



SternJohn v. Kreisler

Case:

African American tenants were evicted when the property was sold to new owners. In October 2004, the largest judgment ever in a fair housing case in Minnesota was secured. The judgment of nearly \$1.1 million against Eboni and Julius SternJohns' former landlord for race discrimination is remarkable because the SternJohns' tangible damages were approximately \$5,000.

Details of the Case:

- Justin Cummins, a Minneapolis based civil rights attorney, filed suit in 2002 in federal court on behalf of the SternJohns to address Robert Kreisler's alleged policy against renting to African Americans.
- Shortly after taking over the apartment building where the SternJohns and numerous other African Americans had lived for years, Mr. Kreisler tried to evict them all. In short order, the building residents changed from being mostly African American to being virtually all white.
- The SternJohns and Mr. Cummins litigated the case for over two years, successfully bringing two motions to compel information from Mr. Kreisler. Based on the evidence generated, the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice has filed a pattern-and-practice lawsuit against Mr. Kreisler. That case is in the early stages of litigation.

Judgment in the Case:

- In connection with the judgment against Mr. Kreisler, the SternJohns and Mr. Cummins secured sweeping non-monetary relief.
- Mr. Kreisler is stripped of all authority to make tenancy-related decisions at any of his many rental properties in Minnesota, and he must now contract with an independent management company.
- Mr. Kreisler and his staff also are now required to market affirmatively in communities of color and to undergo annual fair housing and diversity training.

- Mr. Kreisler must further provide detailed written reports on a quarterly basis to an independent housing agency to prove his compliance with the fair housing laws, and Mr. Kreisler's properties are now subject to periodic, undercover testing of the housing practices there.
- Mr. Kreisler and his staff also are now required to adopt a comprehensive anti-discrimination policy, to post the policy on every floor of every building owned by Mr. Kreisler, and to attach the policy to each lease used.
- The Federal Court will monitor Mr. Kreisler's conduct for the next five years, and Mr. Kreisler shall pay liquidated damages for any future violations of the fair housing laws. Mr. Kreisler will also have to pay the cost of future enforcement actions brought by Mr. Cummins should such litigation be necessary.

This case, SternJohn v. Kreisler, et al, is assigned in U.S. District Court, District of Minnesota -- Civil Case No. 02-842 (MJD/JSM).

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