housing Discrimination Tip Line at 1-800-896-7743, email fairhousing@usdoj.gov, or contact the Department of Housing and Urban Development at 1-800-669-9777.

The federal Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in housing on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, familial status, national origin and disability. Since Jan. 21, 2001, the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division has filed 201 cases to enforce the Fair Housing Act, including 59 based on race. More information about the Civil Rights Division and the laws it enforces can be found at <http://www.usdoj.gov/crt>.

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