

THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
EASTERN DISTRICT *of* NEW YORK

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Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

Eastern District of New York

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, September 24, 2021

Two Former Employees at New York Branch Of Major Bank And An Accountant Charged With Cares Act Loan Fraud

Defendants Conspired with Others to Defraud a Major Bank and the Small Business Administration Out of Millions of Dollars in Federal Loan Funds

Earlier today, in federal court in Brooklyn, a criminal complaint was unsealed and two criminal informations were filed yesterday charging Anuli Okeke, Charlene Wint and Hashim Campbell, respectively, for their participation in a conspiracy to commit bank and wire fraud in connection with a scheme to fraudulently obtain more than \$3 million from the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and the Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) program, both of which were created by Congress as part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. Wint and Campbell pleaded guilty on Thursday to conspiracy to commit bank and wire fraud before United States Magistrate Judge Roanne L. Mann. Okeke was arrested this morning and made her initial appearance this afternoon before United States Magistrate Judge Robert M. Levy who released the defendant on a \$100,000 bond.

Jacquelyn M. Kasulis, Acting United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York; Kenneth A. Polite, Jr., Assistant Attorney General of the Justice Department's Criminal Division; Michael J. Driscoll, Assistant Director-in-Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, New York Field Office (FBI); John Grasso, Special Agent-in-Charge, Social Security Administration, Office of the Inspector General (SSA-OIG); Jay N. Lerner, Inspector General, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, Office of Inspector General (FDIC-OIG); Stephen Donnelly, Acting Special Agent-in-Charge, Office of Inspector General for the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System and the Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection, Eastern Region (FRS-OIG); and Amaleka McCall-Brathwaite, Special Agent-in-Charge, Office of the Inspector General of the U.S. Small Business Administration, Eastern Region Office (SBA-OIG) announced the charges.

"As alleged, the defendants plotted to steal millions in funds that were specifically earmarked by Congress to provide emergency assistance to small businesses and vulnerable workers during a global pandemic and time of great economic hardship," stated Acting U.S. Attorney Kasulis. "Together with our law enforcement partners, this Office will vigorously prosecute defendants who shamelessly seek to enrich themselves by taking advantage of government programs that are designed to help those in need during the COVID crisis."

"Fraudulent schemes exploiting the Paycheck Protection Program are unfortunately all too commonplace. Okeke, Wint, and Campbell, as charged today, join the ranks of others before them who took it upon themselves to personally and illegally benefit from the protections offered to small businesses during a

global pandemic. They are likely not the last, however, and the FBI and our partners will continue to uncover more schemes of this nature and bring their perpetrators to justice,” stated FBI Assistant Director-in-Charge Driscoll.

“Our office will relentlessly investigate fraud schemes and pull them out by the roots,” stated SBA-OIG Special Agent-in-Charge McCall-Brathwaite. “SBA’s PPP and EIDL programs are intended to provide assistance to the nation’s small businesses struggling with the pandemic challenges. I want to thank the U.S. Attorney’s Office and our law enforcement partners for their dedication and pursuit of justice.”

“The defendants in this case – two bank officials at a major financial institution and an accountant – are charged with misusing the bank’s operations for their personal benefit, in order to fraudulently obtain Government-guaranteed loans [which were intended to help small businesses during the current pandemic]. We remain committed to working with our law enforcement partners in investigating such cases where individuals seek to exploit Federal relief programs and threaten to undermine the integrity of our nation’s banks,” stated FDIC Inspector General Lerner.

“We are fully committed to holding accountable any wrongdoers whose fraudulent actions impact the Federal Reserve Board’s ability to assist small businesses under the Paycheck Protection Program Liquidity Facility,” stated FRS-OIG Special Agent-in-Charge Donnelly.

The CARES Act is a federal law enacted on March 29, 2020 to provide emergency financial assistance in connection with economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. One source of relief provided by the CARES Act was the allocation of funds for the issuance of forgivable loans to small businesses for job retention and certain other expenses through the PPP. The PPP allowed qualifying small businesses to receive unsecured loans on favorable terms, which they were required to use for specified expenses, including payroll costs, interest on mortgages, rent and utilities. The PPP provided for forgiveness of the loan if recipient businesses spent the proceeds on these specified expenses within a limited time period and used a certain percentage for payroll costs.

Another source of relief provided by the CARES Act was the EIDL program, which provided low-interest financing to small businesses, renters and homeowners in regions affected by declared disasters. Under the program, EIDL recipients were eligible to receive advances of up to \$10,000 for small businesses within three days of applying for an EIDL (EIDL Advance). The amount of an EIDL Advance was determined based on the number of employees working for the applicant. The EIDL Advance did not have to be repaid.

As alleged in the charging documents, Okeke, a branch manager at a large financial institution, Wint, a supervisor at the same branch, and Campbell, a tax preparer, along with their co-conspirators, provided false tax documents and helped borrowers to complete and submit PPP applications that contained fraudulent information. Despite knowing that the PPP applications contained false statements, Okeke signed each PPP loan application on behalf of the bank and submitted them for approval. Once the loan proceeds were disbursed to the borrowers, Okeke, Wint, Campbell and their co-conspirators received kickbacks from the loan proceeds. Moreover, Okeke, Wint, Campbell and their co-conspirators were involved in preparing fraudulent EIDL applications that fabricated borrower’s financials, and at times sought loans for individuals who were not legitimate business owners.

The charges in the complaint are allegations, and Okeke is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

The government’s case is being handled by the Office’s Business and Securities Fraud Section and the Criminal Division’s Fraud Section. Assistant United States Attorneys Julia Nestor, Chand Edwards-Balfour, and Lindsay Gerdes of the Eastern District of New York, and Trial Attorney Michael McCarthy of the Fraud Section are in charge of the prosecution, with assistance from Assistant United States Attorney Brian D. Morris of the Office’s Asset Forfeiture Section.

The Defendants:

ANULI OKEKE

Age: 49

Bronx, New York

CHARLENE WINT

Age: 54

Bronx, New York

HASHIM CAMPBELL

Age: 41

New York, New York

E.D.N.Y. Docket Nos. 21-CR-477 (FB), 21-CR-478 (FB), and 21-CR-477 (FB)

Attachment(s):

[Download Okeke Complaint](#)

Topic(s):

Coronavirus

Financial Fraud

Component(s):

[USAO - New York, Eastern](#)

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