

For Immediate Release

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Katten Represents Couple in Racial Discrimination in Housing Lawsuit

(CHICAGO) Katten announced today that it has filed a lawsuit in federal court against an apartment owner for violating the Fair Housing Act by discriminating on the basis of race and perceived familial status in the rental of a suburban three-flat residential building.

The complaint was filed Thursday in the US District Court for the Northern District of Illinois by Katten Litigation partner Brian J. Poronsky and associate Gizem Tunca in pro bono partnership with the fair housing advocate group Northside Community Resources on behalf of an African-American couple as the plaintiffs against Rudolf “Rudy” Kis, landlord and owner of a rental property in Harwood Heights.

The suit alleges that the defendant refused multiple times this summer to schedule a viewing of the apartment for the couple either in-person or virtually even though the unit was advertised as available for rent.

“Our complaint alleges that the defendant used a number of false excuses to avoid showing the apartment to our clients, including that the unit was too noisy and that the tenants wouldn’t allow him to show the unit. In contrast, the complaint alleges that the defendant immediately agreed to show the unit to white applicants without making any excuses,” said Katten partner Brian J. Poronsky.

“Our complaint also alleges that the defendant inquired about our clients’ extended family and showed concern that they might allow their children, grandchildren and other relatives to move into the apartment, which was not the case as they were only interested in renting the apartment for themselves,” said Katten associate Gizem Tunca, who is handling the case along with Poronsky. “We want the defendant to be held accountable and to end these unacceptable and illegal discriminatory housing practices now and in the future so other potential tenants have an equal opportunity and access to housing.”

The couple contacted Open Communities, a nonprofit organization in suburban Chicago, which educates, advocates and organizes to promote just and inclusive communities and eradicate housing discrimination. In this case, the organization conducted fair housing testing and other

investigation techniques using a series of applicants to determine whether the defendant would offer the same excuses to other applicants.

The complaint alleges that the landlord scheduled appointments with white female testers after refusing to show the unit to the plaintiffs and contradicted himself in what he told the plaintiffs and test applicants about the apartment.

According to the complaint, when a prospective African-American female renter requested to schedule a viewing of the advertised apartment, the defendant allegedly stated he only rented to people with “good vibes,” refused to accept an online application, and asked the tester for references, as well as a six-month rental history — none of which was requested of white test applicants before scheduling a showing.

Open Communities referred the couple to Northside Community Resources and co-counsel Elizabeth Shuman-Moore reached out to Katten because of her previous work with the firm on pro bono housing discrimination cases.

The lawsuit seeks compensatory and punitive damages for the obstruction of the plaintiffs’ civil rights, loss of their housing opportunity and for the emotional distress they suffered, as well as an injunction directing the defendant to show the advertised apartment to the plaintiffs or other available units in the building if the apartment is no longer available.

The filed complaint is available [here](#).

Katten is a full-service law firm with nearly 700 attorneys in locations across the United States and in London and Shanghai. Clients seeking sophisticated, high-value legal services turn to Katten for counsel locally, nationally and internationally. The firm’s core areas of practice include commercial finance, corporate, financial markets and funds, insolvency and restructuring, intellectual property, litigation, real estate, structured finance and securitization, transactional tax planning, and trusts and estates. Katten represents public and private companies in numerous industries, as well as a number of government and nonprofit organizations and individuals. For more information, visit katten.com.

Northside Community Resources (NCR) and its subsidiary organization, Northside Community Development Corporation (CDC), work to ensure that everyone has fair access to safe, comfortable, affordable, accessible homes to call their own in the Chicago area. Its programs include the Housing Resource Center, Multicultural Resource Center, two senior housing assistance programs, Homebuyer Education, Foreclosure Prevention, an Employer Assisted Housing Program and the Fair Housing Program, which offers outreach and education to all and legal help to people experiencing discrimination. NCR works to respond to and prevent housing discrimination because of race, national origin, disability, familial status, gender, religion, source

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of income and other protected classes. For further information, see www.northsidecommunityresources.org.

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