

hud **MEDIA ADVISORY**

Department of Housing and Urban Development – Alphonso Jackson, Secretary
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HUD CHARGES RE/MAX AGENT IN MILWAUKEE WITH VIOLATING THE FAIR HOUSING ACT

Real estate agent and homeowner charged with making a house unavailable to a local school principal on the basis of race

WASHINGTON - The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development announced today that it has charged RE/MAX Realty 100, RE/MAX real estate broker Phyllis Hasenstab, and homeowner Edith Halvorsen with violating the Fair Housing Act by allegedly refusing to permit an African-American woman to view a home that was for sale.

The charge alleges that the actions of the respondents made Halvorsen's four-bedroom single family home in the Bluemound area unavailable to Tami Doss, who is a principal in the Milwaukee Public School System. Doss was interested in the home because she is required to live within the Milwaukee city limits in order to maintain her position.

HUD's investigation found that, in July 2005, Doss contacted Margaret Silkey, a real estate broker with First Weber Group Realtors, to help her locate a home in the City of Milwaukee. Silkey told Doss about Halvorsen's home because it fit all her requirements and was in her price range. Silkey informed Halvorsen that she had a potential buyer. Halvorsen asked if the buyer was African American, and Silkey informed her that it was against the "discrimination laws" to provide that type of information. Halvorsen then allegedly said that when "blacks" moved into her sister's neighborhood, property values fell. She stated that she "could not do that to her neighbors." Both Doss and Silkey filed complaints with HUD. Silkey alleged that she suffered financial damages because of the lost opportunity to make the sale, as well as damage to her professional reputation.

Halvorsen eventually hired RE/MAX real estate broker Phyllis Hasenstab. Although Silkey wanted to show Doss the house, Hasenstab excluded Silkey from showing the property to any potential buyers. HUD's investigation showed that Hasenstab allegedly took this action because Silkey had called the Multiple Listing Service (MLS) and talked to them about Halvorsen's discriminatory comments. The house was eventually sold to a white person, and Doss is still renting.

Under the Fair Housing Act's provision on choice of forum, RE/MAX has elected to have the case heard in federal district court.

FHEO and its partners in the Fair Housing Assistance Program investigate approximately 9,000 housing discrimination complaints annually. People who believe they are the victims of housing discrimination should contact HUD at 1-800-669-9777 (voice), 800-927-9275 (TTY). Additional information is available at www.hud.gov/fairhousing. Stay on top of the most up-to-date news regarding the Fair Housing Act by signing up for the FHEO RSS Feed at www.hud.gov/offices/fheo/index.cfm.

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