

Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Central District of California

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, May 17, 2022

Woman Serving Life Prison Sentence Allegedly Led Ring that Used Stolen Identities to Apply for Pandemic Unemployment Benefits

LOS ANGELES – Federal authorities today arrested five people linked to a ring that allegedly obtained at least \$2 million in California unemployment insurance (UI) benefits – mostly pandemic-related relief – by using stolen identities, some of which belonged to California prison inmates.

The arrests were made pursuant to a 39-count indictment that charges 13 defendants in a scheme to use misappropriated personal identifying information (PII) to fraudulently apply for, and receive, unemployment benefits, mostly during the second half of 2020.

The lead defendant in the case is Natalie Le Demola, 37, who is currently serving a life prison sentence after she was convicted in 2005 of first-degree murder. The indictment also charges Carleisha Neosha Plummer, 32, of Los Angeles, who was a close associate of Demola in prison until she was paroled in July 2020.

The indictment charges all 13 defendants with conspiracy to commit wire fraud and bank fraud. The conspiracy count alleges 150 overt acts, including illegally obtaining PII, some of which was provided by an unnamed prison official employed by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

The indictment names various defendants in 31 bank fraud counts and seven aggravated identity theft counts.

Demola, Plummer and other co-conspirators “would acquire the PII, such as the names, dates of birth, and Social Security numbers, of individuals, including identity theft victims, who were not eligible for UI benefits, including pandemic benefits, because they were employed, retired, or incarcerated,” the indictment alleges. Members of the conspiracy then allegedly used the information to make fraudulent online applications for UI benefits from the California Employment Development Department (EDD). Once the applications were approved, members of the conspiracy received EDD-funded debit that allowed them to withdraw money from ATMs across Southern California, according to the indictment.

The defendants named in the indictment are:

- Demola, originally of Corona, who will be brought to federal court to face the charges in this case;
- Plummer, 32, of Los Angeles, who was arrested today;
- Khanshanda King, 31, of Los Angeles, who is still being sought;
- Cleshay Johnson II, 28, of Los Angeles, who is still being sought;
- James Antonio Johnson, who has several aliases including “Big Dawg Niddy,” 31, of Los Angeles, who is currently in custody in a Los Angeles County jail;
- Felicite Aleisha King, 41, of Los Angeles, who is still being sought;

- Shafequah Lynete Mitchell, 33, of Los Angeles, who is currently traveling outside of California;
- Loresha Shamone Davis, 31, of Moreno Valley, who was arrested today;
- Porsha Latrice Johnson, 32, of Lynwood, who was arrested today;
- Donisha Lashawn Pace, 38, of South Los Angeles, who was arrested today;
- Dominique Charmone Martin, 37, of Yucaipa, who is still being sought;
- Mykara Destiny Robertson, 23, of Los Angeles, who is still being sought; and
- Amber Jane Wade, 34, of Palmdale, who was arrested today.

Those arrested today are being arraigned this afternoon in United States District Court in Los Angeles.

The conspiracy and bank fraud charges each carry a statutory maximum sentence of 30 years in federal prison. Aggravated identity theft carries a mandatory two-year consecutive sentence.

An indictment contains allegations that a defendant has committed a crime. Every defendant is presumed to be innocent until and unless proven guilty in court.

The investigation into this scheme was conducted by the Los Angeles El Camino Real Financial Crimes Task Force, a multi-agency task force led by Homeland Security Investigations that includes federal and state investigators who are focused on financial crimes in Southern California. The California Employment Development Department, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, the United States Department of Labor – Office of Inspector General, the Inglewood Police Department, and the United States Marshals Service participated in this investigation.

Assistant United States Attorney Gregory Bernstein of the Major Frauds Section is prosecuting this case.

Topic(s):
Financial Fraud
Identity Theft

Component(s):
[USAO - California, Central](#)

Contact:
Thom Mrozek Director of Media Relations
thom.mrozek@usdoj.gov (213) 894-6947

Press Release Number:
22-096