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**NEW YORK CITY ANNOUNCES INVESTIGATION INTO TENANT HARASSMENT
IN QUEENS CONDO BUILDING DISPLAYING NAZI IMAGERY AND
CONFEDERATE POSTERS**

*Day of Action also held in Sunnyside to promote tenants' rights amidst reports of housing
discrimination and discriminatory harassment*

NEW YORK—New York City announced today an investigation into allegations of tenant harassment at 47-55 39th Place in Sunnyside, Queens, which has displays of Nazi and Confederate imagery, swastikas and other hate symbols in the lobby. The NYC Commission on Human Rights launched the investigation on behalf of the City following public reports from Majority Leader Jimmy Van Bramer, tenants and condo owners of a hostile environment due to alleged tenant harassment by the property manager or managers connected to the offensive displays in the common area. Under the NYC Human Rights Law, it is illegal to discriminate against or harass tenants because of their race, color, religion, immigration status, sexual orientation and other protected classes.

The NYC Commission on Human Rights, Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, Community Affairs Unit, Public Engagement Unit and the Human Resource Administration also held a Day of Action outside the 40th Street & Lowery Street and 46th Street & Bliss Street train stations and in front of PS 199Q at 39-20 48th Avenue in Sunnyside Queens where they distributed flyers on tenants' rights and discriminatory harassment and answered questions on legal protections and services against discrimination and harassment.

"It is now more important than ever for New Yorkers to stand united as one city and reject discrimination and intolerance," said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. "We will not let tenants in Sunnyside or across the five boroughs be intimidated or threatened for speaking out against hatred."

"Discrimination and harassment will not be tolerated in New York City and the NYC Commission on Human Rights is cracking down on anyone who thinks they are above the Law," said **Deputy Commissioner of the Law Enforcement Bureau at the NYC Commission on Human Rights Hollis V. Pfitsch**. "Despite hostile rhetoric on the national level, no one in New York City has permission to harass or threaten another person because of who they are, what

they believe, or what they look like. The Commission will continue to use every tool it has to investigate and prosecute violators and encourages anyone who witnesses or is a victim of discrimination or harassment to step forward and report it to the Commission.”

“New York City is at the forefront of protecting tenants’ rights and we are here to ensure that New Yorkers are aware of all the resources this Administration has put in place to defend them from harassment and discrimination,” said **Department of Social Service Commissioner Steven Banks**. “Nobody should be exposed to blatant symbols of hate in their own homes and we want to support these tenants and any other tenant who can benefit from our services.”

“We want to send a clear message that we will not stand idly by and allow tenants to feel victimized in their own homes,” said **Housing Preservation and Development Commissioner Maria Torres-Springer**. “I want to applaud the Mayor’s Office and the NYC Commission on Human Rights for their advocacy on behalf of the New York City residents. We look forward to our continued collaboration as we fight to protect tenants across our city.”

“It is unacceptable that in Queens, the most diverse area in the country, immigrant tenants are facing threatening behavior and symbols of hate in their homes,” said **Kavita Pawria-Sanchez, Assistant Commissioner of the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs**. “Every tenant in New York City has the right to live without fear of discrimination or harassment, including immigrant New Yorkers, and the City will not hesitate to protect that right. We applaud our colleagues at the City’s Commission on Human Rights for launching this investigation, and we will continue our outreach work with the Mayor’s Community Affairs Unit and the Public Engagement Unit in Sunnyside to educate tenants on their rights as New Yorkers.”

“The Mayor’s Community Affairs Unit is proud to partner with community members and elected officials like Majority Leader Jimmy Van Bramer to mobilize New Yorkers against hate and discrimination. Tenant harassment is both illegal and against our core values as New Yorkers. The Mayor and the City is committed to protecting the most vulnerable among us and we thank our sister agencies and Sunnyside residents participating in today’s day of action against tenant harassment and hate,” said **Commissioner of the Mayor’s Community Affairs Unit Marco Carrión**.

“It is core to our mission to ensure that all New Yorkers feel safe and welcome in this City, especially in their homes,” said **Acting Counsel to the Mayor, Paul R. Rodríguez**. “New Yorkers are protected by one of the strongest human rights laws in the country and today we send a message that harassment and discrimination are simply not tolerated in this City. I congratulate the City Commission on Human Rights and other City agencies for taking swift action to investigate and respond to this incident. We will continue to press forward in protecting the rights of all New Yorkers.”

“No New Yorker should have to endure discrimination of any kind. And we are here today to make sure that tenants all across the City know their rights,” said **Public Engagement Unit Director Regina Schwartz**. “The Mayor’s Public Engagement Unit is conducting proactive outreach in communities and at doors across New York City to help individuals access legal assistance and get the help they deserve.”

“The issues at the building affects people like me who are immigrants and renters the most,” **said a tenant.** “They are the ones who are intimidated and harassed the most and more afraid to say anything. His actions create a hostile environment.”

In New York City, it is illegal for housing providers, landlords, or their employees or agents to:

- Discriminate against tenants by creating a hostile environment of harassment based on their race, religion, immigration status, sexual orientation, or any other protected class.
- Harass or threaten tenants because of their race, religion, immigration status, sexual orientation or any other protected class.
- Refuse to make repairs or provide equal services to tenants because of their protected class.
- Retaliate against tenants who report discriminatory behavior or neglect to ensure employees and agents are trained on their responsibilities under the NYC Human Rights Law, including superintendents, maintenance workers, brokers, and salespeople.

Over the past two years, the Commission has significantly increased enforcement efforts to address housing discrimination and tenant harassment, tripling the number of investigations in this area. The Commission is currently investigating 565 claims of housing discrimination, over 75 claims of which directly involve tenant harassment.

It’s also illegal in New York City for people to engage in discriminatory harassment, which occurs when someone uses physical force — or threatens to use physical force — against a victim because of their protected status, and knowingly intimidates, injures, or interferes with a legal right of the victim. Discriminatory harassment also occurs when someone damages or destroys another person’s property because of their protected status. Amid hostile national rhetoric, hate speech and violence over the last year, the Commission has increased outreach and enforcement efforts across the City so people understand their rights. Reports of discriminatory harassment increased by 480% in 2016, with 203 reports of discriminatory harassment made in 2016 compared to 35 in 2015.

The Commission also recently created a “Bias Response Team” to respond to incidents of bias and discrimination across the City following reports/tips from callers, advocates, and city agencies, such as the NYPD Hate Crimes Task Force, and from news media and social media. Over the last six months, the Commission’s Bias Response Team members have monitored and conducted numerous site visits to affected communities following bias incidents, including displays of hate symbols and images such as swastikas, hateful drawings, and written discriminatory threats, among others.

The Commission has the authority to fine violators with civil penalties of up to \$250,000 for willful and malicious violations of the Law and can award compensatory damages to victims, including emotional distress damages and other benefits. The Commission can also order trainings on the NYC Human Rights Law, changes to policies, and restorative justice relief such as community service and mediated apologies.

If you or someone you know believes they are the victim of discrimination or harassment, call the Commission's Infoline at 718-722-3131. Reports may also be filed anonymously. People may also report discrimination on the [Commission's website](#).

"The tenants of this Sunnyside condominium have been terrorized at the hands of this property manager for far too long," said **Majority Leader Jimmy Van Bramer**. "After speaking with the Commissioner on behalf of the tenants and condominium owners, I'm pleased that Commission on Human Rights has decided to open an investigation into this condominium board member and property manager after tenants reported constant intimidation, harassment, and retaliation. Clearly, their rights are being violated. And with the announcement of this investigation today, we send a strong message that we uphold and defend the rights of tenants in New York City."

"This property manager's harassment of tenants and closed-minded views have no place in this city," said **Sateesh Nori, Attorney-In-Charge of the Queens Civil Practice at The Legal Aid Society**. "No New Yorker should have to face Nazi swastikas, confederate flags or other offensive symbols where they live. The Legal Aid Society is proud to stand with the City, elected officials and Sunnyside residents against this reprehensible conduct."

"Tenants have a right to live free from harassment, and without being subjected to offensive symbols or language by their landlords or property managers. Subjecting tenants to symbols of religious or racial oppression is simply unacceptable, and Catholic Migration Services stands with our City leaders and other advocates to condemn this behavior. We encourage all tenants to learn more about their rights by seeking help from a lawyer or the City agencies that enforce these important laws," said **Very Rev. Patrick J. Keating, Chief Executive Officer of Catholic Migration Services**.

"Sunnyside Community Services in its over forty years of existence has embraced the rich diversity of this community. Any affront based on one's ethnicity, race, gender, or sexual preference diminishes all of us. We stand in unity with all who struggle against this," said **Judith Zangwill, Executive Director of Sunnyside Community Services**.

"For over 30 years, Woodside on the Move has worked to protect the rights of tenants. Unfortunately, tenant harassment and discrimination take place all too often in our community. Too many tenants do not know their rights and are vulnerable to discrimination. We are happy to participate in this day of action and take a stand against hate and harassment in Sunnyside and across Queens. Together, we can empower tenants to fight back and stay in our community, said **Maritza Munoz, Housing Program Director, Woodside on the Move**.

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