

LATYSHA ODOM

Hello, my name is Latysha Odom. I am a 39-year-old single mother of four. I am so very grateful and thankful to be here and to be heard.

I am here to testify on my experience living in Heritage Heights in Griffin, Georgia. My kids and I moved to Heritage December 2019. As happy as we were to have our own place, it quickly turned into a nightmare, a constant nightmare.

It all started in January 2020. From 2020 to 2023, my bathroom ceiling leaked every few days. I did as I was supposed to, which was to call the office to put in a work order. Each time, the management company told me it wasn't a leak. They'd blame my upstairs neighbor, saying she was letting the toilet overflow or didn't have a shower curtain or shower mat and the kids were splashing water on the floor. None of those excuses made sense to me, because of how much water was leaking and how much damage it caused.

After constant leaks, my bathroom ceiling actually collapsed. This happened over and over, sometimes repeatedly in the same week. If it collapsed on a Friday and I called the emergency hotline, no one would show up until that Monday, so that leaves me and my children having to find somewhere to stay, since that was our only bathroom. The only thing the management company ever did was replace the ceiling panels, but that didn't actually fix the problem. When the ceiling would collapse, the debris would fall into the toilet and clog it. It would cover the tub and get all over the floor. One time my 6-year-old daughter had no choice but to relieve herself in the sink because the toilet was full of ceiling debris.

This has caused unbelievable trauma for me and my kids. To hear your child cry because they're scared to go to the bathroom by themselves—that makes me feel like less of a mom because my kids live in this environment. After making a complaint with the housing authority and nothing changed, I almost gave up.

In 2021, I contacted HUD, because I was told by the manager that they weren't going to continue to come change the ceiling tile. I was shocked, angry and hurt. So, I emailed customer service and told them, and they changed the tile, however it still wasn't fixed. I continue to deal with this even today. It's my new normal.

No one actually came and fixed my ceiling until 2023. After I found my angel, a local advocate named Sharon King, she helped me push for change. During this time, we dealt with intimidation, being lied to, and different men from the management company coming in and out of my apartment, and sometimes without my knowing because a key to my apartment was being circulated among staff like a hot plate of food.

Along with this issue comes the biggest problem, a roach infestation. My apartment has been infested for about 2, going on 3, years now. It's so bad that my kids and I never eat at the table in the kitchen due to roaches being everywhere. I can't leave any food out, even to fix our plates, because if I do, there will be roaches in our food. If I fix anything to drink, we have to cover our

cups and cans with a book or something heavy—otherwise bugs will get into our drinks. My youngest, two years old, does not want to go to the bathroom alone because of the roaches. It's been several times that I or my girls have been in the tub or shower and a roach would fall into the water.

When we are ready for bed, we all climb into my bed because my 6-year-old is afraid to sleep alone. Even being in my room is still scary, there have been times that roaches crawl onto the pillow we were using, under the sheets, the sides of the bed, the headboard, the walls, my dresser, and the TV. And because of this, I don't sleep. I'm afraid to move my mattress because I worry the roaches may have a colony underneath it. My 6-year-old falls asleep with her hands covering her ears.

I have asked several times for some type of extermination and all I've gotten is Pest Control spraying around the kitchen and bathroom. Whatever that spray is, it is not killing the roaches. I'm still killing all the roaches myself. It is to the point that the building now totally ignores me. They have not responded to me since December 2023 when I asked for a plan to kill the roaches. So instead, I do my own pest control. In the 4 years that I've lived in Heritage, what I've been shown is a lack of human compassion, and abuse of power. When will they be held accountable. When will it end. We deserve better.