

**The Tennessee Human Rights Commission  
Middle Tennessee Fair Housing Summit  
in partnership with  
The Tennessee Fair Housing Council**



**TUESDAY, JUNE 28, 2022**  
**Tennessee Library and Archives**  
**Nashville, Tennessee**



# The State of Housing in Tennessee: Where are we Now?

On April 11, 1968, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1968, which was a follow-up to the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The 1968 Act expanded on previous acts and prohibited discrimination concerning the sale, rental, and financing of housing based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, (and as amended) disability and family status. Title VIII of the Act is also known as the Fair Housing Act (of 1968).

The enactment of the federal Fair Housing Act on April 11, 1968 came only after a long and difficult journey. From 1966 to 1967, Congress regularly considered the fair housing bill, but failed to garner a strong enough majority for its passage. However, when the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated on April 4, 1968, President Lyndon Johnson utilized this national tragedy to urge for the bill's speedy Congressional approval. Since the 1966 open housing marches in Chicago, Dr. King's name had been closely associated with the fair housing legislation. President Johnson viewed the Act as a fitting memorial to the man's life work, and wished to have the Act passed prior to Dr. King's funeral in Atlanta.

Specialized organizations like the NAACP, the National Association of Real Estate Brokers (NAREB), the GI Forum, and the National Committee Against Discrimination in Housing lobbied hard for the Senate to pass the Fair Housing Act and remedy this inequity. Senators Edward Brooke and Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts argued deeply for the passage of this legislation. In particular, Senator Brooke, the first African-American ever to be elected to the Senate by popular vote, spoke personally of his return from World War II and inability to provide a home of his choice for his new family because of his race.

With many cities rioting after Dr. King's assassination, and destruction mounting in every part of the United States, the words of President Johnson and Congressional leaders rang the Bell of Reason for the House of Representatives, who subsequently passed the Fair Housing Act. Without debate, the Senate followed the House in its passage of the Act, which President Johnson then signed into law.

The power to appoint the first officials administering the Act fell upon President Johnson's successor, Richard Nixon. President Nixon tapped then Governor of Michigan, George Romney, for the post of Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. While serving as Governor, Secretary Romney had successfully campaigned for ratification of a state constitutional provision that prohibited discrimination in housing. President Nixon also appointed Samuel Simmons as the first Assistant Secretary for Equal Housing Opportunity.

In subsequent years, the tradition of celebrating Fair Housing Month grew larger and larger. Governors began to issue proclamations that designated April as "Fair Housing Month."

In 2022, we have joined with our partners and allies in commemoration of the Fair Housing Act of 1968.



# PROGRAM AGENDA

**8:30 A.M. Registration/Continental Breakfast**

**8:45 A.M. Opening Remarks and Welcome**

Muriel Nolen- Interim Executive Director, Tennessee Human Rights Commission  
Commissioner Bill Martin- Vice Chair, Tennessee Human Rights Board of Commissioners  
Julie Yriart- Executive Director, Tennessee Fair Housing Council  
Mayor John Cooper- Mayor Nashville and Davidson County

**9:00 A.M. Housing Hot Topics – Updates on Fair Housing and New Laws**

Zac Oswald- Managing Attorney and Housing Practice Lead, Legal Aid Society of Middle Tennessee and the Cumberland  
Katie Ovalle- Staff Attorney, Legal Aid Society of Middle Tennessee and the Cumberland

**Moderator:** Julie Yriart- Executive Director, Tennessee Fair Housing Council

**10:15 A.M. Designing for People with Disabilities- Fair Housing Design and Construction Standards & the Americans with Disabilities Act**

Jerry Hall- ADA Manager and ADA Title II Coordinator, Metropolitan Nashville & Davidson County  
Julie Yriart- Executive Director, Tennessee Fair Housing Council

**Moderator:** Laura Brown- Executive Director, Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services

**11:00 A.M. Housing For All: Affordable Housing in Nashville-Davidson County and Beyond**

Dr. Troy D. White- Executive Director, Metropolitan Development and Housing Agency (MDHA)  
Angela Hubbard- Director, Metropolitan Nashville Planning Department Division of Housing  
Jackie Paul Sims - Executive Director, PATHE Nashville and Community Housing Advocate

**Moderator:** Dhathri Chunduru- Research Director, Tennessee Housing Development Agency (THDA)

**12:15 P.M. Lunch and Networking**

**1:15 P.M. Keynote Speaker**

Zulfat Suara- Council At-Large, Metropolitan Nashville & Davidson County

**2:00 P.M. Closing Remarks and Adjournment**

Muriel Nolen- Interim Executive Director, Tennessee Human Rights Commission

# KEYNOTE SPEAKER



## **Zulfat Suara** Council Member At Large Metropolitan Nashville-Davidson County

**ZULFAT SUARA** was elected as an at large council member in September 2019. With over 34 thousand votes from a very diverse population, she became the first Muslim to be elected to the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County and the first immigrant elected to an at-large position. She is the first Muslim woman elected in the State of Tennessee and the first Nigerian woman elected to any office in the United States.

Zulfat Suara is originally from Nigeria, but came to the U.S. in 1993 and chose to make Tennessee her home when the opportunity for her husband to do a fellowship at Vanderbilt presented itself. She has been active in community service and leadership since she moved here in 1998, all while working full-time as a CPA. Zulfat founded an accounting firm that has worked with county governments in Hardeman, Haywood, Lake, and McNairy counties. She is currently the Assistant Controller of a local university in Nashville.

Always active in her community, she started the Hardeman County Chapter of Junior Achievement in 2004 and continues to advocate for children and young people as a board member of the PENCIL Foundation. Zulfat has served in a number of leadership positions, including the chair of the American Muslim Advisory Council. She has supported women, serving two terms as State President of the Business and Professional Women, a century-old organization promoting equity for all women in the workplace, from 2009-2011. She is active politically as treasurer of the National Women's Political Caucus and chair of Day on the Hill, a joint legislative day for several women's organizations on issues affecting Tennessee women and children. She has also been a speaker at the Nashville Women's March each year since 2017.

Zulfat Suara has been recognized with the FBI Directors' Community Leadership Award and featured in the Jackson Sun's Twenty Most Influential Women in West Tennessee. She was named the 2018 Muslim Policy Advocate of the Year by Islamic Society of North America, and The Tennessee Economic Council on Women inducted her into its Tennessee Women Hall of Fame in 2015. Zulfat recently received an award for Outstanding Service to Human Rights from the TN Human Rights Commission and currently serves as a board member of the Nashville Metro Action Commission.

Zulfat is married to her wonderful husband of 27 years, Dr. Rahaman Suara and they are blessed with five amazing children. Her work in the community has been selfless and humble as she has served only on a volunteer basis. Now, she hopes to continue that service as a member of Metro Council and make Davidson County a better place for all of Nashville.



# PRESENTERS



**ZAC OSWALD** is a graduate of Oklahoma State University and a 2013 cum laude graduate of University of Miami School of Law. While at law school, Zac also earned a Master of Music in Music Business and Entertainment Industries and acted as the Director of Business Affairs for Cat 5 Music Publishing. While awaiting his bar exam results, Zac worked as a grill cook at Chipotle and still cuts chicken faster than most Tennesseans.

Zac started at Legal Aid Society in 2014 as a Miami Legal Corps Fellow working in the Family Law Unit. Zac is the Managing Attorney of the Gallatin Office, practicing housing and consumer law. He is the Lead Attorney for the firm's Housing Practice Group.

Zac received the Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services's New Advocate of the Year award in 2016 and the Housing and Equality Alliance of TN's Fred Cloud & Tracey McCartney Award in 2022.

**KATIE OVALLE**, is a graduate of the University of Tennessee and Vanderbilt University Law School. After law school, she taught 1st grade with Metro Nashville Public Schools for five years.

Katie passed the February 2021 Tennessee Bar Exam and started working for the Nashville office of LAS in June. She is a member of the Housing, Consumer, and Home Retention Practice Groups.



**JACKIE PAUL SIMS** has served the Nashville community for the past eleven years as a community organizer and an activist. The majority of my work has been centered around justice and equity. This work is very intersectional in the lives of the persons we serve and requires the best of collaborative efforts. Affordable housing, homelessness, education, health disparities, environmental and criminal justice are all dire which makes it challenging to prioritize. It has been in the last 12 years that I have had to come to terms with how many of the inequities in community, are intentional. There really is no liberty and justice for all in America. I do however have hope the one day we can live up to our promise of equity and justice for all people.

My work in community was inspired and shaped by my training under Dr. James Lawson; so it's done through a spiritual lens. This is what provides me the endurance to press forward through all the many recent steps backward.



As one of the founding members of the grassroots organization, Democracy Nashville/ Democratic Communities, she has discovered my most impactful work has been that of guidance and instruction to new activist and communicating the importance of reminding grounded. Successes come more often when we set aside self and ambition and work in harmony with one another. That is one of our greater strengths. Criminal justice reforms is where we have realized meaningful success. The Ban the Box campaign and the creation of the Community Oversight Board were both important achievements for the people.

We continue to work with both public and private entities to seek solutions to harmful displacement triggered by aggressive development in indigenous communities.

Finally in an election year much attention will be paid to voter protection, looking for ways to offset voter suppression and educating the community in how to participate in the redistricting process. As organizers we would not prefer to find ourselves in another lawsuit against the state of TN.

# PRESENTERS



**JULIE YRIART** is the Executive Director and Attorney at the Tennessee Fair Housing Council in Nashville, Tennessee. Ms. Yriart regularly represents clients throughout the administrative Fair Housing complaint process before the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Tennessee Human Rights Commission. Prior to coming to the Tennessee Fair Housing Council, Ms. Yriart worked as a Supervising Attorney at The John Marshall Law School Veterans Legal Support Center & Clinic.

Julie Yriart is a graduate of the University of Illinois Chicago Law, formerly known as The John Marshall Law School, and is licensed to practice law in both Illinois and Tennessee. The Tennessee Fair Housing Council serves Tennesseans living in Cheatham, Davidson, Dickson, Montgomery, Rutherford, Sumner, Williamson, and Wilson counties.

Ms. Yriart is well versed in federal, state, and local housing laws and has received training from the National Fair Housing Alliance, The John Marshall Law School Fair Housing Center, and the National Legal Aid and Defender Association. In her spare time, Ms. Yriart likes to... she does not have spare time because she has three wonderful children, two dogs, and a husband that keep her excessively busy.

**JERRY HALL** is the ADA Manager and ADA Title II Coordinator for Metropolitan Government of Nashville & Davidson County. He is a Certified ADA Coordinator and has spent 34-years with Metro Government.

Jerry is a father and grandfather of loved ones with disabilities.

He holds a bachelor's degree in Occupational Safety and Health Administration.





# PRESENTERS



**DR. TROY D. WHITE** is the sixth executive director of the Metropolitan Development and Housing Agency (MDHA), the housing authority in Nashville and Davidson County, which employs nearly 350 staff members, has a budget of \$150 million and houses approximately 30,000 people, primarily through Housing Choice Vouchers and Project-Based Rental Assistance (PBRA). The Agency also owns and manages several mixed-income residential developments, and oversees a Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) program, which has helped create and preserve more than 5,500 affordable housing units in the city since its inception in 2016. In addition, MDHA administers federally-funded community development and homeless assistance programs on behalf of the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County. To foster urban growth, the Agency oversees 11 redevelopment districts and guides neighborhood and commercial development in the urban core. Prior to assuming the role of MDHA's executive director, Dr. White served as the director of housing authorities and market segment leader at Aprio, a national CPA and advisory services firm. During his time at Aprio, he was instrumental in the national expansion of the company's public and affordable housing group.

Dr. White also has more than 20 years of experience working at several housing authorities in cities such as Atlanta and Charlotte, where he held executive leadership positions and managed budgets in excess of \$315 million. He brings expertise in affordable housing development, finance, human services, economic development, compliance, community engagement, risk management, community development and facilities management. Dr. White earned his Doctor of Public Administration with distinction from Capella University, his Master of Business Administration in Finance from the University of Connecticut, and his Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from Southern Connecticut State University. His professional affiliations include: National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials - Morris Brown College Foundation – Board Member, Metro Action Commission – Board Member, Nashville Downtown Partnership – Board Member.

**ANGELA HUBBARD** In January 2022, Angela stepped into the role of Housing Director with the Metro Nashville Planning Department to establish the City's first Housing Division. In this role, she will lead the development of a long-term housing plan that aligns systems, partners, and resources to address Nashville's housing challenges and the creation of a housing data clearinghouse with public facing dashboards. She is committed to creative and innovative approaches that are resident centric and neighborhood appropriate and addressing long-standing housing inequity in Nashville. Prior to joining Metro, Angela had served as the Director of Economic and Community Development for the Greater Nashville Regional Council (GNRC) since September 2018. Her team worked on projects and initiatives to help increase economic prosperity and improve quality of life in communities throughout the 13-county, northern Middle Tennessee region. One of her first accomplishments was leading the creation of the Greater Nashville Qualified Opportunity Zones Network, which launched in April 2019. In 2021, Angela guided a major update to the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.



Beginning in 2007, Angela spent 10+ years with the Metropolitan Development and Housing Agency (MDHA) in a range of capacities from legal affairs to urban and community development. For the last 6 years of her tenure at MDHA, she was the Director of Community Development where her responsibilities included the administration and oversight of Federally-funded affordable housing, community development, disaster recovery, and homeless assistance grant programs for Nashville-Davidson County. She led the development of two Analyses of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice and two Consolidated Plans for Housing and Community Development on behalf of Metro Nashville as well as the establishment of the Nashville Promise Zone. Before MDHA, she worked for 10 years for the State of Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury as a legislative performance auditor.

Angela received a bachelor's degree in political science and a Master of Public Administration from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, where she currently serves as a UT Promise Mentor. She earned a J.D. from the Nashville School of Law and is admitted to the Tennessee Bar. Angela serves as the Vice Chair of the Tennessee Affordable Housing Coalition and is a member of the Tennessee Bar Association. She previously represented the Southeast Region as a Board Member of the National Community Development Association and served on the Nashville Next Housing Resource Team and Mayor John Cooper's Affordable Housing Task Force.

# **Fair Housing Summit Planning Committee**

Laura Brown- Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services

Lynn Cothren- Tennessee Human Rights Commission

Veronica McGraw- Tennessee Human Rights Commission

Zac Oswald- Legal Aid Society of Middle Tennessee and the Cumberland

Laura Swanson- Tennessee Housing Development Agency

Julie Yriart- Tennessee Fair Housing Council

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## **Special Thanks**

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

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Sir Speedy Printing

Menu Maker Catering & Events



Thank you for attending  
the Tennessee Human Rights Commission  
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Please complete and submit the evaluation form and  
return to the registration table

**Under the Fair Housing Act and the Tennessee Human Rights Act, it is unlawful to discriminate in the sale, rental, or financing of housing on the basis of the following protected classes:**

**Race  
Color  
Creed  
National Origin  
Religion  
Sex  
Disability  
Familial Status**



**Tennessee Human Rights Commission**

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