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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2024

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SQUATTER WHO ILLEGALLY OCCUPIED JAMAICA HOME AND PROVIDED FORGED DOCUMENTS TO AUTHORITIES PLEADS GUILTY

*Defendant Trespassed onto Vacant Property in February and Later Took Homeowner to Civil Court with Forged Lease Paperwork;
Must Pay Restitution as Part of Plea*

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced that Lance White-Hunt has pleaded guilty to identity theft, offering a false instrument for filing and tampering with physical evidence after illegally occupying a home in Jamaica and forging leasing documents to stake his claim to the property as a legal tenant. As part of the plea, the defendant is expected to pay restitution to cover the victim's attorney fees for a civil suit he brought against the rightful owner and her broker.

District Attorney Katz said: "Our first priority with squatters is to get trespassers out of the home. This squatter's actions were especially egregious as he brazenly took the legal homeowner to court as part of his bogus claim as a tenant. We have not only held the defendant accountable, but have also secured restitution for the victim who had to spend a hefty sum on legal fees and home repair because of the defendant's actions. My office is committed to protecting property owners from fraud, scams and criminal trespass in Queens."

White-Hunt, 24, of 18th Street in Brooklyn, pleaded guilty yesterday to identity theft in the first degree, offering a false instrument for filing in the first degree and tampering with physical evidence.

Supreme Court Justice Toni Cimino ordered the defendant to return to court on November 6 when he is expected to be sentenced to five years' probation, 20 days of community service and he must pay \$3,900 in restitution.

According to the charges:

- On or about February 23, 2024, the owner of a home on Lakewood Avenue in Jamaica listed it for rent through a broker at Top Nest Properties.
- For several weeks, the broker visited the location multiple times a week and observed the entire house to be vacant, all the windows closed and undamaged, and the two front doors locked. She also had a functioning key for the two front doors.

- On March 1, 2024, the broker made a regularly scheduled stop at the property and observed that the locks had been changed on the front door leading to the studio unit of the residence and her key no longer worked.
- On March 4, 2024, the broker arrived at the residence and observed that the locks had been changed on the front door leading to the upstairs unit. She also observed White-Hunt inside the residence.
- The police were called to the home and White-Hunt said he had been staying at the location since January. He provided a purported lease with the broker and Top Nest Properties listed as the landlords.
- The broker reviewed the lease and determined that she had never seen the document and that her signature on it was forged. The broker's statements were corroborated by the owner of Top Nest Properties.
- On March 5, 2024, the police arrived at the location again and White-Hunt provided a bill from National Grid and AT&T as purported proof of residence. Both companies later confirmed that the provided account numbers did not exist in their official records.
- On March 14, 2024, White-Hunt filed a lawsuit against the homeowner's LLC, the broker, and Top Nest Properties for an illegal lockout. As part of the civil suit, White-Hunt filed a residential lease that was determined to have been forged and the document was a different lease than that provided by the defendant to officers on scene on March 4, 2024. The civil lawsuit was later discontinued with prejudice.
- Following an investigation into the matter by the District Attorney's office, White-Hunt was arrested on May 13 at his place of residence by members of the District Attorney's Detective Bureau.

The investigation was conducted with the assistance of NYPD Sergeant Benjamin Aboagye of the 103rd Precinct.

Assistant District Attorney Rachel Stein, Deputy Bureau Chief of the District Attorney's Housing and Worker Protection Bureau, is prosecuting the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney William Jorgenson, Bureau Chief, and Assistant District Attorney Christina Hanophy, Senior Deputy Bureau Chief, and under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Gerard A. Brave.

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