



The City of New York
Department of Investigation

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DOI ARRESTS NINE PEOPLE IN TWO WELFARE SCAMS WORTH A TOTAL OF \$55,000
-- Three City employees involved --

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation (DOI), and PAUL BALUKAS, Inspector General for the New York State Office of the Welfare Inspector General, announced today the arrests of nine individuals who participated in two separate welfare scam rings that robbed the City of more than \$55,000 in welfare subsidies. This week's arrests involve a current and former City employee who disbursed a total of 88 public assistance grants to seven individuals who did not qualify for them. Those seven split their undeserved monies with the two men who issued the fraudulent welfare grants.

DOI's investigation of the first scheme, involving ADELAJA SOYEMI, a Job Opportunity Specialist assigned to HRA's Melrose Job Center in the Bronx, began after HRA shared with DOI an internal audit report indicating that a welfare recipient, EUGENIE ANTOINE, had received unusually large amounts of welfare grants. The internal audit report, also known as a single issue intercept report, is a corruption prevention measure developed jointly by DOI and HRA. It identifies clients who receive excessive welfare grants over a fixed period of time. In addition to the audit report, DOI received a complaint from an HRA employee at the Melrose Job Center that alleged SOYEMI had issued several unauthorized grants to ANTOINE so she could purchase furniture. Investigators determined that from December 2000 through July 2001, SOYEMI allegedly issued 30 fraudulent welfare grants worth more than \$26,000 to ANTOINE, DESHAWN PLUMMER and LINDA WHIRL. Each of the welfare grant recipients split their proceeds with SOYEMI.

The second scheme involves CHARLES MOORE, who resigned in June 2001 from his job as a Principal Administrative Associate at HRA's Brownsville Job Center in Brooklyn and now works as a conductor for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority/New York City Transit. DOI's investigation began after a former colleague of MOORE's reported that MOORE may have issued a fraudulent welfare grant to QUINTELLA BLOUNT. DOI investigators discovered that from November 2000 until May 2001, MOORE issued 58 fraudulent welfare grants worth \$28,887 to four clients: BLOUNT, MARTA ESPINAL, LEATRICE MOLETTE and SANDRA MCLEAN. Like SOYEMI's scheme, MOORE's clients gave him about one-half the value of each grant they received.

Both SOYEMI and MOORE were suspended upon their arrest. BLOUNT, who was not a City employee at the time of the scheme, is now a Caretaker at the New York City Housing Authority's Gowanus Houses in Brooklyn. She is currently out on leave and is expected to be suspended upon her return.

DOI Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn said, "Lying and cheating are not the way to receive public assistance. Instead of honestly asking for additional welfare benefits, these defendants engaged in cynical bids to line their own pockets with taxpayer's money. The City employees involved in these schemes manipulated these clients and should have known that their ruse would deprive others who might desperately need the financial boost from welfare grants."

Commissioner Gill Hearn also thanked Welfare Inspector General Paul Balukas, MTA Inspector General Matthew Sansverie, and HRA Commissioner Verna Eggleston for their assistance and cooperation in this investigation.

New York State Welfare Inspector General Balukas said, "When fraud happens from within an agency it is important that the agency review its internal controls to ensure that the vulnerability is fixed. Our office will continue to work with DOI to monitor the integrity of the social service programs of New York City."

Commissioner Eggleston said, "Maintaining the integrity of our work is our top priority. In the rare case where our integrity is compromised, we will continue to use every tool at our disposal and provide the information to appropriate agencies, in this case, the Department of Investigation."

These investigations were conducted by Benjamin Defibaugh, DOI's Inspector General for HRA, and members of his staff including Chief Investigator Frank DeLisi. Special assistance was provided by Chief Investigator Joseph Bucci of the New York State Office of the Welfare Inspector General. These cases are being prosecuted by the New York State Office of the Welfare Inspector General with Special Assistant Attorney General Joseph Burruano handling the cases.

DEFENDANTS:

Defendants numbered one through four were arrested today, and defendants numbered five through nine were arrested on Monday, November 15. If convicted, each defendant faces up to seven years in jail.

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| 1. ADELAJA SOYEMI, 48, Bronx | Issued 30 grants worth \$26,196
Grand Larceny in the Third Degree
Defrauding the Government
Official Misconduct |
| 2. LINDA WHIRL, 35, Bronx | Received 4 grants worth \$3,492
Grand Larceny in the Third Degree |
| 3. EUGENIE ANTOINE, 37, Bronx | Received 17 grants worth \$14,847
Grand Larceny in the Third Degree |
| 4. DESHAWN PLUMMER, 31, Bronx | Received 7 grants worth \$6,111
Grand Larceny in the Third Degree |
| 5. CHARLES MOORE, 41, Queens | Issued 58 grants worth \$28,887
Grand Larceny in the Third Degree
Defrauding the Government
Official Misconduct |
| 6. SANDRA MCLEAN, 43, Brooklyn | Received 14 grants worth \$7,493
Grand Larceny in the Third Degree |
| 7. QUNITELLA BLOUNT, 29, Brooklyn | Received 10 grants worth \$4,939
Grand Larceny in the Third Degree |
| 8. MARTA ESPINAL, 26, Brooklyn | Received 18 grants worth \$9,646
Grand Larceny in the Third Degree |
| 9. LEATRICE MOLETTE, 33, Brooklyn | Received 14 grants worth \$6,809
Grand Larceny in the Third Degree |

Criminal complaints are merely an accusation. 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.

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