



FAIR HOUSING NEWS

Produced by the Fair Housing Center of West Michigan

Arc of Justice Author Kevin Boyle to Speak in Holland

The FHCWM and Lakeshore Advisory Board will host the *9th Annual Lakeshore Friends of Fair Housing: Opening Doors to Housing Choice Breakfast* on Thursday, **October 22, 2015**. This year’s event will run from 8:30—10 a.m. at the Double Tree Hotel in Holland and will feature Kevin



Kevin Boyle

Boyle, author of Arc Of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights, and Murder in The Jazz Age, and the William Smith Mason Professor of American History at Northwestern University.

Professor Boyle will discuss Arc of Justice, which tells the true story of a black doctor, Dr. Ossian Sweet, as he and his family move into a white neighborhood in 1920’s Detroit. Sweet’s story is one of perseverance and hope, as he and his family face the many obstacles experienced by African Americans during the Great Migration. The Sweet’s search for their ideal home came at an exorbitant cost and with a violent backlash; their historic legal battle has been referenced as part of the foundation of the civil rights movement. Having been born and raised in Detroit, Dr. Sweet’s story was of special interest to Boyle. Arc Of Justice not only

recounts the struggle of the Sweet family but also provides a timely reminder of the importance of being able to choose housing free from illegal discrimination. Arc of Justice won the National Book Award in 2004 and was named a Michigan Notable Book in 2005. The FHCWM is very much looking forward to welcoming Professor Boyle and hearing his keynote! There is no cost to attend thanks to our sponsors: Chemical Bank, West Michigan Lakeshore Association of REALTORS, City of Holland, Talmer Bank & Trust, Flagstar Bank, West Michigan Community Bank, The Brooks Family, Huntington Bank, and Lakeshore Property Management, Inc. Register now: www.fhcwm.org/lksbreakfast.

FHCWM Partners with Boys & Girls Club

The staff of FHCWM provided educational programming through multiple interactive readings of The Fair Housing Five & the Haunted House and other fair housing-themed books for



Seidman Boys & Girls Club activity room set up for fair housing activities

members of the Seidman Boys & Girls Club with the help of Club Director, Derrick Owens. Fair housing education

empowers families to recognize what housing discrimination looks like today as well as to exercise their rights and increase housing opportunity. By having a full understanding of fair housing, families can better be able to access quality, affordable housing thereby promoting financial stability



Club Director, Derrick Owens (Coach O.), reads aloud to the Seidman members.

and economic security. The FHCWM staff gave all 177 participants a variety of educational materials to be taken home and shared with parents, caregivers, and other family members. Through this partnership, the FHCWM provided meaningful information and fun, interactive experiences to the members of the Boys & Girls Club that increased community knowledge and created positive momentum. The FHCWM truly appreciated this opportunity and feels that the Seidman Club members are outstanding partners and community advocates!

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Supreme Court Upholds Disparate Impact

Shanna Smith, President and CEO of the National Fair Housing Alliance, issued the following statement applauding the Supreme Court's decision to uphold the use of disparate impact claims under the Fair Housing Act: "We are very pleased that the Supreme Court sided with 40 years of legal precedent by holding that the Fair Housing Act allows for disparate impact discrimination claims. Justice Anthony Kennedy and the Supreme Court majority summed it up perfectly when they said, "Much progress remains to be made in our Nation's continuing struggle against racial isolation," and concluded "The Court acknowledges the Fair Housing Act's continuing role in moving the Nation toward a more integrated society." Disparate impact is an important protection for all of us. Today, families can feel more comfortable knowing that their right to housing will not be restricted because they have children, women who experience domestic violence can breathe easier knowing that they will not suffer eviction just because they suffered abuse, and communities of color can live with the security of knowing that the predatory lending practices that dumped millions of subprime loans into their neighborhoods will not be allowed. Neighborhoods still trying to recover from the financial crisis can have hope because disparate impact is an important tool in addressing unfair practices that contribute to economic and wealth disparities. Where we live makes such an important difference in the opportunities that are available to us throughout our lives. Every one of us should be able to make the decision about where we want to live free from illegal discrimination. This is what the Fair Housing Act is all about – making sure everyone has a fair shot. The Supreme Court made the right decision that day. It is clear from the legislative and Congressional record that Congress intended to provide this important right to the people of this nation. The authors of the Fair Housing Act, the late Senator

Edward Brooke and former Vice President Walter Mondale, underscored Congress' intent to include disparate impact when they, along with 21 other Congressional leaders, submitted an amicus brief to the Court in December, 2014. In their brief, Members of Congress explained that not only did Congress fully intend for the Act to address disparate impact discrimination, but that having this protection is critically important to achieving the law's full potential."

The Court's decision did not create new law, but solidified the importance of disparate impact. The ruling gave hope to community advocates, fair housing organizations, and other housing agencies who seek fair housing practices throughout the nation. Undermining or excluding any part of the Act is an injustice done to those the Act was written for. For the nation, the Court's ruling was an uplifting acknowledgement of the progress made to date, but also the obstacles we have yet to face.

Local Fair Housing News

The FHCWM continues to receive numerous allegations of illegal housing discrimination against families with children. These allegations include both blatant and subtle or systemic acts of discrimination. It is important to remember that the Fair Housing Act's definition of familial status includes families with children under the age of 18 as well as women who are pregnant and those in the process of securing legal custody of a minor. Some of the recently received allegations of housing discrimination on the basis of familial status include:

- Restricting families with children to the first floor of apartment buildings
- Steering families to a building designated as the "kids building"
- Enforcing a 2 person per bedroom occupancy limit that is more strict than the local municipal code
- Refusing to sell a home to families with children over the age of 8

FHCWM News

The FHCWM is very pleased to welcome **Madelaine Clapp** to the FHCWM staff as the Education & Outreach Coordinator. Ms. Clapp previously interned with the FHCWM for two semesters under the Grand Valley State University's Public Administration program. Ms. Clapp is responsible for assisting in all educational programs and outreach efforts, including fair housing education programs for elementary and high school students. Welcome, Madelaine!!



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...FHCWM Notes & News...

Update: the new HUD Rule on Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH)

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has released a final rule to equip communities that receive HUD funding with the data and tools that will help them to meet long-standing fair housing obligations in their use of HUD funds. For more than 40 years, HUD funding recipients have been obligated by law to reduce barriers to fair housing. Established in the Fair Housing Act of 1968, the law directs HUD and its program participants to affirmatively further the Act's goals of promoting fair housing and equal opportunity. The final rule on affirmatively furthering fair housing (AFFH) aims to provide all HUD grantees with clear guidelines and the data that will help them to achieve those goals, because no child's ZIP code should determine his or her opportunity to achieve.

What is affirmatively furthering fair housing (AFFH)?

It means "taking meaningful actions, in addition to combating discrimination, that overcome patterns of segregation and foster inclusive communities free from barriers that restrict access to opportunity based on protected characteristics. Specifically, affirmatively furthering fair housing means taking meaningful actions that, taken together, address significant disparities in housing needs in access to opportunity, replacing segregated living patterns with truly integrated and balanced living patterns, transforming racially and ethnically concentrated areas of poverty into areas of opportunity, and fostering and maintaining compliance with civil rights and fair housing laws. The duty to affirmatively further fair housing extends to all program participant's activities and programs relating to fair housing and urban development."

For the purposes of the rule, meaningful actions "means significant actions that are designed and can be reasonably expected to achieve a material positive change that affirmatively furthers fair housing by, for example, increasing fair housing choice or decreasing disparities in access to opportunity."

The AFFH rule sets out a framework for local governments, States, and public housing agencies (PHAs) and is designed to help program participants better understand what they are required to do to meet their AFFH duties. It enables them to assess fair housing issues in their communities and then make informed policy decisions.

Under the rule, an "Assessment of Fair Housing" (AFH) will replace the current "Analysis of Impediments" (AI) process. The AFH Assessment Tool, which includes instructions and data provided by HUD, consists of a series of questions designed to help program participants identify, among other things, fair housing issues pertaining to patterns of integrations and segregation; racially and ethnically concentrated areas of poverty; disparities in access to opportunity; and disproportionate housing needs, as well as the contributing factors for those issues.

Key features of the final rule include:

- Clarifying existing fair housing obligations. Existing patterns of meeting AFFH obligations have been undermined by limited access to data about fair housing conditions and access to opportunity. A Government Accountability Office report from 2010 also cited a lack of clarity, standards, and transparency for communities under the current process. HUD's rule clarifies and standardizes this process.

- Publicly open data on fair housing and access to opportunity. HUD will provide publicly open data and mapping tools to aid community members and local leaders in setting local fair housing priorities and goals.

- A balanced approach to fair housing. The final rule helps to facilitate communities relying on local knowledge and local decision-making to determine best strategies for meeting their fair housing obligations at the local level – including making place-based investments to revitalize distressed areas, or expanding access to quality affordable housing throughout a community.

- Expanding access to opportunity. The strength of America's economy, the stability and security of its neighborhoods, and the ability for all to prosper depends



on all Americans having equal access to opportunity – no matter what they look like or where they come from. This rule facilitates local decision-making by HUD grantees to expand equal access to opportunity for all Americans.

- Valuing local data and knowledge.

HUD is providing grantees with data to assist with their assessment of fair housing, but grantees will also use local data and knowledge to inform local decision-making, including information obtained through the community participation process.

- Customized tools for local leaders.

Recognizing that one size does not fit all grantees, given their differing responsibilities and geographic areas served, HUD will be providing fair housing assessment tools specific to local jurisdictions, public housing authorities (PHAs), and states and Insular Areas.

- Collaboration is encouraged. Many fair housing priorities transcend a grantee's boundaries. Actions to advance these priorities often involve coordination by multiple jurisdictions. The final rule encourages grantees to collaborate on fair housing assessments to advance regional fair housing priorities and goals.

- Community voice. The rule facilitates community participation in the local process to analyze fair housing conditions and set local priorities and goals.

- A phased-in approach. The final rule provides for additional time for communities to adopt this improved process for setting local fair housing priorities than originally proposed.

- Additional time for small grantees and recent regional collaborations. Local jurisdictions receiving a CDBG grant of \$500,000 or less and qualified PHAs will have more time to submit their first AFH. Grantees that recently submitted a Regional Analysis of Impediments in connection with HUD's Sustainable Communities competition have additional time to submit their first AFH than originally proposed.

For more info: http://www.huduser.org/portal/affht_pt.html#affh

Save the Date! Upcoming Fair Housing Events

9th Annual Lakeshore Friends of Fair Housing “Opening Doors to Housing Choice”

Thursday, October 22, 2015

Please mark your calendars for this exciting educational event, which will be held at the Double Tree Hotel in Holland, MI. This is a free event that provides attendees with a opportunity to learn more about equal housing, and ensuring fair housing services along the Lakeshore. Registration can be found at www.fhcwm.org/lksbreakfast. Please contact the FHCWM at (616) 451-2980 or (866) 389-FAIR if you are interested in receiving information about or sponsoring this event!

Fair Housing Book Club

The Fair Housing Book Clubs have discussed some great books this year, including The House Girl, Until Tuesday, Boy, Snow, Bird: A Novel, The Book of Unknown Americans and others! Read along with us: www.fhcwm.org/booksweveread or send an email request to contact-us@fhcwm.org to be added to our Book Club email alerts!

We meet at 11:45 am in our office (20 Hall Street SE, Grand Rapids) or the Disability Network Lakeshore office (426 Century Lane, Holland). Bring a lunch, a friend and join the discussion!

Fair Housing Trainings

The Fair Housing Center of West Michigan offers fair housing trainings, including, but not limited to, Fair Housing & Advertising, Fair Housing Training for Rental Professionals, Fair Housing & Maintenance and Fair Lending sessions. Costs vary depending on the type of training. Trainings run between 1-3 hours and include a comprehensive packet of reference materials as well as certificates of completion.

Some sessions are held at the Fair Housing Center office; we can also come to your location. Call Liz Keegan at (616) 451-2980 to learn more or register. Check our website home page for upcoming dates: www.fhcwm.org.

The Center hosts regular **tester trainings**. Testers are volunteers that play the role of a homeseeker and receive a small reimbursement in return for their time and services. In order to accommodate differing schedules, trainings will be offered both during business hours and in the evening. For the specific training dates, to register, or with any other questions, contact Gabe Chapla at (616) 451-2980 or gchapla@fhcwm.org.

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