



Department of Investigation *Press Release*

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DOI ARRESTS BROOKLYN COUPLE IN \$19K HOUSING FRAUD
-- Submitted Phony Documents To Qualify For Section 8 Housing Subsidies --
-- Applicant Claimed Battered Woman Status --

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner of the Department of Investigation (DOI), today announced the felony arrest of SANDRA CLARKE and JAVAN WAKEFIELD, a.k.a. FRANK OH, in a scheme to defraud the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA). CLARKE and WAKEFIELD illegally received a total of \$18,970 in rent subsidy benefits, from July 2000 to November 2001, by submitting fraudulent documents to NYCHA to support their applications as a Section 8 tenant and landlord, respectively.

In addition to managing 345 public housing developments for more than 535,000 tenants, NYCHA administers the Section 8 Leased Housing program, a federally-funded program providing government rent subsidies to nearly 75,000 needy families living in privately-owned dwellings. Since December 1994, because of the burgeoning number of pending Section 8 applications, NYCHA accepts new applications only in exigent circumstances, such as that the applicant is a victim of domestic violence, an intimidated witness, or homeless.

Commissioner Gill Hearn said, "This defendant falsely proclaimed herself a victim of domestic abuse, yet she herself was the abuser -- of a program designed to help real victims. With so many truly needy New Yorkers on long waiting lists for subsidized housing, the City will not allow itself, or its citizens, to be victimized by unscrupulous people who use shameful deceit to obtain benefits for which they are not entitled."

NYCHA's Inspector General began an investigation in September 2000, upon receiving an anonymous complaint alleging that WAKEFIELD was illegally receiving Section 8 landlord subsidy checks.

According to records maintained by NYCHA, CLARKE submitted an application to participate in the Section 8 program on November 8, 1999, citing exigent circumstances, claiming that she was a "battered woman." In support of her application, CLARKE submitted the following documents: a lease agreement for an apartment located at 89-42 184th Street in Queens, listing CLARKE as the tenant, and FRANK OH as the landlord; birth certificates and Social Security identification cards for 3 minor children purportedly living with her; employment verification records indicating that CLARKE worked as a receptionist at Technomind from 1993 - 1997, and earned an annual salary of \$15,000; a letter from Brooklyn-based Interfaith Medical Center, dated March 28, 1997, claiming that CLARKE had suffered injuries consistent with being a victim of domestic violence; and 4 letters written over a 3-year period, from April 1997 to October 2000, purportedly by a case

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manager with the "Victims Services Agency," indicating that CLARKE sought their services because she was an abuse victim.

CLARKE and WAKEFIELD, using the name and other personal identifying information of one FRANK OH, allegedly submitted other fraudulent documents to NYCHA to support CLARKE's application, including a notarized letter, dated May 25, 2000, purportedly signed by OH stating that he is the landlord for the apartment being rented by CLARKE; a form entitled "Additional Landlord Information," signed by FRANK OH on January 2, 2000, and by CLARKE on February 2, 2000; a "Lessors Disclosure for Lead Paint," signed by both OH and CLARKE on February 1, 2000; two pre-approval NYCHA inspection certificates, dated January 2, 2000 and February 29, 2000, and both signed by OH and CLARKE; an application for Section 8 subsidy as a landlord, purportedly signed by OH; and utility bills altered to reflect that OH was the landlord.

On May 1, 2000, CLARKE was accepted into the Section 8 program, and determined to be entitled to a monthly rent subsidy of \$980 -- increased on May 1, 2001, to \$1030, purportedly after CLARKE's "rent" had been raised. On July 1, 2000, NYCHA mailed the first of 16 rent subsidy checks, in the amount of \$2940, retroactive to May 1, to CLARKE's purported landlord, FRANK OH, at 273 Park Place in Brooklyn. NYCHA continued to send subsidy rent checks to OH until November 2001.

The investigation disclosed that all of the supporting documentation submitted to NYCHA by CLARKE -- including her claim that she was a victim of domestic abuse -- was fraudulent and contained false information. The investigation further revealed that CLARKE never lived at 89-42 184th Street, and WAKEFIELD, a.k.a FRANK OH, was not the true landlord of record for that address.

The investigation further revealed that 9 of the NYCHA checks payable to "FRANK OH" were endorsed by both FRANK OH and SANDRA CLARKE; 6 of the checks were endorsed solely in the name of OH; and 1 check was endorsed in the names of OH and JAVON WAKEFIELD.

CLARKE, 36, of 2585 Linden Boulevard and WAKEFIELD, 37, of 273 Park Place, both in Brooklyn, have been charged with the following crimes: Grand Larceny in the Third Degree and Criminal Possession of a Forged Instrument in the Second Degree (4 counts), both Class D felonies; Scheme to Defraud in the First Degree, Falsifying Business Records in the First Degree (32 counts), and Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree (32 counts), all Class E felonies; and Criminal Possession of a Forged Instrument in the Third Degree (28 counts) and Conspiracy in the Fifth Degree, both Class A misdemeanors. CLARKE has also been charged with Endangering the Welfare of a Child, a Class A misdemeanor. If convicted, each defendant faces up to 7 years in prison.

Commissioner Gill Hearn expressed her sincere appreciation to NYCHA's Leased Housing Department and to the Human Resources Administration (HRA), particularly Assistant Commissioner Peter Jenik, Deputy Assistant Director Alida Mattos, and Special Investigator Janice Taylor, of HRA's Bureau of Fraud Investigation, for their cooperation and assistance in the investigation.

The investigation was conducted by DOI Assistant Commissioner and NYCHA Inspector General Steven A. Pasichow and members of his staff, including Deputy Inspector General Steven Gruberger, Confidential Investigator Frank Carubia, and Investigative Attorney Karen Cohen.

The Office of Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown is prosecuting the case. Assistant District Attorney Christine Burke, of the DA's Economic Crimes Unit, is handling the matter.

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It should be noted that a criminal complaint is merely an accusation and the defendants are presumed innocent unless proven guilty.