

Woman allegedly swindled out of home allowed to stay



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By [Paul Meincke](#)

July 28, 2009 (CHICAGO) -- A 75-year-old Chicago woman will be allowed to stay in her South Side home - at least for now. Lessie Town's bungalow is threatened by foreclosure.

Towns and others say she is the innocent victim of mortgage rescue fraud.

Lessie Towns will be able to stay - for now - in her South Side home of 40 years.

Four years ago, Ms Towns, who is 75, was facing foreclosure, and she signed what she thought was a refinancing agreement to keep her home. In reality, the papers she signed authorized the sale of her home.

"I know when you buy a house or sell a house, you have to sign attorney papers. I know that. I did not do that," said Lessie Towns.

Towns continued to live in what she thought was her home even though it had been sold, not once, but twice.

"Ms. Towns home was sold for a fraction of its value and the cost was jacked up and sold to another person and the person in the middle collected all that windfall. This was a classic mortgage rescue scheme," said Brent Adams, Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulations.

The state department of Finance and Professional regulation has taken disciplinary action against Oak Brook-based Trust One mortgage. Its President Paul Shelton declined today to talk on camera, but insists Ms Towns was never

mislead, that she most certainly had to have known she was selling her home, and that her signature on documents supports that. Towns' attorney says it was fraud.

"I think they understood that she doesn't understand certain terminology and they used that to their advantage to get what they wanted," said Sabrina Herrell, Towns' attorney.

Facing possible eviction, Lessie Towns won a small victory in court on Tuesday. The foreclosure action against her will continue, but she'll be allowed to stay in her home while she attempts to prove she did not know she was selling her home when she signed her name four years ago.

"I'm glad. I thank God for that...I told them I wouldn't leave. Because when you know you're right, you stand on that right, and I know I'm right," said Towns.

Ms. Towns still faces what her attorney concedes is a serious challenge. For Ms. Towns bears the burden of proving to the court that she didn't know she was selling her home.

No criminal charges have been filed in this case though the department of finance and professional regulation and the attorney general's office are investigating over a dozen similar cases involving the same lender.



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