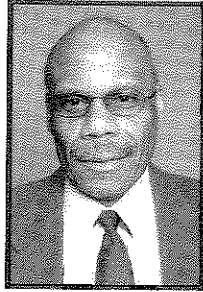


Spotlight on HRAC



New board member Harold Williams is no stranger to the Housing Center. He's been involved with the organization since it was known as the Metropolitan Strategy Group, helping to write predatory lending statutes. He is the managing attorney of the consumer law unit for Legal Aid Society of Cleveland, focusing primarily on the Save the Dream program. Harold's passion for civil rights began over 30

years ago with a summer internship for the Washington Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights. Since then, he's dedicated his career to fighting cases of employment discrimination and other unfair treatment cases. Of note were his cases of the Shield Club v. the City of Cleveland, a case involving hiring and promotions of black police officers, and a class action lawsuit against the Ohio Liquor Commission. Currently, he works to help individuals in foreclosure situations. Harold served on the board of the Home Repair Resource Center for 7 years. Harold received his J.D. from the Columbus School of Law at Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.

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Mission:

To eliminate housing discrimination and assure choice in Northeast Ohio by providing those at risk with effective information, intervention and advocacy.

Support the Ohio Coalition to Restore Fair Housing

In 1992, Ohio modified its fair housing law to be "substantially equivalent" to the federal Fair Housing Act. This allows Ohio to participate in a federal program to have the Ohio Civil Rights Commission (OCRC) investigate and process complaints of housing discrimination filed by Ohio residents and further provides Ohio with over \$1,000,000 in federal aid each year to carry out this work.

In the past two years, Ohio courts have interpreted Ohio's fair housing laws in a manner that is *not* substantially equivalent to the Fair Housing Act, as required under federal regulations. For example, these rulings have held:

- that non-profit fair housing organizations that provide assistance to individuals are not able to bring cases under Ohio law, despite almost 40 years of case law finding them eligible to do so; and
- that even after the Ohio Attorney General proves that a developer has constructed inaccessible housing in violation of Ohio's laws, the courts may not require the developer to correct violations through retrofits or repairs and may not order penalties or monetary damages.

Fair housing laws protect all Ohio citizens from housing discrimination. The laws prohibit housing discrimination based on race, color, national origin, ancestry, sex, religion, familial status, disability, and military status.

The Ohio Coalition to Restore Fair Housing (OCRFH) is asking that Ohio's law be restored to "substantial equivalence" to the federal Fair Housing Act.

Join the OCRFH – and the Housing Research & Advocacy Center – in calling on the Ohio Legislature to pass legislation to restore Ohio's fair housing law and once again make it equivalent to the federal Fair Housing Act. Doing so not only protects Ohio residents from housing discrimination, but it also ensures that complaints filed by Ohioans are decided in Ohio, and it keeps Ohio from losing out on millions of dollars in federal support for this important work.

To join the OCRFH or for additional information, go to the OCRFH's website www.restorefairhousing.org or contact the Housing Center at (216) 361-9240.