



The City of New York
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BROOKLYN MAN CONCEALED HIS MOTHER'S DEATH FOR TWO YEARS
-- Collected \$14,800 in SSI funds from her bank account and lived in her \$175/month NYCHA apartment --

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner of the Department of Investigation (DOI), and EDWARD J. RYAN, Special Agent in Charge of the Office of the Inspector General of the New York Office of the Social Security Administration (SSA), announced today the arrest of JAMES BRYANT for allegedly defrauding both the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) and SSA of more than \$14,000 by concealing his mother's death and living on her housing and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits.

BRYANT, 44, of Brooklyn, has been charged with Grand Larceny in the Third Degree and Offering a False Instrument for Filing in First Degree. If convicted, he faces up to seven years in jail.

DOI Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn said, "Mr. BRYANT went to great lengths to defraud both NYCHA and SSA of benefits intended for his disabled mother. He has learned the hard way that housing scams don't work and aren't worth the effort that goes into them. Let this case be a warning to others considering similar schemes: DOI investigates these scams so that tax payers' money is not wasted and so that those who need and qualify for affordable public housing will receive it."

Using a computer program to match data in NYCHA tenant records with death certificates filed with the New York City Department of Health, DOI investigators discovered that someone was pretending that Eloise Monroe, the tenant of record of a 1-bedroom apartment in NYCHA's Pink Houses in East New York, Brooklyn had not died on July 3, 2000. Investigators discovered that BRYANT allegedly submitted documents to NYCHA to make it appear that Monroe, his mother, was still alive, living in her \$175/month apartment, and receiving SSI benefits. At one point, BRYANT told NYCHA personnel seeking to speak to his mother that she was away at a cousin's house. Before her death, Monroe was confined to a wheel chair and had suffered from a stroke. BRYANT was not entitled to remain in the apartment after his mother's death because he was an unauthorized tenant. This summer, DOI arrested 13 others for allegedly executing similar housing fraud schemes in which relatives or friends concealed the deaths of tenants of record.

DOI investigators also determined that three days before his mother's death, BRYANT obtained Power of Attorney over his mother's affairs, which included a bank account at Queens County Savings Bank in Flushing. BRYANT also allegedly concealed his mother's death from SSA, and used his Power of Attorney to withdraw her monthly SSI benefits, which ranged from \$599 to \$632/month and had been deposited into her bank account. Queens County Savings Bank video cameras captured BRYANT making the withdrawals. From August 2000 through July 2002, BRYANT withdrew \$14,847 of SSI funds. DOI shared its findings with SSA, which then ceased sending SSI to Monroe.

The investigation was conducted by DOI's Inspector General for NYCHA, Judith F. Abruzzo, and members of her staff, including Deputy Inspector General Kevin Smith and Acting Assistant Inspector General Rosemary Caruso; as well as by Special Agent Angel Rodriguez of the Inspector General's Office for the SSA and Detective Adrian Jones of the Kings County District Attorney Squad. Kings County Assistant District Attorney Steven Kramer will prosecute.

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

DOI is one of the oldest law-enforcement agencies in the country. The agency investigates and refers for prosecution City employees and contractors engaged in corrupt or fraudulent activities or unethical conduct. Investigations may involve any agency, officer, elected official or employee of the City, as well as those who do business with or receive benefits from the City.

Get the worms out of the Big Apple.
To report someone ripping off the city, call 311 or DOI directly at (212) 825-5959.