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REACT: Some SA Apartments Banning Tattoos

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It's against the law for landlords to discriminate based on the color of a person's skin. But can they reject you because of what's on your skin?

Some San Antonio apartment complexes are refusing to rent to people with tattoos and body piercings. News 4 WOAI Trouble Shooter Jaie Avila investigates the case of one couple who says that policy is unfair.

REACT: News 4 WOAI's Jaie Avila comments about how many of us have seen people with tattoos and body piercings and thought "wait until they try to get an office job, or worse yet, wait until they get older and start losing the battle with gravity." But should people be denied an apartment because of their 'body art'? Jaie wonders if this is a sign of things to come. [Click here to read more and tell us what you think about it.](#)



(Clear Channel)

Gilbert Carrillo thinks tattoos are an artform. He's been to tattoo conventions and one of his tattoos was featured in a magazine. "Ever since I was 18, to now, 25, bit by bit, covering up here, covering up there."

But last month, Carrillo's tattoos kept him and his wife, Melissa, from moving into an apartment complex called the Villas at Medical Center. "We liked the apartment, we brought them a check for the deposit and a check for the application fee," says Melissa.

Later, Gilbert went by to look at the apartment wearing a short sleeve shirt. The next day, the Carrillos were told they didn't qualify to live there, because the tattoos on Gilbert's arms violated the policy on personal appearance.

"For them to be so judgmental on a person's appearance, and for them to judge someone based on them having a tattoo is just ridiculous, you know," says Melissa.

The Carrillos were also upset that the manager refused to refund their full \$70 application fee. But mostly, they feel the policy is discriminatory.

So the Trouble Shooters went to the Villas at Medical Center to hear their side of it.

The manager, Daisy Salazar, said she wasn't allowed to talk to us. "We have our own lawyers, I can't speak

to anyone," said Salazar.

But we didn't give up. We contacted one of the owners of the apartments: A southern California doctor named Edward Frankel.

Frankel e-mailed us a statement saying his apartment complexes do, in fact, "reject prospective tenants who have... tattoos exposed on the neck, head, hands and wrists, or large tattoos that cover over 40% of the lower or upper arm."

Frankel says, "We do not discriminate. The above applies to persons of any race, color, gender, etc."

Frankel, and his partners, have purchased numerous upscale apartment complexes in San Antonio and Dallas, where they've also banned pierced eyebrows and tongues. Tenants can't have more than one nose piercing, or more than five earrings.

Local fair housing officials say the rules may be unusual, but they are not illegal.

"Refusing to rent to somebody because they have tattoos may be unfair, but it's not discrimination under the fair housing act, unless the tattoos are specific to the person's religion or national origin," says Sandy Tamez of the San Antonio Fair Housing Council.

After the Trouble Shooters started looking into the case, the apartment complex refunded the Carrillos' full application fee.

But the couple is still angry that a landlord would consider body art to be the mark of a bad tenant.

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