

**PRESS RELEASE**

# **South Los Angeles Woman Pleads Guilty to Scheming with Others to Use Stolen Identities to Fraudulently Obtain COVID Jobless Benefits**

Monday, April 24, 2023

**For Immediate Release**

U.S. Attorney's Office, Central District of California

*LOS ANGELES* – The final defendant in a conspiracy – led by a woman serving a life sentence for murder – that used stolen identities of California prison inmates and others to fraudulently obtain at least \$993,181 in state unemployment insurance (UI) benefits pleaded guilty today to a federal criminal charge.

Mykara Destiny Robinson, 24, of Los Angeles, who was charged under the incorrect name of "Mykara Destiny Robertson," pleaded guilty today to one count of bank fraud.

Robinson is the 13th and final defendant to plead guilty in this case, whose lead defendants are Natalie Le Demola, 38, originally of Corona and who currently is serving a life prison sentence after she was convicted in 2005 of first-degree murder, and Carleisha Neosha Plummer, 33, of Los Angeles, a close prison associate of Demola's until her parole in July 2020.

The case's other defendants are:

- Khanshanda Eugenea King, 32, of Los Angeles;
- Cleshay Johnson, II, 29, of Los Angeles;
- James Antonio Johnson, 32, of Los Angeles;
- Felicite Aleisha King, 42, of Los Angeles;
- Shafequah Lynete Mitchell, 34, of Los Angeles;
- Loresha Shamone Davis, 32, of Moreno Valley;

- Porsha Latrice Johnson, 33, of Lynwood;
- Donisha Lashawn Pace, 39, of South Los Angeles;
- Dominique Charmone Martin, 38, of Yucaipa; and
- Amber Jane Wade, 35 of Palmdale.

Demola, Plummer, and other co-conspirators “would acquire the personal identifying information (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,” according to a 39-count [indictment returned in May 2022](#).

Members of the conspiracy then 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 cards that allowed them to withdraw money from ATMs across Southern California.

According to Robinson’s plea agreement, the conspiracy began in June 2020 and Robinson joined it two months later. Robinson and other members of the conspiracy assumed the identities of California prison inmates and used EDD debit cards issued in their names to make fraudulent cash withdrawals of UI benefits, including pandemic benefits, from Bank of America ATMs in Los Angeles County.

As to Robinson specifically, from August 2020 to October 2020, Robinson and her co-conspirators used 10 debit cards to withdraw a total of approximately \$68,742 in fraudulently obtained EDD funds from ATMs in Southern California. But, in total during the scheme, Robinson and other co-conspirators withdrew at least \$993,181 in EDD funds from approximately 151 fraudulent accounts.

United States District Judge John F. Walter scheduled a July 3 sentencing hearing for Robinson, at which time she will face a statutory maximum sentence of 30 years in federal prison.

Demola pleaded guilty on March 7 to one count of conspiracy to commit wire fraud and bank fraud, three counts of bank fraud, and one count of aggravated identity theft. She faces a statutory maximum sentence of 30 years on the conspiracy and bank fraud counts, and a mandatory two-year consecutive sentence for the aggravated identity theft count, at her July 10 sentencing hearing.

Plummer pleaded guilty on April 17 to one count of conspiracy to commit wire fraud and bank fraud, and one count of aggravated identity theft. She faces up to 32 years in federal prison at her July 14 sentencing hearing.

The case's other defendants have pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit wire and bank fraud, bank fraud, and/or aggravated identity theft based on their respective roles within the scheme. Most defendants will face a statutory maximum sentence of 30 years in federal prison.

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 David C. Lachman of the Terrorism and Export Crimes Section and Assistant United States Attorney Nisha Chandran of the Cyber and Intellectual Property Crimes Section are prosecuting this case.

Anyone with information about allegations of fraud involving COVID-19 can report it by calling the Department of Justice's National Center for Disaster Fraud Hotline at (866) 720-5721 or via the NCDF Web Complaint Form at: <https://www.justice.gov/disaster-fraud/ncdf-disaster-complaint-form>.

## Contact

Ciaran McEvoy  
Public Information Officer  
[ciaran.mcevoy@usdoj.gov](mailto:ciaran.mcevoy@usdoj.gov)  
(213) 894-4465

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