

# Fair Housing News

## DC Office of Human Rights

APRIL , 2005

### Inside this issue:

Office of Human Rights	2
Office Settlements	3-4
Probable Cause Cases	4
Outreach and Education	5-6
Housing Statistics	6-7



Anthony A. Williams, Mayor

## THE OFFICE OF HUMAN RIGHTS

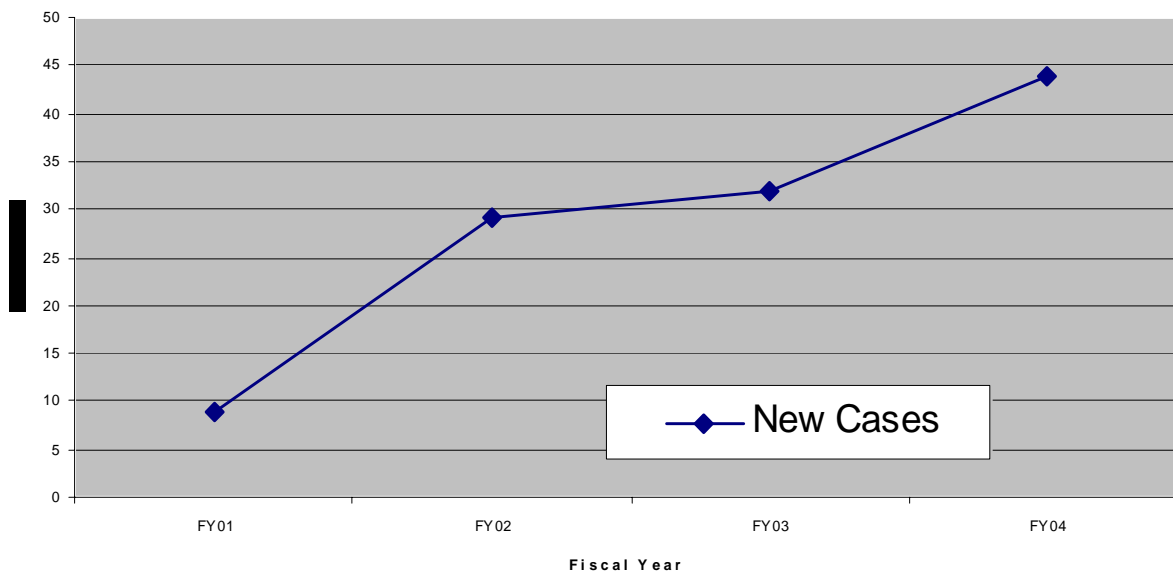
The Office of Human Rights seeks to eliminate discrimination, increase equal opportunity and protect human rights in the District of Columbia. To accomplish its mission, the Office enforces the D.C. Human Rights Act of 1977 and other laws and policies on nondiscrimination. The office is the advocate for the practice of good human relations and mutual understanding among the racial, ethnic and religious groups in the District of Columbia.

The Human Rights Act of 1977, as amended, prohibits discrimination in the areas of actual or perceived: race, color, sex, national origin, religion, age, marital status, personal appearance, sexual orientation, familial status, family responsibilities, matriculation, political affiliation, physical handicap, source of income, and place of residence or business in the areas of employment, housing, commercial space, educational institution and public accommodations.

The OHR executes these functions by: 1) conducting vigorous and proactive educational outreach programs for the public, including District residents, employers and agencies 2) conducting investigations and public hearings on racial, religious, or ethnic groups tensions, prejudice, intolerance, bigotry, disorder, and on any form of unlawful discrimination in employment, housing, commercial space, public accommodations or educational institutions.

Moreover, the OHR maintains a Work share Agreement with the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) that allows for the dual filling of housing cases that are substantially equivalent under federal law. The OHR Fair Housing Assistance Program (FHAP) commenced in 2000. Similar to other jurisdictions across the nation, housing discrimination is also prevalent in the District of Columbia. OHR has processed cases where landlords have failed to provide reasonable accommodations to persons who are disabled; applicants have been denied approval to rent apartments or purchase condominiums because of their race, national origin or sex; and we have seen cases where lenders have steered senior citizens into refinancing their homes which ultimately ended in the foreclosure and the loss of years of equity in their home. Since the inception of the housing program in 2000, new cases represent a 67% increase in FY04.

Housing Cases



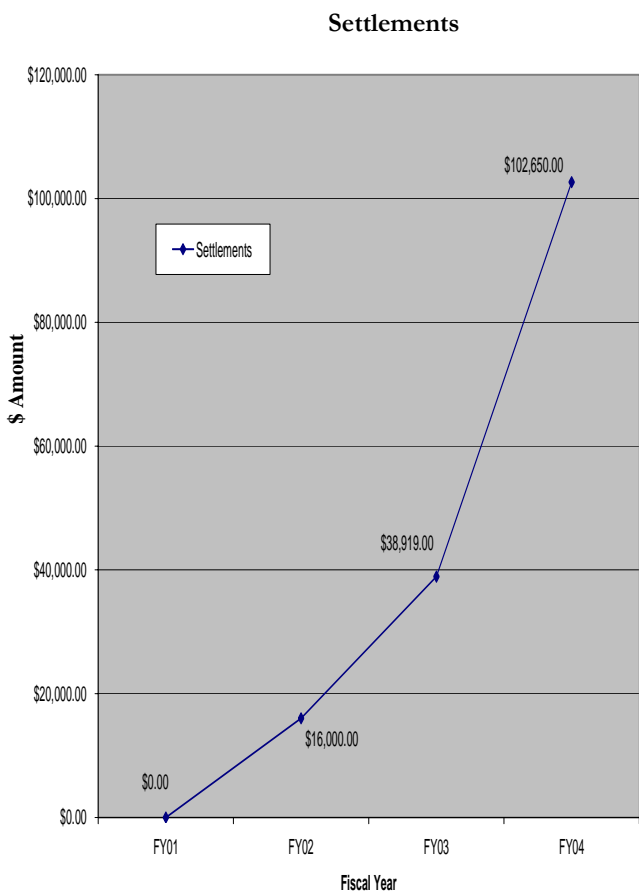
The following are samples of cases that settled in mediation:

Complainant alleged discrimination based on **race** in the terms and conditions by offering more lucrative terms to white applicants when Complainant was not informed about an amenities fee waiver. Complainant initially inquired about renting an apartment in person and was not informed about the fee waiver. However, when Complainant contacted Respondent by telephone the next day Complainant was informed of the fee waiver. Parties reached a settlement agreement in the amount of \$2000

Complainant alleged discrimination based on **national origin** for imposing different terms and conditions regarding maintenance services. The Complaint alleged Respondents failed to correct repairs and the lack of maintenance affected all parts of the building. Parties reached a settlement agreement in the amount of \$10,000.

Complainant alleged discrimination based on **race** when Respondent informed Complainant a White tenant was preferred. An African American apartment-seeker reported that a property owner made statements indicating he believed the apartment-seeker was White and expressed a preference for White tenants. Testing was initiated and established the Respondent informed a White tester that he sounded White, and then informed the tester that the area was mostly Black. The Respondent also informed the tester that he was trying to encourage Whites to move into his neighborhood. The Respondent informed the second White tester that he would prefer to have more Caucasians in his building. Parties reached a settlement agreement in the amount of \$5050.00

Complainant alleged Respondent discriminated based on **national origin** in the terms, conditions and privileges relating to renting units. Complainant currently rented an efficiency unit for over ten years and made a request for a unit transfer to a one bedroom unit, Complainant alleges when a one bedroom unit was available Complainant was denied the unit. Parties reached a non monetary settlement agreement.



Complainant alleged discrimination based on **religion** when Complainant was staying in a homeless shelter and was required to attend bible study classes as a condition of her housing. Parties reached a non monetary settlement agreement.

Complainant alleged that the Respondent refused to provide a reasonable accommodation by denying a transfer to an accessible unit based on Complainant's **disability**. Complainant occupied a unit which required climbing numerous steps to access the unit. Complainant requested the installation of a ramp for access to the unit. Respondent informed Complainant that there was a same size accessible unit available with front and rear access however, Respondent rescinded the offer citing the Complainant did not meet the income criteria. Parties reached an agreement and Complainant was granted a unit transfer.

Complainant alleged discrimination based on **disability** for imposing different terms and conditions regarding maintenance services to the unit. Complainant made numerous requests for repairs and alleged Respondent ignored requests and failed to provide repairs in a timely fashion. The parties reached a settlement agreement to complete all repairs within ninety days.

Although monetary settlements were achieved in many agreements, all mediated agreements involve some form of non-monetary affirmative relief. Typical examples include: fair housing training for staff; formal apology; policy revisions to include an anti-discrimination policy and postings; reasonable accommodation granted and compliance monitoring.

#### **FY04 Probable Cause Determinations**

A *national origin* testing case was issued a probable cause finding when Respondent provided false representation about availability to Latino home-seekers. Latino's home seekers were denied the opportunity to purchase or rent units. Testing evidence demonstrated preferential treatment was given to Caucasian testers (encouraged to apply and informed about available units) however, Latino testers were discouraged from applying and were not provided the same information about available units. The case was resolved through conciliation and parties reached a monetary settlement in the amount of \$45,000.

A *familial status* case was issued a probable cause finding when Respondents discriminated against Complainant in the terms conditions and services of their tenancy based on familial status when Respondents sought to evict Complainant's family for violating Respondents' unwritten occupancy policy limiting the number of tenants in a one bedroom apartment to three occupants. The case was sent to The Commission on Human Rights for a public hearing.



## Outreach & Education

The OHR instituted a priority for community outreach by providing training and developing informational materials. The OHR website provides an immediate link to activities and materials. The Housing Unit provides training to community groups, housing service providers, real estate professionals and other interest groups. The OHR continues to work with HUD, non profit fair housing groups and other government fair housing programs to co-sponsor events.

In 2004, OHR participated in various outreach events in the District of Columbia which included The Office of Latino Affairs; the Boat People SOS; the Central American Resource Center (CARECEN); the Chinatown Service Center; the Ethiopian Community Development Center; Marshall Heights Community Center the Richardson Dwelling Community ; the United Planning Organization and the D.C. Center for Independent Living (DCCIL).

OHR developed and utilized an interactive training modality for some of the community events. The format of the presentation was conducted through role play depicting scenarios of real life housing situations. At the conclusion of the scenarios, the instructors identified the fair housing violations, disseminated fair housing material and provided information on how to file a complaint. Many participants reported an unwillingness to exercise their fair housing rights and others reported they were uninformed about fair housing laws. OHR reinforced information about protections regarding retaliation and encouraged participants to contact OHR. To ensure effective communication for non-English speaking resident's materials were translated into Amharic, Chinese and Vietnamese. OHR collaborated with the Equal Rights Center, D.C. Department of Housing and Community Development and with community based organizations. Community organizations assisted with recruitment and hosted many of the events at their facility.



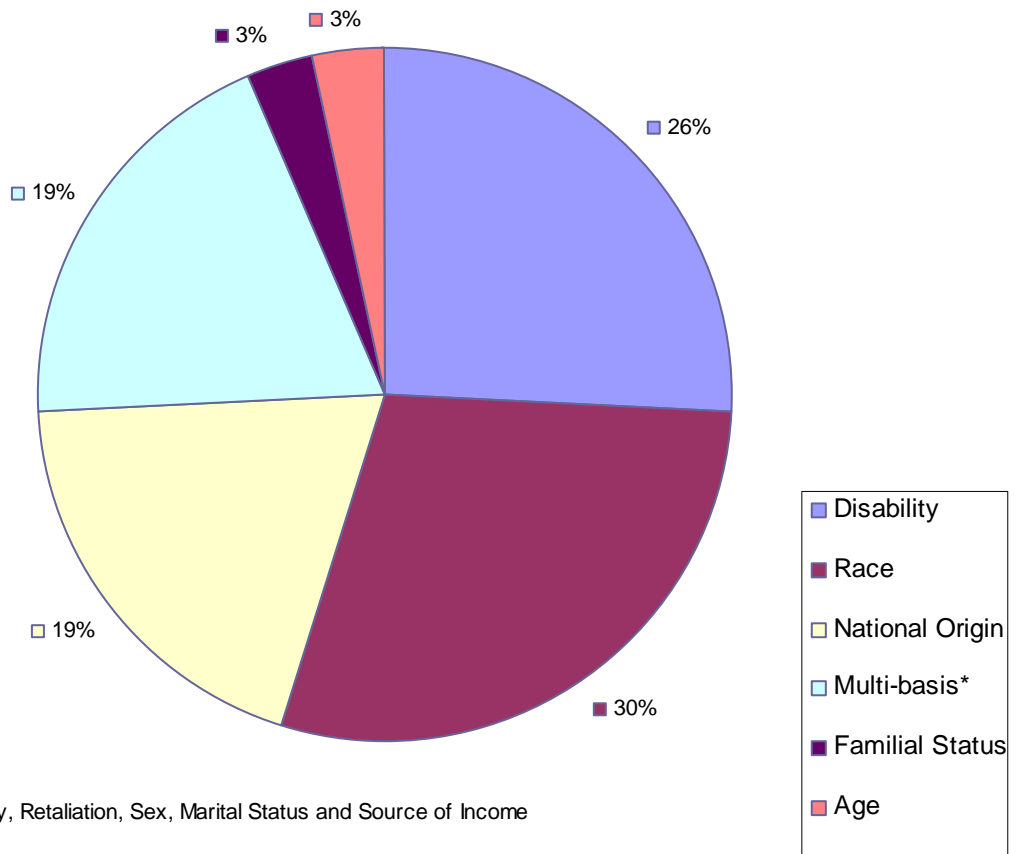
Other outreach include the Marshall Heights Community, Hillcrest Heights Civic Association , DC Ward 1 and 8 Citizen’s Summit and the Gay/Lesbian/Transgender Community. OHR has documented an increase in telephone inquiries and new cases filed since the expansion of outreach was implemented.

OHR , in collaboration with the Equal Rights Center and the Department of Housing and Community Development sponsored the third annual D.C. Fair Housing Symposium on April 20, 2004. The event was held at the Metro Center Marriott Hotel. The theme, “Fair Housing in a Changing Community” included topics on revitalization v. gentrification, predatory lending and the elderly and credit card scams. Speakers included Wanda Nieves, HUD Region Four HUB Director, James Carr, Senior Vice President of Financial Innovation, Planning & Research for the Fannie Mae Foundation, W. Christopher Smith, from W.C. Smith, Inc., the Hon. Rev. Walter E. Fauntroy, Former U.S. Congressman and Jim Sugarman, from AARP.

Based on the increased number of housing complaints against property management companies received at OHR, OHR designed a fair housing training specifically for real estate professionals. The training was offered in conjunction with the April 20, 2004 symposium. The OHR was approved as a certified fair housing training agency by the D.C. Board of Realtors which enabled OHR to issue fair housing CEU’s for licensed agents attending the training. The D.C. Board of Realtors assisted with the recruitment of participants for the training and University Legal Services provided training on Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. OHR will continue to offer this training annually.

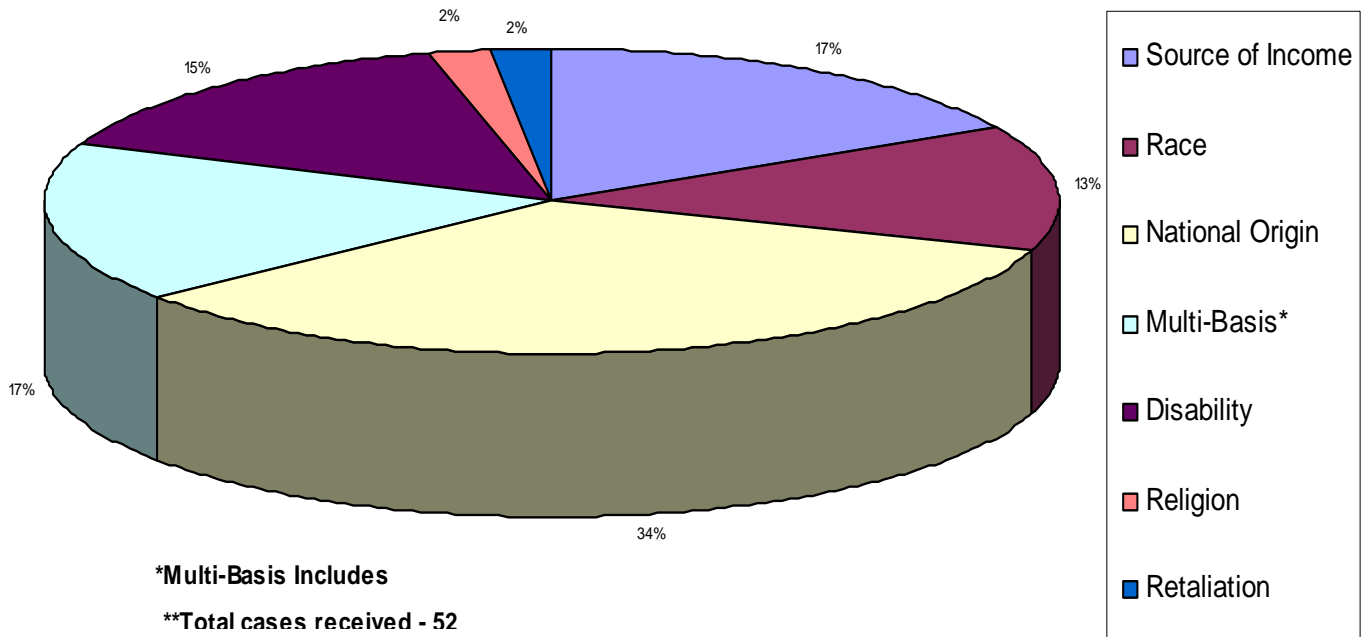
# Housing Statistics

Closed Cases by Basis for FY04

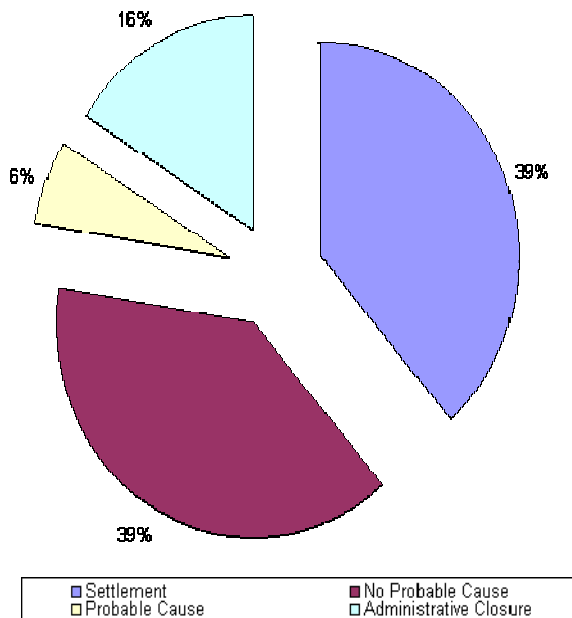


# Housing Statistics

**Protected Class Named in Complaint  
10/01/04-03/31/05\*\***

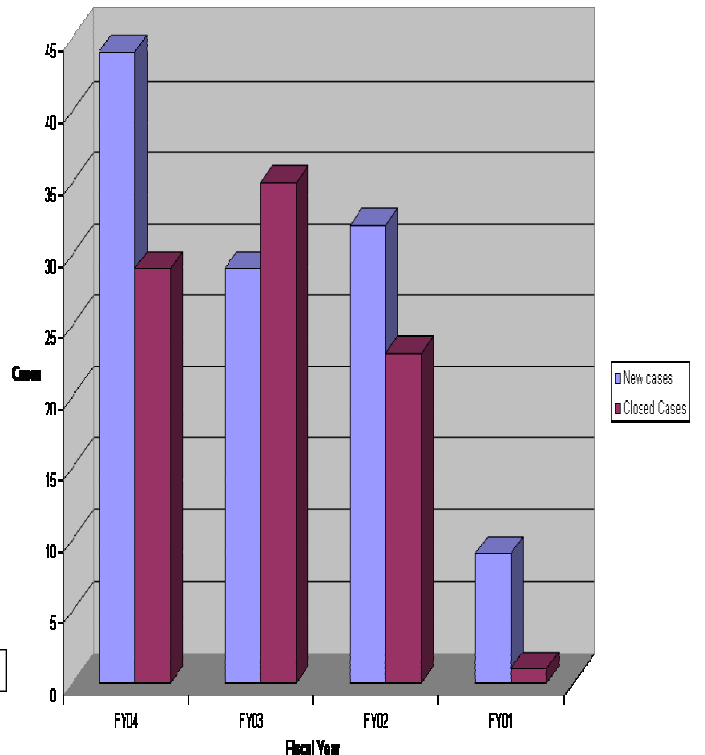


**Outcome of Closed Cases in FY04 \***



**Closed Cases- 31**

**New/Closed Cases FY01-FY04**





**FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:**

**DC OFFICE OF HUMAN RIGHTS**

441 4<sup>TH</sup> STREET, NW  
STE 570-N  
WASHINGTON, DC 20001  
PHONE: (202) 727-4559  
FAX: (202) 727-9589

**DC OFFICE OF HUMAN RIGHTS FAIR HOUSING PROGRAM**

3220 PENNSILVANYA AVE, SE  
STE 100  
WASHINGTON, DC 20020  
PHONE: (202) 727-4559  
FAX: (202) 645-6390

**Notice of Non-Discrimination**

*In accordance with the DC Human Rights Act of 1977, as amended, DC Official Code Section 2-1401.01 et seq., (Act) the District of Columbia does not discriminate on the bases of color, race, national origin, sex, age, marital status, personal appearance, sexual orientation, familial status, family responsibilities, matriculation, political affiliation, disability, source of income, or place of residence or business. Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination which is also prohibited by the Act. Discrimination in violation of the Act will not be tolerated. Violators will be subject to disciplinary action.*