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COUPLE INDICTED FOR SEX TRAFFICKING TEENAGE GIRL

*Defendants Allegedly Set Up Sex Dates for Victim and Collected the Cash;
The Accused Face Up to 25 Years in Prison if Convicted*

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced today that Jamael “Tiny Biz” Whittingham and Shaneya “China” James have been indicted by a Queens County grand jury and arraigned in Supreme Court on sex trafficking of a child, promoting prostitution and other crimes. The couple allegedly arranged for strangers to have sex with the minor in Queens, New Jersey and North Carolina throughout November of 2020. Despite promising the 16-year-old victim that she would earn large sums of money, the defendants kept the money for themselves.

District Attorney Katz said, “As alleged, the two defendants in this case used a teenager below the age of consent to enrich themselves by pushing her to earn at least \$500 a day having sex with strangers. The female defendant has been transported back to New York after fleeing the state and the male defendant was recently apprehended here in Queens. Sadly, this is yet another example of why I created a Human Trafficking Bureau when I became DA.”

Whittingham, 32, of Queens, New York was apprehended on June 15, 2021 after being found in a hotel in Queens. The defendant was arraigned on Thursday, June 17, 2021, before Queens Supreme Court Justice Peter Vallone on an eight-count indictment charging them with sex trafficking of a child, sex trafficking, compelling prostitution, promoting prostitution in the second degree and endangering the welfare of a child.

Defendant James, 34, of Manhattan, New York became aware of a warrant for her arrest and fled the jurisdiction. She was found in Annapolis, Maryland, where she was taken into custody. James waived extradition and was returned to New York to face charges. She was arraigned on the same indictment today before Justice Vallone. Justice Vallone set the return date for both defendants on July 21, 2021. If convicted, Whittingham and James each face up to 25 years in prison.

As alleged, defendant James met the 16-year-old girl in early November 2020 and promised she could make a lot of money if they worked as a team with Whittingham. James bought the teenager clothes, shoes and a phone and arranged for the girl to meet with customers in New Jersey for sex in exchange for cash. Around November 16th, James allegedly took the girl to the JFK Inn Hotel in Jamaica and booked a room to use for sexual encounters.

According to the charges, the victim - who was urged to earn no less than \$500 a day – had sex with strangers for cash that she turned over to James. She was repeatedly told she had to make more money and if she resisted the pair refused to give her food.

Furthermore, per the charges, around November 25th, the victim was taken to North Carolina by the defendants, and made to work in motels there. After several days, she told the defendants she no longer wanted to prostitute herself, but they allegedly replied that she owed them money and had to continue. She was eventually brought back and dropped off on a street in East New York, Brooklyn.

The investigation was conducted by Detective Joannie Colon, under the supervision of New York City Police Department’s Vice Enforcement Human Trafficking Division, under the supervision of Sergeant Pete Duplessis, Lieutenant Amy Capogna, Captain Thomas Milano and under the overall supervision of Inspector Fenando Guimaraes.

Assistant District Attorney Jason Trager, a Supervisor in the District Attorney’s Human Trafficking Bureau, is prosecuting the case, under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney Jessica Melton, Bureau Chief, and under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Gerard A. Brave.

Criminal complaints and indictments are accusations. A defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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