



# Department of Justice

United States Attorney Melinda Haag  
Northern District of California

FOR IMMEDIATE  
RELEASE  
August 12, 2011  
6599

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**DEFENDANT IN \$6.2 MILLION EAST BAY FALSE TAX REFUND SCHEME SENTENCED TO 21  
MONTHS IN PRISON**

***False Refunds Deposited into Defendant's Bank Accounts***

SAN FRANCISCO – Sparkle Jernigan was sentenced to 21 months in prison, followed by three years of supervised release, for her role in a false tax refund scheme, United States Attorney Melinda Haag and Special Agent in Charge, IRS Criminal Investigation, Scott O'Briant announced. Jernigan was also ordered to pay restitution in the amount of \$31,786.

According to court documents, Jernigan, 32, of Pittsburg, Calif., admitted that, beginning in 2008, she assisted in filing false tax returns using other individuals' identities. Jernigan also acknowledged that she obtained and transmitted personal identifying information of others through text messages so that false tax returns could be filed using that information. Jernigan further acknowledged that her part in the scheme involved having tax refunds deposited into three bank accounts that she accessed. One of the false returns was filed in Jernigan's name.

According to criminal complaints filed by an IRS-CI Special Agent, the IRS identified 800 fraudulent income tax returns claiming \$6.2 million in fraudulent refunds. In March and April of 2009, IRS-CI agents executed nine search warrants at the residences of the individuals who maintained the bank accounts listed on the fraudulent income tax returns, in the Northern and Eastern Districts of California.

Niyah Edwards, 30, of Sacramento, Calif., was sentenced on May 17 to 51 months in prison. Edwards is scheduled to be sentenced for a second time on Aug. 26, for criminal contempt based on her violations of a court order.

Ayani Davis, 33, of Antioch, Calif., was sentenced on April 13, to 63 months in prison.

Samuel Warren, of Oakley, Calif., was sentenced on July 6 to 21 months in prison.

Latrece O'Neal, 41, of Oakley, is scheduled to be sentenced on Aug. 24. She was charged on Sept. 21, 2010, with conspiracy to file false claims and obstructing the administration of Internal Revenue laws. The indictment alleges that O'Neal filed multiple false federal income tax returns, and that she induced witnesses to provide false information to the IRS during the investigation of this case. O'Neal was also charged with obstruction.

In a related case, Khendria Williams, of Pittsburg, Calif., was charged by criminal complaint on Aug. 3. Williams was charged with conspiring to file false claims against the United States, specifically maintaining bank accounts for the purpose of receiving fraudulent tax refunds.

Thomas Newman is the Assistant U.S. Attorney who is prosecuting the case with the assistance of Kathy Tat. The prosecution is the result of an investigation by the Internal Revenue Service – Criminal Investigation.

**Further Information:**

Case #: 09-858-CRB, 10-687-CRB and 10-891-CRB

A copy of this press release may be found on the U.S. Attorney's Office's website at [www.usdoj.gov/usao/can](http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/can).

Electronic court filings and further procedural and docket information are available at <https://ecf.cand.uscourts.gov/cgi-bin/login.pl>.

Judges' calendars with schedules for upcoming court hearings can be viewed on the court's website at [www.cand.uscourts.gov](http://www.cand.uscourts.gov).

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