



Department of Investigation

Press Release

Release # 010-2002

FRIDAY, MARCH 1, 2002

10 INDIVIDUALS -- INCLUDING SCHOOL SAFETY AGENT -- CHARGED IN \$250K BROOKLYN & STATEN ISLAND HOUSING AND WELFARE FRAUD

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner of the Department of Investigation (DOI), ROBERT M. MORGENTHAU, Manhattan District Attorney, and CHARLES J. HYNES, Brooklyn District Attorney, today announced that 10 public housing residents -- including an NYPD Public School Safety Agent -- have been charged with stealing a total of nearly \$250,000 in government benefits. The defendants allegedly lied about their employment or household income and thereby fraudulently received more than \$245,000 in subsidized housing benefits from the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA). One of the defendants has also been charged with illegally receiving more than \$3,000 in public assistance benefits by concealing her employment income from the New York City Human Resources Administration.

Commissioner Hearn and District Attorneys Hynes and Morgenthau said, "These arrests are part of an ongoing Citywide crackdown by DOI and the local district attorneys, which has since 1995 resulted in the arrest of 235 residents -- including 78 City, State and Federal employees -- charged with stealing over \$4.8 million in rent and welfare subsidies by hiding their income and assets from the City. Within the past 9 months alone, 52 individuals have been arrested for illegally receiving more than \$1 million in government housing benefits by concealing their employment or household income from NYCHA. So far, 174 cases have resulted in convictions and more than \$2.3 million in court-imposed restitution."

NYCHA manages 345 public housing developments providing shelter to more than 535,000 tenants. In addition, NYCHA administers the Section 8 Leased Housing program, a federally-funded program that provides government rent subsidies to nearly 75,000 needy families living in privately-owned dwellings.

Commissioner Hearn added, "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 simply not be duped into providing subsidized apartments to people who can well afford to pay more or even live elsewhere."

District Attorney Morgenthau said, "These arrests should send a clear message to those individuals who are not eligible for public housing and are involved in defrauding the system that they will get caught and prosecuted."

District Attorney Hynes said, "The filing of these charges should act as a deterrent to those individuals who

would deceive the City to 'qualify' for subsidized benefits, thereby depriving the truly needy of scarce public housing resources."

The 10 defendants charged today are accused of stealing a total of \$245,997 in public housing benefits from NYCHA by concealing their employment or their actual household income. Six (6) of the tenants lived in Section 8 apartments in Brooklyn, and were responsible for stealing, between May 1992 and October 2000, a total of \$167,000 in rent subsidies; the other 4 defendants lived in government-funded housing developments in Brooklyn and Staten Island and were responsible for stealing, between January 1993 and August 2000, a total of \$78,977. The 10 defendants illegally received rent subsidies ranging from \$2,184 to \$48,606. One of the Section 8 tenants, MARITZA SALVAT, has been charged additionally with stealing from the City's HRA, between October 1996 and December 1997, over \$3,000 in welfare subsidies by concealing her actual household income. The following are examples of the charged frauds:

REYNALDA ROMAN, an NYPD Public School Safety Agent, and her three children lived in a 5-room, Section 8 apartment at 80 Etna Street in the East New York section of Brooklyn from September 1995 to December 31, 1999, and a 5-room apartment located at 177 Chestnut Street, also in East New York, from March 1992 until September 1995. ROMAN has been charged with illegally obtaining over \$3,000 in Section 8 subsidies by concealing from NYCHA, between March 1993 and November 1999, the presence in the apartment of her husband -- who earned between \$22,184 and \$30,048 a year as an employee of Pitney Bowes, and later as a Correction Officer with the New York City Department of Correction. ROMAN falsely claimed to NYCHA that, between 1993 and 1999, her household consisted only of herself, and that her total household income ranged from \$6,456 to \$10,460 a year and was wholly derived from child support and her employment as a School Crossing Guard, the position she formerly held with the NYPD. ROMAN's rent share ranged from \$137 to \$237 a month, while the Section 8 program paid subsidies between \$406.75 and \$719.80 a month. In fact, ROMAN should have paid a rent share of between \$643.75 and \$856.80 a month.

YVONNE GAYLE, a Section 8 resident since March 1995 of a 4-room apartment in Brooklyn, has been charged with illegally obtaining \$3,000 in rent subsidies between March 1995 and October 2000, by failing to report to NYCHA her employment by, and income received from, Lauren & Associates, a temporary agency, and United Cerebral Palsy, where she worked as Nurse Educator. In addition, GAYLE was charged with concealing her husband's presence in her apartment, and the income, which ranged between \$16,000 and \$47,000, he received from his employment with Phoenix House, where he worked as a counselor, and IXL-New York Inc., a web site-building company where he worked as a Project Coordinator. GAYLE instead reported to NYCHA that her household income was derived wholly from public assistance benefits. Between 1995 and 2000, GAYLE's rent share ranged from \$22 to \$73 a month, while NYCHA paid rent subsidies ranging from \$619 to \$671 a month. In fact, Gayle should have paid a rent share of \$692 a month during that time period.

CASANDRA MORALES-SANABRIA, a recipient of public assistance, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and child support, and a resident, since March 1991, of a 4-room apartment at NYCHA's South Beach Houses in Staten Island, has been charged with illegally obtaining \$3,000 in rent subsidies by concealing from NYCHA, between August 1993 and August 2000, the presence in the apartment of her husband, who earned an annual salary of \$36,000 a year from his employment as a clerk with East New York Hardware. MORALES falsely claimed that her household consisted only of herself and her two children, and that her total household income ranged from \$5,136 to \$6,836 a year and was derived from welfare, social security benefits, and child support. Between 1993 and 2000, MORALES's rent share ranged from \$148 to \$179 a month, while NYCHA paid rent subsidies ranging from \$324 to \$358 a month. In fact, MORALES should have paid a rent share of \$495 a month, the maximum rent for an apartment of that size.

Another public assistance recipient, TAUNDR A GRIFFIN, had been a resident, and tenant of record, of a 4-room apartment at NYCHA's Albany Houses in Brooklyn from December 1981 until October 25, 1999. GRIFFIN was charged with illegally obtaining \$3,000 in rent subsidies by concealing from NYCHA, between January 1993 and December 1998, the presence in the apartment of her then-boyfriend, who earned between \$10,588 and \$62,700 a year as a construction worker with various construction companies. GRIFFIN falsely claimed that her household consisted only of herself and her son, and that her total household income ranged from \$4,368 to \$6,204 a year and was wholly derived from public assistance benefits. Between 1993 and 1998, GRIFFIN's rent share was fixed at \$145.75. In fact, GRIFFIN should have paid a rent share of \$495 a month, the maximum rent for an apartment of that size. GRIFFIN moved from Albany Houses after her husband purchased a nearby house for \$165,000.

ELIZABETH CRUZ, a public assistance and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipient, has been a resident since November 1991 of a 5-room apartment at NYCHA's Hope Gardens Houses in Brooklyn. She has been charged with illegally obtaining \$3,000 in rent subsidies between March 1994 to September 1999, by failing to report her SSI benefits to NYCHA. CRUZ falsely claimed to NYCHA that during the period between 1991 and 1999, her total household income ranged from \$430 to \$470 a month and was derived solely from public assistance. CRUZ's rent share ranged from \$97 to \$102 a month. In fact, CRUZ should have paid a rent share between \$183 and \$455 a month.

The defendants have been variously charged with Grand Larceny in the Third Degree, a Class D felony, punishable by up to 7 years in prison, and Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree, a Class E felony, punishable by up to 4 years in prison.

Commissioner Hearn and District Attorneys Morgenthau and Hynes expressed their sincere appreciation to NYCHA's Borough Management and Leased Housing Departments for their cooperation and assistance during the course of the investigation.

The investigation was conducted by DOI Assistant Commissioner and NYCHA Inspector General Steven A. Pasichow and members of his staff, including Deputy Inspectors General James Ernst, Edward Glander and Kevin Smith, Assistant Inspector General Bergia Telesford, and Confidential Investigators Christopher France, Alexandra Hampton, Haydee Urena, and Louis Vega. Assisting in the public assistance Fraud Case was HRA Deputy Commissioner Peter Jenik and HRA Investigator Sal Ippolito of the Bureau of Fraud Investigation.

The Manhattan prosecutions are being handled by Assistant District Attorneys John Han, Scott Ferber and Justin Shur, under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney Gary Fishman of District Attorney Morgenthau's Welfare Fraud Unit. The Brooklyn prosecutions are being handled by Assistant District Attorneys Dennis Ring, Michael Welch, Karen Turner and Peter Zanolin, under the supervision of Executive District Attorney Melissa Jackson of District Attorney Hynes' Rackets Bureau.

FOR INFORMATION CONTACT:

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DEFENDANT INFORMATION:

1. ELIZABETH CRUZ, 35, currently of 85-89 67th Street, Queens; formerly of 148 Palmetto Street, Brooklyn, (Brooklyn District Attorney's Office)

10 Individuals Including School Safety Agent Charged In \$250K Bklyn & SI Hsg & Welfare Fraud

2. CARLOS FILPO, 37, 448 Shephard Avenue, Brooklyn (Brooklyn District Attorney's Office)
- 3 . CORNELIA FILPO, 60, 448 Shephard Avenue, Brooklyn (Brooklyn District Attorney's Office)
4. YVONNE GAYLE, 37, of 365 St. Johns Place, Brooklyn (Brooklyn District Attorney's Office)
5. TAUNDR A GRIFFIN, 43, currently of 216 Albany Avenue, Brooklyn; formerly of 1008 St Marks Ave, Brooklyn (Manhattan District Attorney's Office)
6. CHARLES KALIKU, 37, 105-13 Glenwood Road, Brooklyn (Brooklyn District Attorney's Office)
7. CASANDRA MORALES-SANABRIA, 35, of 106 Kramer Street, Staten Island (Manhattan District Attorney's Office)
8. FATIMA PEDATO, 39, 1515 Jefferson Avenue, Brooklyn (Brooklyn District Attorney's Office)
9. REYNALDA ROMAN, 41, currently at 74-14 Rockaway Boulevard, Woodhaven, formerly of 80 Etna Street, Brooklyn (Manhattan District Attorney's Office)
10. MARITZA SALVAT, 38, currently at 8 Belmont Avenue, Paterson, New Jersey, formerly of 105 5th Avenue, Brooklyn (Brooklyn District Attorney's Office)