

## PRESS RELEASE

# Brooklyn-Based Ninedee Gang Member Sentenced to 145 Months' Imprisonment for Covid-19 Unemployment Benefits Fraud Scheme

Thursday, March 26, 2026

### For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Eastern District of New York

Darnell Jones, also known as "EJ," was sentenced today by United States District Judge Dora L. Irizarry in federal court in Brooklyn to 145 months' imprisonment for wire fraud conspiracy and aggravated identity theft. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, from March 2020 through August 2021, Jones used stolen personal identifying information to fraudulently obtain more than \$800,000 from federally funded unemployment insurance programs established under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. As part of the sentence, Jones was ordered to pay \$838,120 in restitution to the New York State Department of Labor. In addition, as part of his April 2025 guilty plea, Jones admitted to obtaining personal identifying information, including bank account information, between May 2021 and October 2024, to commit wire fraud with an intended loss of more than \$2.7 million.

Joseph Nocella, Jr., United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York; James C. Barnacle, Jr., Assistant Director in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, New York Field Office (FBI); and Jessica S. Tisch, Commissioner, New York City Police Department (NYPD), announced the sentence.

"Today's sentence demonstrates that those who defraud innocent victims and pilfer federal funds to support violent gangs will face severe punishment," stated United States Attorney Nocella. "To successfully dismantle violent gangs who terrorize our neighborhoods and communities, it is essential that we cut off their sources of income, including from fraud schemes like the one perpetrated by the defendant here."

Mr. Nocella also thanked the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of the Inspector General and the New York State Department of Labor, Office of Special Investigations for their assistance on the case.

"Darnell Jones, a Ninedee gang member, stole more than \$800,000 intended for unemployment benefit recipients to fund the enterprise's illicit operations and firearms procurement. Jones manipulated financial programs designed to support vulnerable

New Yorkers during a global pandemic just to unlawfully facilitate the gang's criminal activity. Alongside our law enforcement partners, the FBI will continue to stem any source of revenue supporting the viability of gangs plaguing our communities," stated FBI Assistant Director in Charge Barnacle.

"Darnell Jones stole more than \$800,000 in federal funds meant to help vulnerable New Yorkers during a global pandemic and used those funds to bankroll a violent gang," stated NYPD Commissioner Tisch. "Today's sentencing sends a clear message: anyone who steals from the government will face real consequences, and the NYPD will aggressively pursue anyone who seeks to defraud and victimize others. I am grateful to the NYPD investigators, the FBI, and the prosecutors at the U.S. Attorney's Office for their pursuit of justice in this case."

As set forth in court filings in connection with sentencing, Jones is a member of the Ninedee Gang, a violent criminal enterprise operating out of the Louis H. Pink Houses in East New York, Brooklyn. Ninedee Gang members were affiliated with the "5" and "6" Pink Houses apartment buildings and engaged in gang-related violence within and outside of the New York City Housing Authority complex. The Ninedee Gang protected its turf through violence, made money by selling drugs and committing fraud, and sought to silence those they perceived to be working with law enforcement.

Jones led the Ninedee Gang's fraud schemes, also known as "scamming," and worked with other members to earn money for the gang through check fraud, postal money order fraud, and unemployment benefits fraud. For example, beginning in approximately November 2020, Jones sent a co-conspirator text messages containing the names of 10 New York residents in order to obtain personally identifiable information (PII) for those individuals without their knowledge. The co-conspirator sent Jones the requested individuals' dates of birth, Social Security numbers, and driver's license numbers. In exchange, Jones paid the co-conspirator with cryptocurrency. Subsequently, Jones submitted fraudulent claims for unemployment insurance benefits to the New York State Department of Labor using the stolen PII. As set forth in court filings and as established at the trial of Ninedee Gang leader Maliek Miller, text messages in 2020 showed that Jones coordinated with fellow Ninedee Gang member Kevin Wint about pooling their money to purchase "glicks" or "plates," which are references to firearms. Notably, in August 2021, law enforcement agents recovered two firearms, which were outfitted with laser sights, in a residence shared by Jones and Wint.

Eight Ninedee Gang members have been prosecuted for their gang-affiliated crimes, which included the prosecution of seven Ninedee members for their roles in the July

2020 murder in-aid-of-racketeering of Shatavia Walls. Seven Ninedee defendants have pleaded guilty and an eighth, Maliek Miller, was convicted at trial in June 2024 and faces a mandatory life sentence.

The government's case is being handled by the Office's Organized Crime and Gang Section. Assistant United States Attorneys Emily J. Dean and Irisa Chen are in charge of the prosecution with the assistance of Paralegal Specialists Elizabeth Reed and Marlane Bosler.

**The Defendant:**

DARNELL JONES (also known as "EJ")  
Age: 31  
Brooklyn, New York

E.D.N.Y. Docket No. 24-CR-369 (DLI)

**Defendant Convicted at Trial:**

MALIEK MILLER  
Age: 32  
Brooklyn, New York

**Defendants Who Previously Pled Guilty:**

QUINTIN GREEN (also known as "Wild Child")  
Age: 25  
Brooklyn, New York

JOE SANTANA (also known as "Baby Joe")  
Age: 21  
Brooklyn, New York

Chayanne fernandez (also known as "White Boy")  
Age: 25  
Brooklyn, New York

KEVIN WINT (also known as "Kev G")  
Age: 32  
Brooklyn, New York

SHAKUR BEY (also known as "Speedy")

Age: 28

Brooklyn, New York

E.D.N.Y. Docket No. 20-CR-331 (LDH)

RAQUEL DUNTON (aka "Rah")

Age: 39

Brooklyn, New York

E.D.N.Y. Docket No 24-CR-344 (LDH)

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