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For Immediate Release

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**QUEENS WOMAN INDICTED IN IMMIGRATION SCAM THAT STOLE \$73,000
FROM BRONXITES OF CARIBBEAN DESCENT
Defendant Allegedly Posed as an Attorney;
\$425,000, Thousands of Applications Recovered in Her Home**

Bronx District Attorney Darcel D. Clark today announced that a Queens woman has been indicted for defrauding ten people out of \$73,000 by promising to improve their immigration status.

District Attorney Clark said, “The defendant allegedly preyed upon vulnerable members of our undocumented community--men and women who were simply seeking to legally work and provide for their families. The defendant’s alleged exploitation turned their American dreams into a nightmare.”

Homeland Security Investigations New York (HSI) Special Agent in Charge Ivan J. Arvelo said “As alleged, Windella Sanderson Wells posed as an attorney and targeted a growing number of Caribbean victims, whom she deceived into paying thousands of dollars for services that were never rendered as promised. The defendant is accused of joining a growing population of criminals committing what has been dubbed a ‘dream scam.’ She allegedly preyed upon individuals who were seeking to legitimately undergo the immigration process, and in turn exploited their pursuits of the American dream. HSI New York’s Document and Benefit Fraud Task Force is unwavering in its dedication to protecting all New Yorkers, especially the most vulnerable.”

District Attorney Clark said the defendant, Windella Sanderson Wells, 54, of Hollis, Queens, was arraigned today before Bronx Supreme Court Justice Raymond Bruce on a 44-count indictment charging first-degree Scheme to Defraud, second-degree Grand Larceny, third-degree Grand Larceny, third-degree Criminal Possession of Stolen Property, third-degree Unlawful Possession of Personal Information, Practicing or Appearing as Attorney-At-Law Without Being Admitted and first-degree Falsifying Business Records. The defendant was placed on supervised release and is due back in court on November 1, 2024.



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An arrest and search warrant were executed overnight at defendant's home by Detective Investigators from the Bronx District Attorney's Office and Special Agents from Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) New York. They seized \$425,000 in cash along with thousands of client applications.

In February of 2023, HSI New York and the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services referred this matter to the Bronx District Attorney's Financial Frauds Bureau. According to the investigation, the defendant allegedly targeted people from the Guyanese, Jamaican and Haitian communities. Between September 1, 2019, and May 1, 2023, Wells allegedly posed as both a licensed attorney and accredited immigration preparer, claiming she was experienced in assisting undocumented immigrants. She promised her victims she would get their applications approved and directed them to sign the documents.

The defendant allegedly collected exorbitant fees varying in amount. In one case, she demanded and received \$22,000 in cash. She allegedly took a total of \$73,000 from ten people. All the applications she filed were rejected.

Anyone who believes that they have been victimized by this defendant is encouraged to contact the Bronx District Attorney's Immigrant Affairs Unit at 718-838-7201 or bximmigrant@bronxda.nyc.gov

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Michelle Milanes, Deputy Chief, Financial Frauds Bureau, Assistant District Attorney Robert Lindston, Financial Frauds Bureau under the supervision of Herman Wun, Chief of the Financial Frauds Bureau, under the overall supervision of Denise Kodjo, Deputy Chief, Investigations Division and Wanda Perez-Maldonado, Chief of the Investigations Division.

District Attorney Clark thanked Trial Preparation Assistant Debra Abreu, Principal Accountant Investigator Julio Santiago, and BXDA Chief of Detective Investigators Frank Chiara and Deputy Chief Rackets Investigator Peter Holness, Detective Investigators: Lieutenant Vincent Cantarella, Supervising Investigator Sherece Perkiss, Senior Investigator Brendan Hammond, Senior Investigator Jairo Jativa, Investigator Nicholas Russo, Investigator Randy Scarpinato, Investigator Luisenrique Amaya and Investigator Anai Tamarez.



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District Attorney Clark thanked the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services agencies for their assistance.

An indictment is an accusatory instrument and not proof of a defendant's guilt.