



Department of Investigation

Press Release

DISTRICT ATTORNEY - KINGS COUNTY

Welfare Worker Indicted For Receiving Welfare Benefits

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2000

October 19, 2000, Kings County District Attorney Charles J. Hynes and Department of Investigation Commissioner Edward J. Kuriansky announced today the arrest of, and the filing of an indictment against, a New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA), employee for falsely claiming welfare benefits while working for Calvin Klein, Inc.

A 32-Count indictment naming Cheryl Gilkes, 37 of Rosedale, Queens, was unsealed today in Supreme Court, Kings County, with the following charges: Welfare Fraud in the 3rd Degree (9 counts); Grand Larceny in the 3rd Degree (both D Felonies); Offering a False Instrument for filing in the 1st Degree (9 counts) (E Felony); Issuing a False Financial Statement (3 counts); Welfare Fraud in the 5th Degree (9 counts) and Petit Larceny (all A misdemeanors).

According to the indictment Gilkes, who was employed at an HRA Job/Income Support Center 215 Duffield St. Brooklyn, as an "Eligibility Specialist," (a position responsible for determining an applicant's entitlement to welfare benefits), applied for and received maternity leave from HRA. Gilkes then successfully filed for welfare benefits at an HRA Job/Income Support Center, a few blocks away, at 210 Livingston St., Brooklyn.

At the same time, and unbeknownst to HRA, Gilkes sought and obtained private employment through the Phoenix Search Group, Ltd. (a temporary employment agency), and was placed with Calvin Klein, Inc. at 350 Fifth Ave. as a computer specialist. She was paid, through Phoenix, a salary equivalent to \$60,346 per year.

"Here was a person who, obviously bright enough to be offered a valuable position with a major employer, chose to use her talents for unlawful manipulation, Hynes said. "What a waste".

"Public assistance is meant for the truly needy, not the greedy, DOI Commissioner Edward J. Kuriansky said. "Here, a City employee, whose very job it was to determine the eligibility of others for benefits, herself ripped off taxpayers for over \$17,000 in income maintenance, rent and food stamps she didn't deserve. Such contemptible conduct will not go unpunished."

The investigation disclosed that Gilkes, unlawfully, received public assistance benefits for income maintenance, rent and food stamps between January 20, 1998 and May 3, 2000 after she had provided caseworkers, with the false information about her employment, marital status and residence on an application,

"absent parent" questionnaire and "face-to-face" Recertifications.

Additionally, she submitted a number of false documents to support her claim, among them:

- An apartment lease listing her as the sole lessee (no spouse),
- A letter, purportedly written by her landlord, regarding her monthly rent cost,
- A letter, purportedly written by a computer training school in Bridgeport, Ct. regarding her fictitious enrollment in the school.

Gilkes continued to live with her husband who was employed by the city, in another agency, throughout the entire episode.

The investigation of Gilkes begin in June 1999, when DOI received a complaint that Gilkes had illegally received welfare payments while living in a Brooklyn household with her husband, also a city employee.

District Attorney Hynes commended the Department of Investigation, including DOI's Inspector General for HRA, Gerard Hoey, Assistant Inspector General Marion Hamilton and Confidential Investigators Angie Wells, Walter Hartman and Flora Newsome. Hynes and Kuriansky also expressed their appreciation to HRA Commissioner Jason A. Turner and members of his staff for their assistance and cooperation in the investigation.

The press and public are advised that this indictment is not evidence of guilt. It is the accusatory instrument by which criminal proceedings are commenced.

The case is being prosecuted by the District Attorney's Public Assistance Crimes Unit Chief Lauren Mack and Assistant District Attorney Soo-young Chang.