

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Shirley Salmon-Davis and the Fair Housing Partnership allege in a complaint filed at the Department of Housing and Urban Development a discriminatory appraisal based on race of a house in East Liberty

EAST LIBERTY, PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA – Shirley Salmon-Davis and The Fair Housing Partnership of Greater Pittsburgh (FHP) have filed a housing discrimination complaint against Ditio, Inc. alleging a racially discriminatory appraisal of a house located in East Liberty, a neighborhood within the City of Pittsburgh.

Shirley Salmon-Davis sold her house at 716 North Saint Clair Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15206 in 2021. In preparation for the sale, Ms. Salmon-Davis coordinated with Harrison Kinnane Smith, a family friend, and an artist, for her home to be appraised. Mr. Smith arranged for two appraisals in conjunction with his exhibit entitled *Sed Valorem* at The Mattress Factory that explored regional property valuation.

As alleged in the complaint, on May 24, 2021, Ms. Salmon-Davis, a Black woman, met with an appraiser from Ditio, Inc. who valued her home at \$400,000. Ms. Salmon-Davis and Mr. Smith then removed Ms. Salmon-Davis' family pictures, her art of Black individuals, and her African tribal masks. The home was then decorated with the family pictures of Jenna Date, a white woman who is a friend of Ms. Salmon-Davis. On May 27, 2021, Ms. Date met with an appraiser from a different appraisal company who then valued the home at \$436,000.



Shirley Salmon-Davis, photo courtesy of Ms. Salmon-Davis.



716 N. St. Clair Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15206, photo courtesy of Google Maps.



Jenna Date, photo courtesy of Ms. Date.

Both appraisals used a “Sales Comparison Approach” and used two of the same comparable properties. However, 716 North Saint Clair Street is about a block and a half from Stanton Avenue which is a border between East Liberty and Highland Park. 716 North Saint Clair Street is in East Liberty. Based on the 2020 U.S. Census, East Liberty is 42.25% Black alone and Highland Park is 15.89% Black alone. The appraisal by Ditio, Inc. only used comparable properties in East Liberty whereas the other appraisal used comparable properties in both East Liberty and Highland Park.

As alleged in the complaint, Ms. Salmon-Davis and FHP allege the devaluation of Ms. Salmon-Davis’ home due to it being inhabited by a readily observable Black family in a neighborhood with a substantial Black population.

Ms. Salmon-Davis stated, “The process of packing my belongings and selling my home was stressful. However, the act of removing my family’s identity as a Black family from our home and asking a white friend for the favor of representing that her family owned the home, effectively erasing myself from my home of over 10 years, then to see its value increase by thousands of dollars was an unexpectedly dehumanizing experience.”

Ms. Date stated, “I was hopeful that we wouldn’t find any shift in the appraisal amounts. I was deeply saddened for all of us when it uncovered such a large gap. I am thankful for Shirley and Harrison’s courage in revealing the inequity in Pittsburgh’s housing system. I hope this project will bring awareness, so we can solve this pervasive community issue.”

Mr. Smith stated, “The results of our case study are devastating, but unfortunately not surprising. Similar racially biased devaluations are well-documented across the country. My hope is that the work of Ms. Salmon-Davis and the FHP help Pittsburgh recognize and begin to rectify this latest chapter in the centuries-old story of racial discrimination at the site of the home.”

Megan Confer-Hammond, the executive director of FHP, stated, “As a society we often assume that the calculation of value for an inanimate object is without bias. I ask Pittsburghers to consider that the same house was appraised three days apart and its value changed by \$36,000. What changed in that time?”

The complaint is being investigated by the Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity.

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Founded in 1984, The Fair Housing Partnership is a full-service fair housing agency dedicated to ensuring equal housing choice through education, fair housing analysis, enforcement, outreach and community organizing in western Pennsylvania.