



# Department of Justice

Acting United States Attorney Stan Harris  
Southern District of Mississippi

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## **TWO JACKSON WOMEN PLEAD GUILTY TO IDENTITY THEFT AND BANK FRAUD CHARGES**

Jackson, Miss - Acting United States Attorney Stan Harris announced that Bria Morris and Jaynita Coleman, both of Jackson, entered guilty pleas before United States District Judge Daniel P. Jordan III on Friday, July 31, 2009 in U.S. District Court in Jackson. Morris pled guilty to mail fraud, bank fraud, aggravated identity theft and conspiracy charges, and Coleman pled guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit bank fraud. Both will be sentenced on October 23, 2009, in Jackson.

Morris and Coleman were involved in a wide range of identity theft related crimes, as they admitted in connection with their guilty pleas. Morris mailed a counterfeit check and false identification to an auto dealer in Michigan in an attempt to purchase a Cadillac Escalade under a false name. The check included the routing and account information of a local Jackson-area business. Morris acquired the identity of one of her victims while staying at a local women's shelter and then used the identity to obtain a duplicate driver's license in the victim's name.

Morris opened up numerous accounts at four area banks, and some of these accounts were opened using the fraudulently obtained driver's license. Morris used these accounts to obtain funds through counterfeit checks drawn on various accounts, including the accounts of individuals, local businesses and charities. Morris also created a false business to further the scheme. Morris and Coleman used a laptop computer to generate fake documents and counterfeit checks. Morris has previously been convicted on separate federal charges of conspiracy to commit fraud and assault on a federal law enforcement officer.

Morris faces up to 30 years in prison and up to a one million dollar fine for the mail fraud charge, up to 30 years in prison and up to a one million dollar fine for the bank fraud charge, and up to 5 years in prison and up to a \$250,000 fine for the conspiracy charge. In addition to any other sentence imposed, Morris will be sentenced to 2 years in prison for Aggravated Identity Theft, a sentence that by law must be served consecutive to any other prison term imposed. Coleman faces up to 5 years in prison and up to a \$250,000 fine for conspiracy to commit fraud.

Acting U.S. Attorney Harris praised the investigation of these crimes by the United States Postal Investigation Service. Harris noted that "this was a particularly flagrant series of crimes, given the number and varied types of offenses." Harris said "it is especially damaging to the community when targeted victims include a charitable organization and the most vulnerable of society such as a person living in a shelter." The case was investigated by Robert Gechijian of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, and Assistant United States Attorney Dave Fulcher prosecuted the case.

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