

NEWS RELEASE

GREATER NEW ORLEANS FAIR HOUSING ACTION CENTER

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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FAIR HOUSING CENTER WINS MOTION FOR CONTEMPT; ST. BERNARD PARISH MUST PAY FEES, COSTS AND DAMAGES

This revised release corrects the July 23, 2009 version that attributes a statement to Judge Berrigan that she did not make in her ruling. GNOFHAC apologizes for the error.

On March 25, 2009, the Honorable Judge Helen G. Berrigan ruled that St. Bernard Parish violated a February 2008 Consent Order by banning the construction of multi-family housing in St. Bernard Parish. On July 22, 2009, Judge Berrigan held that by violating the Consent Order, the Parish was in contempt of the Order and that the Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center (GNOFHAC) and Provident Realty Advisors, Inc. can recover the costs expended in bringing the Parish's contemptuous conduct to light.

The ruling is GNOFHAC's second win in a long-standing case seeking to ensure fair housing opportunities in St. Bernard Parish. In the course of the multi-year litigation, GNOFHAC has successfully challenged St. Bernard's two multi-family construction moratoria, and an ordinance that restricted the rental of single-family residences to those related by blood to the owner of the property.

In her July 22 ruling, Judge Berrigan writes, "The Court concluded that the Parish and Council's intent in enacting and continuing the moratorium was racially discriminatory, and as such defendants violated the Fair Housing Act, 42 U.S.C. §3604(a), 42 U.S.C. §§1981, 1982, and 1983 and the terms of the February 2008 Consent Order. The Court also concluded that the moratorium had a discriminatory effect on African-Americans and therefore violated the Fair Housing Act, 42 U.S.C. §3604(a), and the terms of the February 2008 Consent Order. Accordingly, the Court finds that plaintiffs are entitled to attorneys' fees and costs based on defendants' failure to comply with a court order in effect, namely the 2008 Consent Order."

Relman & Dane PLLC represents GNOFHAC in this matter.

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James Perry, Executive Director of GNOFHAC, comments, "Judge Berrigan's ruling sends a strong message to both St. Bernard Parish and neighboring communities that fair and affordable housing opportunities must be allowed in our region."

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The Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center (GNOFHAC) is a private non-profit organization. The Center was established by a group of concerned New Orleanians in 1995 with the help of the National Fair Housing Alliance and a grant from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. GNOFHAC is dedicated to eliminating housing discrimination and furthering equal housing opportunities through education, outreach, advocacy, and enforcement of fair housing laws across the metro New Orleans and Baton Rouge areas. The activities described in this release were privately funded.