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DFEH Settles National Origin Discrimination Case Against Orange County Landlord

Defendants to pay \$16,000 for harassment of tenants based on their national origin

Sacramento – The California Department of Fair Employment and Housing (DFEH) has reached a settlement in a national origin discrimination case involving allegations that Orange County landlords Rosemarie Axton and her son Rodney Axton engaged in a campaign of harassment against a tenant family based on their Mexican national origin.

An Orange, California woman filed a complaint with DFEH on December 28, 2016 alleging that the Axtons harassed and retaliated against her, her partner, and their two children. The Axtons own and manage a four-unit apartment complex in Orange. The complaint alleged a months-long pattern of harassing, discriminatory, and threatening behavior on the part of Rodney Axton towards the family. The harassment included spoken statements such as “I hate Mexicans,” discriminatory written notes containing insults about people of Mexican descent, and actions such as opening the family’s mail, destroying their household plants, and making threatening gestures.

DFEH found cause to believe that a violation of the Fair Employment and Housing Act had occurred and, after unsuccessful mediation, filed a lawsuit in Orange County Superior Court (case number 30-2018-00965639-CU-CR-CJC) in January 2018.

“California law prohibits landlords from harassing tenants on any basis protected by law, including national origin,” said DFEH Director Kevin Kish. “Harassment can be verbal, visual, or physical in nature, and we encourage anyone experiencing harassment in their home to step forward.”

In settling the case, the landlords will pay the complainant \$16,000, attend anti-discrimination trainings, and distribute fair housing brochures to their tenants.

Staff Counsel Joni Carrasco represented DFEH in this proceeding.

The DFEH is the state agency charged with enforcing California’s civil rights laws. The mission of the DFEH is to protect the people of California from unlawful discrimination in employment, housing and public accommodations and from hate violence and human trafficking. For more information, visit the DFEH’s web site at www.dfeh.ca.gov.

