

Agency denies racial steering

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The broker-owner for Julia Stevens Realty, the Hewlett real estate agency accused of housing discrimination, defended his company yesterday, saying it had a long history and an "unblemished record."

Broker-owner Jay Goldman's comments came on the same day a complaint was filed against his agency with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The complaint, issued by two nonprofit groups - the National Fair Housing Alliance and Long Island Housing Services - accuses Julia Stevens Realty of steering black homeowners to neighborhoods and schools with more minorities, and white homeowners to areas with a higher concentration of whites.

The complaint also alleges that agents at the firm made anti-Semitic comments to the testers - people who came into the office posing as home buyers.

In a statement, Goldman said the accusations came as a surprise, especially because he initially found out about them from a member of the media, who told him about a press release that had been issued about yesterday's press conference.

"It is our firm's policy to fulfill the housing needs and requirements of our customers regardless of race, creed and/or religion," the statement continued. "We have no knowledge of any acts of alleged discrimination," the statement said.

Despite those claims, Long Island Housing Services, a fair-housing group based in Bohemia, said this isn't the first time a formal complaint was filed against Julia Stevens. In 1994, the group filed a complaint with HUD against the same agency on behalf of a white renter with an interracial son who said she was discriminated against, according to Long Island Housing Services executive director Michelle Santantonio.

The complaint filed yesterday included claims of rental discrimination, as well. Black testers were shown apartments only in Valley Stream, while white testers were shown apartments in Valley Stream, Cedarhurst, Lynbrook, Hewlett and Woodmere, the complaint said.

And two other black testers were shown no apartments at all, Santantonio said.

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