



Long Island Housing Services, Inc.
40 Johnson Avenue, Suite 8, Bohemia, New York 11716-2624
Suffolk: 631-567-5111— Nassau: 516-292-0400 — Fax: 631-567-0160
www.LIFairHousing.org

January 15, 2016

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Pages 2

Contacts:

Emery Celli Brinckerhoff & Abady, LLP (212)-763-5000

Diane L. Houk, Esq.

O. Andrew F. Wilson, Esq.

Long Island Housing Services, Inc. (631) 567-5111

Michelle Santantonio, Executive Director

Michelle@LIFairHousing.org; ext. 316

Jennifer Simcovitch, Staff Attorney

JenniferSimcovitch@LIFairHousing.org; ext. 317

***Race Discrimination Lawsuit Settles ~ Barriers Removed at
Long Island German-American Settlement League***

Yaphank, New York — January 15, 2016—On January 15, 2016, Federal Judge Joan Azrack approved a Settlement Agreement (“the Agreement”) resolving claims filed by Long Island Housing Services, Inc. (“LIHS”) and the Kneer Family charging discrimination by the German-American Settlement League (“GASL”). The cornerstone of this historic settlement is the reformation of the GASL’s bylaws to make the residential community open to the public in compliance with federal, state and local fair housing laws.

The GASL purchased the Yaphank property from the American Bund party in the late 1930’s, when it was used as a camp and gathering place for German-Americans who supported Nazism. According to the [former] by-laws of the GASL, one of the primary purposes of the organization was to “introduce, cultivate, and propagate in every direction true Germanic culture and to cultivate the German language, customs and ideals.” The complaint, filed in October 2015, alleged that the GASL’s continued restrictions on membership, leasing, and resale of homes served as a barrier to prospective home buyers who are not white people of German ancestry or background and discriminated on the basis of race and national origin in violation of federal, state, and local fair housing laws.

LIHS first became aware of the GASL’s policies after being contacted by Philip Kneer and Patricia Flynn-Kneer, owners of a home in Siegfried Park. Prior to contacting LIHS, the Kneer family had been attempting to sell their home for approximately six years, but had been unable to do so as a result of the racially/ethnically restrictive membership and advertising policies regarding the sale of homes. The Kneers sought assistance from LIHS to change the GASL’s rules to allow them to sell their home in an open and fair manner.

The Agreement bars GASL from discriminating on the basis of race or national origin and resolves claims under Section 1982 of the Civil Rights Act of 1866, the federal Fair Housing Act, the New York State Human Rights Law, and the Suffolk County Human Rights Law. In addition, it requires the GASL to amend its by-laws to include a non-discrimination provision, allow advertising of homes for sale in the community, and to remove the requirement that

prospective home buyers are sponsored by current GASL residents, as well as remove any vestiges of Nazi or Hitler era, among other things. The GASL's Board of Directors will be required to undergo Fair Housing training and provide notice of the revisions to the GASL's by-laws to the Long Island Board of Realtors, the Town of Brookhaven, and Suffolk County's Human Rights Commission. Finally, the settlement agreement provides compensation to LIHS for resources devoted to this investigation and future fair housing-related activities, including monitoring for compliance with the Agreement and supports payment of legal fees and costs.

LIHS Executive Director Michelle Santantonio stated, "We are very pleased with the GASL's prompt decisions resulting in critically needed, and decades overdue, changes to end its discriminatory and exclusionary practices. This Settlement will open up affordable housing options for many that would have previously been ineligible for homeownership at GASL." Santantonio added, "The newly amended by-laws eliminate the outlawed, insidious discriminatory practices and will now benefit all homeowners by making legitimate mortgage financing options possible. We remain committed to eliminating racial segregation and barriers to Fair Housing choice wherever they exist on Long Island."

Mr. and Mrs. Kneer note that: "The truth definitely prevailed in this case. After many years of anguish, we now feel vindicated and are thrilled that the discriminatory practices that were taking place within the GASL will now be a thing of the past. Hopefully, lessons have been learned."

Plaintiffs are represented by Diane L. Houk and O. Andrew F. Wilson of the law firm Emery Celli Brinckerhoff & Abady LLP ("ECBA"). Click [here](#) to view the Settlement.

"This sweeping settlement is a vindication for those who have the courage to challenge intolerance and those who are willing to make changes for the better. The important reforms embraced by the GASL now turn the page on a dark past in favor of a bright future." said ECBA attorney Andrew Wilson.

The federal Fair Housing Act, the New York State Human Rights Law, and the local Suffolk County Human Rights Law all prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, national origin, disability, sex, and familial status; New York State also prohibits discrimination on the basis of marital status, military status, and age; and Suffolk County prohibits discrimination against victims of domestic violence and based on source of income and veteran status. Additional information will be posted on www.LIFairHousing.org.

Founded in 1969, Long Island Housing Services, Inc. (www.LIFairHousing.org) is a private, nonprofit HUD-qualified Fair Housing Enforcement Organization and a HUD approved Housing Counseling agency. Its work is supported in part by HUD's Fair Housing Initiatives Program for Private Enforcement. LIHS' mission is the elimination of unlawful discrimination and promotion of decent and affordable housing through advocacy and education.

Emery Celli Brinckerhoff & Abady LLP is a litigation boutique that focuses on civil rights, commercial, criminal, and ethics matters. We represent individuals, businesses, and institutions in all aspects of litigation and pre-litigation dispute resolution, from negotiation, mediation and arbitration, through hearings, trials, and appeals.