



The City of New York
Department of Investigation

ROSE GILL HEARN
COMMISSIONER

80 MAIDEN LANE
NEW YORK, NY 10038
212-825-5900

Release # 33-2004
nyc.gov/html/doi

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
FRIDAY, JUNE 18, 2004

CONTACT: EMILY GEST
(212) 825-5931

DOI ARRESTS NINE FOR TRYING TO SCAM SECTION 8 RENT VOUCHERS
-- They allegedly pretended to live in the same apartment building--

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation (DOI), announced today the arrest of nine individuals who were involved in a fraudulent scheme to obtain Section 8 rent subsidies from the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD). A tenant in a City-owned building allegedly attempted to help nine others unlawfully obtain a rent voucher under the Section 8 program by letting them falsely claim they lived in the same apartment building. DOI investigators are seeking a tenth individual connected to the scheme.

The nine individuals arrested were PETRA GUTIERREZ, LATRICE KNIGHT, JOHN COLEMAN, NICHCOLE GUIONS, SHINIECE HOPKINS, SHARIA JENNINGS, DOROTHY JONES, MICHELE HENDRICKS and MICHELLE WALKER. The defendants were arrested over a period of three days this week, with the ninth defendant, GUTIERREZ, surrendering this morning. All have been charged with felony counts of Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree and Falsifying Business Records in the First Degree. If convicted, the defendants face a maximum of four years in prison.

DOI's investigation began after an HPD intake counselor reported encounters with nearly a dozen rent subsidy applicants who said they lived either at the same address or in the same three-bedroom apartment at 203 West 131st Street in Harlem. Investigators determined that the applicants in question were pretending to live in either DOROTHY JONES' 3-bedroom apartment or in her building in order to make themselves eligible for Section 8 rent vouchers. HPD's rent voucher program stipulates that applicants are residents of a City-owned property for one year before they can be considered for rent payments in non-City-owned buildings. None of the applicants would have qualified for the Section 8 rent voucher program because they did not live in City-owned buildings. Although JONES lived in the City-owned building, she does not receive Section 8 vouchers.

DOI Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn said, "The City will not be fooled into providing scarce subsidized housing to those who either don't need it or try to obtain it illegally. I congratulate the alert HPD caseworker who noticed and reported this attempt to defraud the City."

This investigation was conducted by Assistant Commissioner Vincent E. Green and members of his staff, including DOI First Deputy Inspector General Francis A. Sinatra and Confidential Investigator Joann Arweiler. The Office of Manhattan District Attorney Robert M. Morgenthau is handling the case and Assistant District Attorney Judy Salwen will prosecute.

Criminal complaints are merely an accusation. Defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

-More-

DEFENDANT INFORMATION:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| 1. JOHN COLEMAN, 38, Bronx | Falsifying Business Records 1 st Degree
Offering a False instrument for Filing 1 st Degree |
| 2. NICHCOLE GUIONS, 31, Bronx | Falsifying Business Records 1 st Degree
Offering a False Instrument for Filing 1 st Degree |
| 3. SHINIECE HOPKINS, 21, Bronx | Falsifying Business Records 1 st Degree
Offering a False Instrument for Filing 1 st Degree |
| 4. SHARIA JENNINGS, 22, Bronx | Falsifying business Records 1 st Degree
Offering a False Instrument for Filing 1 st Degree |
| 5. DOROTHY JONES, 58, Manhattan | Falsifying Business Records 1 st Degree |
| 6. MICHELLE WALKER, 57, Bronx | Falsifying Business Records 1 st Degree
Offering a False Instrument for Filing 1 st Degree |
| 7. MICHELE HENDRICKS, 21, Bronx | Falsifying Business Records 1 st Degree
Offering a False Instrument for Filing 1 st Degree |
| 8. PETRA GUTIERREZ, 27, Bronx | Falsifying Business Records 1 st Degree
Offering a False Instrument for Filing |
| 9. LATRICE KNIGHT, 22, Bronx | Falsifying Business Records 1 st Degree
Offering a False Instrument for Filing 1 st Degree |

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.

***Get the worms out of the Big Apple.
To report someone ripping off the city, call 311 or DOI directly at (212) 825-5959.***