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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**SQUATTER SENTENCED AFTER PLEADING GUILTY TO THREE FELONIES FOR ILLEGALLY OCCUPYING JAMAICA HOME**

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

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced that Lance White-Hunt was sentenced today after pleading guilty to identity theft, offering a false instrument for filing and tampering with physical evidence. White-Hunt illegally occupied a home in Jamaica and went as far as to forge leasing documents to stake his claim to the property as a legal tenant. As part of the sentencing, the defendant is expected to pay restitution to cover the victim's attorney fees and damage to the property.

District Attorney Katz said: "The first priority for my office when it comes to dealing with squatters is to get them off the premises. This case was especially egregious as the defendant took the legal homeowner to court as part of his bogus claim to the property. Thanks to the strong case built by my Housing and Worker Protection Bureau, we indicted the defendant, and he plead guilty to three felonies. He must now make restitution of the homeowner's expenses in addition to completing community service."

White-Hunt, 24, of 18<sup>th</sup> Street in Brooklyn, was sentenced today by Supreme Court Justice Toni Cimino to five years' probation, 20 days of community service and \$3,900 in restitution. He pleaded guilty on September 26.

DA Katz said that, 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. Three days later, 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 told the officers that 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. 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 103<sup>rd</sup> Precinct.

Assistant District Attorney Rachel Stein, Deputy Bureau Chief of the District Attorney's Housing and Worker Protection Bureau, prosecuted 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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