



The City of New York  
Department of Investigation

ROSE GILL HEARN  
COMMISSIONER

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NEW YORK, NY 10038

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**DOI ARRESTS MAN WHO TRIES TO STEAL HOMES FROM THE DEAD**  
**-- He tries to seize one home from rightful heirs by posting 'No trespassing' signs --**

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation (DOI), announced today the arrest of MESSIAH ALI BEY for allegedly filing fraudulent deeds with the NYC Department of Finance (DOF) for two unoccupied homes in the Bronx worth more than a total of \$570,000. The owners of both properties had died anywhere from one year to 69 years before BEY's attempts to transfer ownership.

BEY, 46, of the Bronx, will be charged with Grand Larceny in the Second Degree, Attempted Grand Larceny in the Second Degree, Criminal Possession of Stolen Property in the Third Degree, Criminal Possession of a Forged Instrument in the Second Degree, and Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree. If convicted, BEY faces up to seven years in prison.

DOI investigators determined that BEY attempted on three separate occasions to file fraudulent deeds for a two-family house worth more than \$340,000 at 1663 Unionport Road in the Bronx. In May 2003, BEY tried to file a deed with DOF's Bronx City Register's Office that transferred ownership of the Unionport Road home to himself. At the time, BEY mistakenly assumed that the property belonged to a woman named Elizabeth Cushing and tried to submit a forged deed indicating she had signed the deed to him. The paperwork was not accepted because the signatures were not notarized. Investigators later determined Cushing, whose full name was Margaret Elizabeth Cushing, died in September 1934. Even though the deed was not filed, BEY seized the property, began renovating the two-family house, changed the locks and posted a sign that read, "Private Property, Keep Off, No Trespassing." The rightful owners of the home at the time were the heirs of Ruth Jobson -- Cushing's granddaughter who had died in February 2003, three months before BEY seized the property. Jobson's heirs sued BEY in Bronx Civil Court and won. However, despite a judge's ruling in March 2004 that was in favor of Jobson's heirs, BEY attempted to file fraudulent deeds on the property twice more, in June and September 2004. On both occasions, the fraudulent deeds corrected BEY's earlier mistake and falsely stated that the property had been transferred from Jobson to BEY. Staff at DOF's Bronx City Register's Office intercepted these fraudulent deeds and immediately notified DOI. Jobson's heirs have since sold the home.

In April 2003, BEY attempted to gain ownership of a one-family home worth more than \$231,000 at 1117 Hoe Avenue in the Bronx, by filing a fraudulent deed that indicated the one of the owners, Hipolito or Maria Bermudez, or their son Wilke Bermudez had transferred ownership to him. However, Hipolito died in January 1985, his wife Maria died in January 1989 and their son Wilke died in December 1999. The documents alleged that both Hipolito and Maria Bermudez had signed the deed after their deaths.

Commissioner Gill Hearn said, "This defendant's avarice and unscrupulous conduct has caught up with him: His new home is now behind bars. I congratulate the alert City employees who notified DOI about the defendant's unlawful actions."

Commissioner Gill Hearn thanked the DOF Commissioner Martha E. Stark and her staff for their assistance and cooperation in the investigation.

The investigation was conducted by DOI Assistant Commissioner Vincent E. Green, and members of his staff, including Deputy Inspector General Maureen Lewis, and Acting Chief Investigator Belarminia Ortiz.

The Office of Bronx District Attorney Robert Johnson is prosecuting this case. Assistant District Attorney Ameenah Karim will prosecute under the supervision of Chief of Arson/Economic Crimes Bureau Richard O. Baker.

Criminal complaints are merely an accusation. Defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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

