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SERIAL SHOPLIFTER CHARGED WITH STEALING \$170,000 WORTH OF JEWELRY

Five Queens Stores Hit From December to February Alone
DNA Evidence Linked Defendant to Another Robbery In 2021

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced that Aaron Smalls was arraigned on charges of grand larceny and other crimes for stealing expensive pieces of jewelry from stores throughout Queens. The defendant allegedly hit six shops between December 2023 and February 2024, stealing merchandise valued at more than \$50,000. DNA evidence tied Smalls to another theft of gold chains worth \$120,000 in 2021.

District Attorney Katz said: “The defendant is accused of preying upon local jewelry stores by committing brazen thefts that go back to 2021. My office is committed to addressing the issue of serial shoplifters who disproportionately contribute to retail thefts across the borough. Ensuring the safety of our store owners, their employees, and customers is essential to a vibrant economy. We can never lose sight of the fact that communities thrive when local businesses thrive.”

Smalls, 39, of Wandell Avenue on Staten Island, was arraigned last night on charges of grand larceny in the second and fourth degrees and four counts of grand larceny in the third degree. He was also arraigned on a separate complaint charging him with robbery in the third degree, attempted assault in the second degree and two counts of grand larceny in the fourth degree for allegedly punching a man and stealing his bank card on August 3, 2021, in Corona.

Smalls faces up to 15 years in prison if convicted. Queens Criminal Court Judge Diego Friere ordered him to return to court on May 13.

According to the charges, Smalls’ practice was to ask a jewelry store clerk to see an expensive piece held in a security case. Immediately upon being handed the merchandise, he would run out of the store, stolen property in hand. Smalls is accused of using this tactic to steal:

- Two gold chains worth approximately \$4,369, from HR Gold and Diamond Inc. on Roosevelt Avenue in Jackson Heights on December 14, 2023, at approximately 3:50 p.m.
- One gold chain worth approximately \$2,400, from Queens Pawn & Jewelry on Roosevelt Avenue in Elmhurst on December 21, 2023, at approximately 3:13 p.m.

- A gold chain with a large pendant bearing the image of Jesus, worth approximately \$20,000, from Gold Tower USA Inc. on Junction Boulevard in Corona on December 28, 2023, at approximately 5:15 p.m.
- A gold chain and a bracelet, together worth approximately \$17,000, from Zales on Steinway Street in Astoria on January 1, at approximately 3:30 p.m.
- Two gold chains worth approximately \$9,000 from Prime Jewelers on Jamaica Avenue in Woodhaven on February 6, at approximately 1:38 p.m.
- Twenty-five gold chains worth approximately \$120,000 from Simon and Son Jewelers on 63rd Drive in Rego Park on September 26, 2021. Smalls was linked to this theft following DNA that was recovered from a sweat-stained hat he left behind upon fleeing the store.

Smalls was apprehended on May 8 at the Woodside Motel on Queens Boulevard by members of the Queens Warrant Squad led by Detective William Dugan, under the supervision of Sergeant Kyle Hurst and under the overall supervision of Captain Erick Erdaide.

The investigation was conducted by Detective William Dugan of the Queens Grand Larceny Squad under the supervision of Lieutenant Michael Mongan, under the direction of the Crimes Against Persons Unit Commanding Officer Inspector Scott Henry. Members of the 102nd, 109th, 110th, 114th and 115th Precincts provided crucial assistance in this case.

Senior Assistant District Attorney Catherine Jahn of the District Attorney's Major Economic Crimes Bureau is prosecuting the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Mary Lowenburg, Bureau Chief, Catherine C. Kane, Senior Deputy Bureau Chief, Jonathan Scharf, Deputy Bureau Chief, and under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Gerard Brave.

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