

FAIR HOUSING IS AS EASY AS ABC, LET'S DO IT WITH SOME POETRY! Part Two (N - Z)

By Jo Becker, Education/Outreach Specialist, Fair Housing Council of Oregon

In the piece below, Nadeen Green continues her poetic reflections on fair housing law. Ms. Green is an attorney who has spoken on fair housing topics to residential rental audiences across the country since the Fair Housing Amendments Act's inception in 1989.

Here at the Fair Housing Council (FHCO) we make ourselves available to those who feel their fair housing rights have been violated, as well as to those with fair housing questions, including housing providers! If you have a question about your rights or responsibilities under federal, state, and local fair housing laws, please visit us at www.FHCO.org or call our free Hotline at 800/424-3247 Ext. 2.

***We are taking the alphabet, letter by letter, So perhaps you can do things a little bit better
To make your community open to all, And not take an unexpected fair housing fall!***

N is for National Origin, which tells us
It matters not whether Spain, Haiti or Belarus
Is from where someone or their family came,
Because no matter the country, you'll treat them
the same
As you treat all others who knock on your door,
Because this is one of the protected classes
EHO is for.

O is for Occupancy Standards, the number
Of how many people can live and can slumber
In housing that's owned or managed by you;
Generally for each bedroom the number is two.
But it could be more, which you may not realize,
Depending on local laws, or the dwelling's
overall size.

P is for Parking, a significant issue
When those with disabilities approach you
Needing a particular designated spot
Somewhere in the community's parking lot.
Reasonable accommodation is what you may
often owe,
Requiring that you assign parking and violators
tow.

Q is for Quiet, and yes, that can be
A condition imposed at your community.
But remember this standard is for *everyone*,
The adults, the children, the vow-silenced nun.
Noise is the issue, and all must you scold,
Not just the young ones, but those who are old.
R is for Recovery, which has been deemed to
give
Protection of fair housing to those who may live
With an addiction that is now under control,
Meaning no drug use or abuse of alcohol.
While not intended for those who manufacture or
deal,
Those with addictions have a disability that's
real.

S is for Steering, when you send them away,

Or limit the housing at which they may stay.
Playgrounds or ponds, tennis courts or stairs,
It matters not for families or those in
wheelchairs.
Any available housing your prospects may
choose;
Limit their options, the lawsuit you'll lose.

T is for Testers, they have standing to sue
Your company, your manager, and yes, even
you.
And while no law requires your consistency,
It's certainly a great operating policy.
Email, phone or in-person communication,
All people should get the same information.

U is for Unjust, and it's important to this poet
To point out that everyone should know it -
It's not just about law or about what it can cost,
And it's not just about the opportunity that's lost.
It's about destroying someone's personal dignity
By denying simple equal housing opportunity.

V is for Voice, and now people do sue
Based on the concept that it's easy for you
To know their race, particularly white or black,
Even though a visual meeting you lack.
So promptly return phone messages, and invite
those who call,
So you don't take a linguistic profiling fall.

W is for White Only Advertising, a major sin
When you select only blonde Barbie® to appear
in
Your ads, so that those of color and those with
kids
Believe that you will turn down their housing
bids.
The majority and minority groups you must use,
If human models to market is the technique you
choose.

X is for Xenophobia, "the dislike, mistrust or fear

Of foreigners or that which is strange” to us here.
And while you may to such a phobia cling,
To act upon it is not a wise thing.
So get used to diversity, in our lives it's a fact,
And much is protected under the Fair Housing Act.

Y is for Yarmulke, worn by the observant Jew,
A religious symbol likely recognized by you.
In decorating and advertising please stay away
From using any symbols that clearly show or say
That the message is intended in a religious way.
(But Santa and the Easter Bunny are actually OK!)

Z is for Zip Code, it's where people live,
And there is information about them that zip codes give.
Perhaps their ethnicity or race or income
Is known by where they now make their home.
So target market by zip only if you can show
A good business reason for where your promotions go.

We have rhymed the letters N through Z;
Questions may have been raised by this poetry.
You are welcome to ask me any of those,
Though it may be your attorney who best knows.
“Do it right” is the final message from me,
Offer everyone Equal Housing Opportunity.

This article brought to you by the Fair Housing Council; a nonprofit serving the state of Oregon and SW Washington. Learn more and / or sign up for our free, periodic newsletter at FHCO.org.

“Fair Housing Focus” is written by Nadeen Green, also known as The Fair Housing Lady. She gets to be Senior Counsel with For Rent Media Solutions™, which means that she is their attorney, not yours. So the information contained in this article is not to be considered legal advice. Both the author and FRMS strongly suggest that you consult with your own counsel as to any fair housing questions or problems you may have. Fair Housing Lady can be reached at Nadeen.Green@ForRent.com.

Qs about your rights and responsibilities under fair housing laws?

Visit FHCO.org or call 1-800-424-3247 Ext. 2.

Qs about this article? Want to schedule an in-office fair housing training program or speaker for corporate or association functions?

Contact Jo Becker at jbecker@FHCO.org or 503/453-4016.