

# Housing bugs foreign students

by JOHN DVORAK  
Nebraskan Staff Writer

Edet Inyang, 27, a native of Nigeria who is studying management at the University of Nebraska, doesn't know when his case will come up in court.

He said that faulty pipes in his former apartment on 28th Street caused him to move after less than a week of residence there. A judge will decide whether his landlord

must refund the deposit Inyang made on the apartment.

The foreign student can't say any more about the case for fear of prejudicing the upcoming court proceedings. He has moved to a better apartment now, just a block from campus.

Problems like those Inyang encountered with his former landlord are not rare among foreign students living off campus, according to Ivan

Alphonse, one of NU's two foreign student advisors.

Another case is pending in court besides Inyang's. A student from India has had severe contractual disagreements with his landlord.

"We have a few real problems every year," Alphonse said. "The problems with racial discrimination always exist, but our greatest problems occur with contracts many students are asked to sign."

Apartment contracts are difficult enough for American students well-versed in the English language and the wily ways of some apartment landlords.

But for a student from Ghana, India or Brazil, who has just gotten off a bus or an airplane in Lincoln, the problems can cause endless heartache and trouble.

"Sometimes the landlords ask foreign students to 'sign on the dotted line and the apartment is yours,'" Alphonse

said. "The students are anxious to obtain a home, so they sign, sometimes without thinking."

Alphonse told of a case where one of NU's foreign students was shown a lovely, clean apartment, told to sign a contract, and then found to his dismay he had been rented another, less desirable place.

On occasion, foreign students have been asked for exorbitant deposits.

People don't realize the problems foreign students face in their attempt to line up off campus housing, according to Bachitarr Singh, president of the International Club.

Foreign students do not have the money for a townhouse in the Chateau le Fleur of Briarhurst. Often they don't even have a driver's license, so they must rent within walking distance of the campus. They generally have no friends in the city, so they have no real assistance in finding a place to live. Most have a working knowledge of English, but

sometimes that is not enough.

Some colleges and universities have community volunteers who help foreign students search out housing. Such arrangements, however, can become too paternalistic, Singh believes.

"It smacks too much of 'let me take you by the hand,'" Alphonse said. "By getting some heard knocks, the foreign student can learn a lot about Lincoln in a hurry."

"If he comes to us, we can help him," Alphonse added. "But you can do too much for a foreign student, who is a very intelligent person."

The foreign students who live in dormitories have things comparatively more easy than their compatriots off campus.

They are within a few blocks of all their classes, they needn't worry about electric bills, broken windows, holes in the ceilings or leaky toilets. Their meals are nutritious and regularly prepared. They can even have their bed linens laundered weekly.

Food is perhaps the greatest problem a foreign student in the dormitory encounters, said Singh, who used to live in a dorm. The cooking and taste are different, and some foreign students are vegetarians.

Housing rules are relaxed for foreign students in the dorms. They can move out of the dorm anytime if they have a good reason. They do not put down an advance deposit, since most are overseas until just before the beginning of school. Freshmen foreign students live off campus if they wish.

Other than the dormitories, there are only about a dozen living units on campus available to foreign students.

They are in two buildings, one at 1548 R Street, another at 1505 S Street, which have been purchased by the University and made available to foreign students with families.

Eventually the buildings will be torn down, according to Housing Officer Wayne L. Blue. For the time being they are rented out for about \$85 a month to foreign families.

Although the buildings are old, they have been renovated by the University and are well-painted, clean and livable.

Singh would like to see the University provide more on-campus housing for foreign students.

He is also a strong advocate of the host family program which he termed "one of the best things the foreign students office does."

Under that program, a Lincoln family "adopts" a foreign student who has just come to Lincoln. The student lives with them for the first few days of his stay, and they are available to help him when he moves into his own house. Singh still speaks glowingly of his relationship with his host family, even though he has been at the University for more than two years.

Singh agreed with Alphonse that spoon feeding is not the answer for a foreign student trying to find housing.

"Experience is the best experience," Singh said.



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