



The City of New York  
Department of Investigation

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**FOUR INDIVIDUALS CHARGED IN \$79,000 HOUSING FRAUD**

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner of the Department of Investigation (DOI), announced today the arrest of four current and former residents in the New York City Housing Authority for fraudulently receiving more than \$79,000 in government rent subsidies for apartments in Washington Heights and Harlem.

Three Defendants -- ICELEAN LOCKWOOD, SHARON BARNES and EVET CEDREZ -- have been charged with filing false documents on which they allegedly concealed their income so that they could receive rent subsidies ranging from \$8,000 to \$12,000. If convicted, they each face up to five years in jail. The fourth defendant, EVITA DAWSON, who allegedly failed to inform NYCHA that she had moved from her Section 8 apartment so she could continue to collect a subsidy, has been charged with stealing \$46,000. If convicted, she faces up to ten years in jail.

These arrests are part of an ongoing Citywide crackdown by DOI and the local United States Attorneys and District Attorneys, that has, since 1995, resulted in the arrest of 284 residents--including 93 City, State and Federal employees--charged with stealing more that \$5.6 million in rent and welfare subsidies by hiding their income and assets from the City.

Since January 2003 alone, 26 individuals have been arrested for illegally receiving more than \$366,000 in government housing benefits by concealing their employment or household income from NYCHA. So far, 223 cases have resulted in convictions and nearly \$3.6 million in court-imposed restitution.

NYCHA manages 345 public developments which provide housing to more than 418,000 tenants. In addition, NYCHA administers a federally-funded leased housing program known as Section 8. Under that program, tenants living in privately-owned dwellings can receive a government rent subsidy. The program presently covers more than 83,000 families.

Commissioner Gill Hearn said, "The lesson these defendants and others would be wise to learn is that, with so many needy New Yorkers on long waiting lists for affordable public housing, the City will not be deceived into providing apartments to people who do not qualify for the scarce subsidized housing."

In today's cases, EVITA DAWSON, a NYCHA Section 8 tenant since 1989, allegedly failed to report that she had vacated her Harlem apartment prior to October 1999 and that she had additional sources of income that would make her ineligible for federal housing subsidies. As a result, NYCHA paid more than \$46,000 in rent subsidies on Dawson's behalf from February 1993 to October 1999. Dawson allegedly had claimed her only income

was a babysitting business. However, DOI investigators discovered she worked at St. Clare's Hospital in 1993 and moved to Stone Mountain, Georgia where she purchased a residence. From 1997 to 2000, Dawson worked at a variety of companies in Virginia and Georgia. She now lives in Maryland.

EVET CEDREZ, who has been a resident at NYCHA's Grant Houses in Harlem since 1984, allegedly failed to tell housing authorities that her husband resided with her and she did not report his salary. By making these false statements, her rent was reduced by \$11,614 from September 1998 to June 2002.

ICELEAN LOCKWOOD, a NYCHA tenant as well as a Section 8 landlord, has been charged with making false statements regarding her apartment in the Dyckman Houses in Washington Heights. Lockwood allegedly told NYCHA she received income only from her job at a day care center. She allegedly did not report that she and her husband owned property in the Bronx, from which they received rental subsidy payments on behalf of the tenant residing there. Lockwood used the rent subsidies garnered through her tenant to pay the mortgage on the property, which had been bequeathed to her, it was charged.

SHARON BARNES, a former NYCHA tenant at Audubon Houses in Washington Heights, has been charged with making false statements in her affidavits of income. Barnes allegedly underreported her income since at least 1993 and, as a result, she received \$12,429 in rent subsidies during the period of April 1996 to April 2001.

Commissioner Gill Hearn thanked NYCHA's Leased Housing and Borough Management Department.

The investigation was conducted by DOI Assistant Commissioner and NYCHA Inspector General Steven A. Pasichow and members of his staff, including Deputy Inspectors General Kevin Smith and Edward Glander, Assistant Inspectors General Bergia Telesford, and Special Investigators Louis Vega and Michael Wilk. Angela Stewart, Special Agent for the U.S Housing Authority Inspector General of Atlanta, also assisted with this investigation.

The Office of James B. Comey, U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York is prosecuting the cases. Assistant U.S. Attorney Christina Paglia Bischoff is handling the prosecutions.

**DEFENDANT INFORMATION:**

1. Evita Dawson, 37, of Baltimore, Maryland (\$ 46,901 in rent subsidies)
2. Icelean Lockwood, 62, of Washington Heights (\$8,675 in rent subsidies)
3. Sharon Barnes, 49, of Kearney, N.J., (\$12,429 in rent subsidies)
4. Evet Cedrez, 40, of Harlem (\$11,614 in rent subsidies)