



For Immediate Release

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**Department of Justice Files Racial Discrimination Lawsuit
Against Coldwell Banker Franchisee**

National Fair Housing Alliance & HUD Investigations Confirm Discrimination

ATLANTA, GA – On November 6, 2008, the U.S. Department of Justice filed a federal lawsuit against Coldwell Banker Joe T. Lane Realty in the metropolitan area of Atlanta alleging discrimination on the basis of race and color in violation of the Fair Housing Act. Coldwell Banker Joe T. Lane Realty is a franchisee of Coldwell Banker Real Estate LLC. The Fair Housing Act prohibits housing discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status and disability.

An undercover investigation of this Coldwell Banker office conducted by National Fair Housing Alliance found that its agent Rodney Foreman repeatedly engaged in racial steering, made discriminatory statements, and treated individuals differently based on their race and color. On multiple occasions, Foreman steered white homebuyers to areas that were predominantly white and discouraged a white homebuyer from viewing homes in the predominantly African-American neighborhood of Stonewall Jackson and warned white homebuyers to avoid areas where they would be a minority.

In one instance, Foreman told a homebuyer, "I didn't know if you were Caucasian or not over the phone." After seeing that the homebuyer was white, Foreman produced two sets of home listings, one in case the homebuyer was white, and one in case he was black. Foreman then threw away the listings he said were for the black homeowner. In addition, the agent made numerous discriminatory statements, including, "Blacks do not keep their homes up," "whites move south when blacks move in," and whites "don't care how far south they have to go." After expressing doubt for a white homebuyer's ability to sell his home in an integrated community, Foreman declared, "That's why I'm steering you away from here."

"By discouraging Whites from even considering integrated neighborhoods, racial steering practices result in producing communities that are racially, ethnically and economically isolated," said Shanna L. Smith, President and CEO of the National Fair Housing Alliance. "Racial steering is illegal under the Fair Housing Act and NFHA will continue to investigate sales practices across America, especially in light of so many homes in foreclosure and real estate agents duty to market these homes to all potential buyers.

NFHA's investigation revealed that steering was not limited to homes but to schools and school districts as well, including a comment from Foreman that the children of a white family in an integrated community were the only whites in the graduating class. Coldwell Banker Joe T. Lane Realty has since merged with the Bullard Realty organization. Previously, the Joe T. Lane office was located in Clayton County, which the Harvard Civil Rights Project has identified as having the most rapidly re-segregating school district in the country.

NFHA filed a complaint with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) on April 13, 2005. HUD initiated an investigation based on NFHA's findings and issued a charge of discrimination on September 18, 2008. Following the enforcement provisions of the Fair Housing Act, NFHA elected to have the case heard in federal court and the Justice Department filed the suit on behalf of NFHA and the United States government: *United States v. Coldwell Banker Joe T. Lane Realty, Inc. and Rodney Lee Foreman* (Case no. 08-CV-3427). This investigation was part of NFHA's multi-year, multi-city enforcement project to investigate housing discrimination in real estate sales practices. This initial investigation was part of a contract NFHA entered into under HUD Secretary Mel Martinez in 2002. The companies investigated were selected by HUD because testing in its 2000 Housing Discrimination Study indicated that this company may have one or more violations of the Fair Housing Act.

About the National Fair Housing Alliance (www.nationalfairhousing.org)

Founded in 1988, the National Fair Housing Alliance is a consortium of more than 220 private, non-profit fair housing organizations, state and local civil rights agencies, and individuals from throughout the United States. Headquartered in Washington, D.C., the National Fair Housing Alliance, through comprehensive education, advocacy and enforcement programs, provides equal access to apartments, houses, mortgage loans and insurance policies for all residents of the nation.