



The City of New York
Department of Investigation

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SIX SECTION 8 APPLICANTS CHARGED WITH FABRICATING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE INCIDENTS

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation ("DOI"), announced today that six individuals are charged with filing fraudulent applications and forged police reports and court orders that falsely identified five of the defendants as victims of domestic violence in unsuccessful efforts to obtain Section 8 housing subsidies from the New York City Housing Authority ("NYCHA"). The Office of New York County District Attorney Robert M. Morgenthau is prosecuting the cases.

DOI Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn said, "Fabricating police reports and court orders to jump over others on a waiting list for housing assistance is a brazen abuse of the City's effort to protect crime victims. Had the charged hoaxes succeeded, they would have hurt families in need of these scarce housing subsidies. NYCHA is to be commended for recognizing and reporting the scam, and I thank the Manhattan District Attorney's Office for its diligence in our continuing combined efforts to deter housing fraud."

DOI's investigation began in May 2009, when a NYCHA Manager noticed similarities in the purported police reports and other documents submitted by several apparently unrelated applicants and reported the irregularities to DOI. Four of the six defendants were arrested during the summer; all six were indicted this month.

NYCHA's Section 8 housing program has a waiting list of over 130,000 applicants who are seeking a subsidy to reside in privately-owned apartments. Currently, NYCHA is only accepting Section 8 applications from three groups of individuals -- victims of domestic violence, referrals from the City's District Attorney's offices through the "Intimidated Witness Program," and referrals from the City Administration for Children's Services ("ACS") of individuals from the "Independent and Family Unification Programs."

Victims of domestic violence who apply for Section 8 housing with NYCHA must submit supporting documentation, such as an order of protection issued by the court, a police report or a hospital admission letter, and a letter indicating the individual has received victim advocacy services from a government agency, such as ACS or a District Attorney's office, or a private organization that assists domestic violence victims, such as Safe Horizon.

NERI GARCES, 44, of Yonkers, was arrested today. She is charged in an indictment with four counts of Criminal Possession of a Forged Instrument in the Second Degree, a class D felony, one count of Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree, a class E felony, and two counts of Criminal Possession of a Forged Instrument in the Third Degree, a class A misdemeanor. Upon conviction, a class D felony is punishable by up to seven years in prison, a class E felony by up to four years in prison, and a class A misdemeanor by up to a year's incarceration. Indictments have also been filed against five other defendants, named below.

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The five other defendants indicted as a result of this investigation are BARBARA GOSS, 52, of Manhattan; DESHANNA GRAHAM, 29, of the Bronx; SHANELLE REED, 28, of Queens; and two defendants, CHEVELLE RICHARDSON, 38, and her daughter, CHANDERA RICHARDSON, 20, both of the Bronx, who are charged together in one indictment. GOSS, GRAHAM, REED, CHEVELLE RICHARDSON and CHANDERA RICHARDSON were each charged with Criminal Possession of a Forged Instrument in the Second Degree, Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree, and Criminal Possession of a Forged Instrument in the Third Degree.

Three of the defendants, GOSS, CHEVELLE RICHARDSON, and CHANDERA RICHARDSON were arrested on July 1, 2009 and were later indicted. DOI's press release announcing their arrests can be viewed through the following link: http://www.nyc.gov/html/doi/pdf/pr64nycha_70209.pdf. REED was arrested on July 15, 2009 and later indicted. GRAHAM's arrest is pending.

The forged documents charged in the indictments include "Domestic Incident Reports" purportedly created by and filed with the New York City Police Department and Temporary Orders of Protection purportedly issued by and filed with the New York State courts. DOI's investigation found that the defendants knowingly submitted the charged forged documents and false Section 8 applications to NYCHA between June 2008 and March 2009.

Commissioner Gill Hearn thanked NYCHA Chairman John B. Rhea and New York County District Attorney Robert M. Morgenthau and their staffs for their assistance in this investigation.

The investigation was conducted by DOI's Acting Inspector General for NYCHA Kelvin Jeremiah and members of his staff, including Senior Deputy Inspector General Ralph Iannuzzi, Assistant Inspector General Suzanne Vitti, Chief Investigator John Reatz and Special Investigator Stephen Mattei.

The New York County District Attorney's Office is prosecuting the cases, which have been assigned to Senior Assistant District Attorney Stuart Silberg and Assistant District Attorney Albert Berry III.

Indictments are accusations. Defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

DOI is one of the oldest law-enforcement agencies in the country. The agency investigates and refers for prosecution City employees and contractors engaged in corrupt or fraudulent activities or unethical conduct. Investigations may involve any agency, officer, elected official or employee of the City, as well as those who do business with or receive benefits from the City.

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