



Metropolitan Fair Housing Council of Oklahoma, Inc.
"Fighting Housing Discrimination in Oklahoma Since 1979"

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Metropolitan Fair Housing Council of Oklahoma Announces \$800,000 Sexual Harassment Lawsuit Settlement

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Oklahoma City, OK - Today, the Metropolitan Fair Housing Council of Oklahoma, Inc. (MFHC, Inc.) announced a settlement of \$800,000 of a sexual harassment lawsuit by a Consent Decree, signed by the Honorable Chief Judge Joe Heaton, United States District Court of the Western District of Oklahoma on December 7, 2017. The consolidated actions, *Metropolitan Fair Housing Council of Oklahoma, Inc., et al. v. Walter Ray Pelfrey, etc., et al.*, Consolidated Case Nos. CIV-15-1331-HE and CIV-17-393-HE were brought by plaintiffs MFHC, Inc., Raquel Hall-Hubbard, Darnell Jackson, Myeisha Jones, Sereeta Walter, Sharita Wiley, Andria Collins and Maeisha Pennon against defendants Walter Ray Pelfrey, individually, as Trustee of the W. Ray Pelfrey Revocable Trust dated March 1, 2002, and dba Pelfrey Rentals; Omega Enterprises, LLC; Pelfrey Investments Company, LLC, and Rosemarie Pelfrey, individually, and as trustee of the Rosemarie Pelfrey Revocable Trust dated March 1, 2002. ([See Consent Decree + Complaints](#)).

Plaintiffs, MFHC Inc. and the Pelfreys' former tenants are represented by MFHC Cooperating Attorneys Cynthia Rowe D'Antonio of Green, Johnson, Mumina and D'Antonio of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma and Christopher Brancart, Brancart and Brancart of Loma Mar, California.

The parties agreed upon the material terms of settlement of the consolidated actions on November 14, 2017, in a conference before the Honorable Magistrate Judge Shon Erwin, United States District Court of the Western District of Oklahoma. The lawsuit alleged defendants and their agents violated the federal Fair Housing Act, 42 U.S.C. § 3601, *et seq.*, and related Oklahoma laws by engaging in a pattern or practice of sexual harassment of female residents of residential dwellings owned and/or managed by defendants in Oklahoma City and the surrounding area. Defendants have denied all material allegations in the complaints. The parties have agreed that in order to avoid protracted and costly litigation, the controversy would be resolved without a trial, and have consented to entry of the consent decree. Defendants make no admission of liability or wrongdoing in connection with the allegations and claims made by plaintiffs.

On December 4, 2015, a lawsuit was filed in the United States District Court, Western District of Oklahoma (Case No. CIV-15-1331-HE) against landlords Walter Ray and Rosemarie Pelfrey, and their various business entities for discrimination, harassment and retaliation in violation of the Fair Housing Act, 42 U.S.C. § 3601, *et seq.*, and related state statutes. The complaint alleged that since at least 2008, Walter Ray Pelfrey has discriminated against his female tenants on the basis of sex, subjecting them to severe, pervasive, and unwelcome sexual harassment, including making unwelcome sexual comments and unwelcome sexual advances to female tenants, including plaintiffs; subjecting female tenants, including plaintiffs, to unwanted sexual touching; conditioning or offering tangible housing benefits – such as rent forgiveness, late fee withdrawal, dismissal of evictions, payment of utilities or access to housing – in exchange for sexual acts by female tenants, including plaintiffs; entering the dwellings of female tenants, including plaintiffs, without notice or permission; taking adverse housing actions, or threatening to take such actions, against female tenants including plaintiffs who have not granted or would not continue to grant sexual favors; and seizing the personal property of female tenants and their children, including plaintiffs, in retaliation for their failure or refusal to provide sexual favors.



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The complaint further alleged since at least 2008, Pelfrey has engaged in a pattern or practice of discrimination, targeting younger, mostly poor, African American, single women and mothers with children for sexual harassment; that he targets this group of tenants, exploiting their vulnerability, to demand or extract sexual favor from them.

Monetary relief includes defendants paying the sum of eight hundred thousand dollars (\$800,000.00) in full and final payment of all claims by plaintiffs for damages, attorneys' fees and costs on a payment schedule.

Defendant Walter Ray Pelfrey, effective immediately upon entry of the decree, shall cease and desist from any contact or communication with any person occupying or seeking to occupy a rental dwelling managed or operated by any defendant, including any control or authority over any person's tenancy, or any conduct or responsibility that may cause him to have contact with any person who occupies or seeks to occupy a rental dwelling owned, managed, operated or controlled by any defendant. The decree also includes mandatory fair housing training for all defendants and their agents, current and new employees; adopting a written policy prohibiting discrimination, including sexual harassment; displaying HUD fair housing posters in rental properties and providing HUD fair housing complaint brochures to current and new tenants.

Richard Marshall, President, MFHC Board of Directors, stated, "It is evident by what we are hearing daily in the news that violations of human rights on many fronts are finally coming to light. Those willing to stand up and say NO MORE are appreciated for their courage. For those who are still hurting in silence, we pray you find comfort"

MFHC Executive Director Mary Daniels Dulan, stated, "On behalf of the victims and their families, we wish to thank our legal team, MFHC Cooperating Attorneys Christopher Brancart, Cynthia Rowe D'Antonio and Kwame Mumina for responding to the plight of these women; and former MFHC Staff Attorney (current OK Co. Judge) Lydia Y. Green and current MFHC Staff Attorney Ge'Andra Johnson who responded to numerous women with claims alleging demands of sex for favors and retaliation by the same housing provider. This alleged abusive behavior will continue to have a negative impact on the women and their families for the rest of their lives."

Attorney Cynthia Rowe D'Antonio stated, "Seven very brave women stood up to Walter Ray Pelfrey, a landlord that the women reported had sexually harassed them, entered their homes without consent during the late hours of the night, and oftentimes retaliated against them when they resisted his unwanted advances. These women have proven that regardless of your race or economic position, our laws are here to protect those who cannot protect themselves. I was blessed to be a part of this great victory in upholding the rights of these strong women. I also want to thank my co-counsel Mr. Christopher Brancart and Mr. Kwame Mumina. Due to the combined efforts of the attorneys, Metro Fair Housing staff, and the Plaintiffs themselves, this victory became a reality."

The federal Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in housing on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, familial status, and disability. Investigative and enforcement efforts in this complaint were supported in part by a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Fair Housing Initiatives Program-Private Enforcement Initiatives. MFHC, Inc. also receives fair housing enforcement and advocacy funding from the cities of Oklahoma City, Midwest City, Norman, Moore and Edmond, Oklahoma under Community Development Block Grant Programs.



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Brancart & Brancart - Since 1989, Brancart & Brancart has been litigating housing discrimination cases on behalf of plaintiffs in federal and state courts. The firm is dedicated to promoting enforcement of the federal Fair Housing Act and related state laws through litigation and advocacy, and by providing education, training and support to fair housing attorneys and advocates throughout the country.

Green, Johnson, Mumina & D'Antonio – The law firm of Green, Johnson, Mumina and D'Antonio has been litigating civil rights cases on behalf of Plaintiffs in both state and federal courts. The firm also litigates cases involving police misconduct and various forms of tort litigation.

Metropolitan Fair Housing Council of Oklahoma, Inc. - Since 1979, the Metropolitan Fair Housing Council has served as the only full-service, 501(c) (3) private nonprofit, qualified fair housing enforcement and advocacy organization in Oklahoma. We provide fair housing enforcement resources to alleged victims of housing discrimination; respond to consumer complaints of unfair treatment from the housing industry, conduct fair housing/fair lending education and outreach training for consumers, housing providers, public and private organizations and conduct counseling and mediation services to promote equal housing opportunity. We are dedicated to the creation of racially and economically integrated communities, and the elimination of housing discrimination.

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