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HOUSING DISCRIMINATION CASE FILED AGAINST FIRST MONTGOMEY GROUP AND MELROSE STATION APARTMENTS

MONTGOMERY COUNTY, PA, January 17, 2006 – The Fair Housing Council of Montgomery County announced today that has filed a fair housing complaint with the U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development and in Federal Court in the Eastern District of Pennsylvania against Melrose Station Apartments in Elkins Park and its owners, First Montgomery Group, based in NJ.

In August 2004 the Council was contacted by an African American female living at Melrose Station who claimed that management was discriminating against her because of her race. Over a 12 month period the Council conducted a series of tests at Melrose Station that showed evidence of discrimination against African Americans. Tests revealed that African American testers did not receive follow up telephone calls after visiting the site while white testers received calls, thank you letters, and in some cases, gifts while visiting the site. White testers were told of rent specials and reduced security deposits while African American testers were not. African American testers were given less information about available apartments and were told about fewer available units than white testers. In one instance, while testers visited the apartment within minutes of each other and saw the same agent, the African American tester was told there were no units available until the next month and the white tester was told about a special pre-leasing arrangement.

“It is outrageous that people are still being discouraged from renting an apartment solely based upon their race“says Elizabeth Albert, Executive Director of the Council. “We are filing this complaint as a wake up call to landlords and managers that this type of behavior will not be tolerated and that we are monitoring rental practices throughout the region.” The Council recently received a three year grant from HUD to conduct enforcement and testing in the Philadelphia region.