



TIMOTHY J. CRUZ
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
PLYMOUTH DISTRICT

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

MAIN OFFICE:
166 MAIN STREET
BROCKTON, MA 02301
TEL: (508) 584-8120

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CONTACT: BETH STONE
(508) 584-8120

TAUNTON WOMEN ARRAIGNED ON CHARGES THEY OPERATED AN ORGANIZED COUNTERFEIT COUPON RING TO STEAL \$27,000 IN GOODS

BROCKTON – Two women have pleaded not guilty to charges that they ran an organized, counterfeit coupon operation and stole nearly \$27,000 in products, Plymouth County District Attorney Timothy J. Cruz has announced.

Today, Jacqueline White, 41, and Crystal Travis, 41, both of Taunton, were arraigned in Brockton Superior Court. White pleaded not guilty to one count each of Larceny by False Pretense by Single Scheme, Larceny to Induce Parting with Personal Property, and Aggravated Organized Retail Theft. Travis, pleaded not guilty to one count each of Larceny by False Pretense by Single Scheme and Larceny to Induce Parting with Personal Property. The Commonwealth requested White be held on \$10,000 cash bail with the condition that she stay away and have no contact with any Stop and Shop stores in Massachusetts. The court imposed \$3,000 cash bail and the condition on White. Travis was released on personal recognizance with the condition that she stay away from all Stop and Shop stores in Massachusetts.

The pair were indicted by a Plymouth County grand jury back in August after a several months long investigation by Hingham Police, Abington Police, and supported by Florida-based Coupon Information Center (CIC), a non-profit association that fights coupon fraud. Investigators allege that from March 10, 2023 through June 2, 2023, White and Travis entered numerous Stop and Shop grocery stores in Massachusetts, and used counterfeit coupons to steal approximately \$26,547 of products. The indictments further allege that White and Travis operated a complex scheme using social media sites and apps like Facebook and Dropbox to purchase counterfeit coupons.

The two women committed the theft by passing counterfeit coupons to unsuspecting Stop and Shop cashiers. The fake coupons allegedly netted White and Travis steep discounts, sometimes undercutting the total retail value of the products.

As an example, according to the indictment, on March 10, 2023, White and Travis used a Stop and Shop Rewards Program card to purchase 366 items worth \$1,658.28. The

items included beverages, laundry detergent, hygiene products, and dishwash soap. Using fraudulent coupons reduced the amount by \$1,655, shrinking the amount owed to Stop and Shop by White and Travis down to \$3.28.

According to the investigation, White and Travis created high quality, counterfeit coupons that contained barcodes and graphic designs that mirrored legitimate third-party coupons.

After absconding with the items, the pair posted photographs of the products on social media sites, namely Facebook, offering to sell the goods at steeply discounted prices. The women asked potential buyers to meet them at a location in Taunton and payments for the products were to be made in cash.

In total, the investigation alleges that White and Travis purchased products from Stop and Shop stores located in: Quincy, Weymouth, Raynham, Plainville, Whitman, Abington, Pembroke, Norwell, Hingham, North Dartmouth, New Bedford, Sandwich, Brockton, East Providence, R.I. and Pawtucket, R.I.

The investigation found that over the three-month timeframe, White and Travis accumulated the following products:

- 300 bottles of fabric freshener
- 56 bars of bath soap
- 188 bottles of fabric softener
- 226 bottles of laundry detergent
- 219 cans of air disinfectant
- 135 bottles of hand soap
- 22 skin care products
- 130 air fresheners
- 275 cases of anti-bacterial wipes
- 34 bottles of mouthwash
- 34 packages of paper towels
- 26 toothbrushes
- 21 tubes of hand cream
- 158 bottles of dish soap

On April 26, 2023, the CIC notified White online that she had been identified as a person associated with illegal counterfeit coupon activities and to cease activity. White allegedly continued on with the activity.

The pair are next scheduled to appear in court on December 20.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Alex Zane. The investigation was performed by the Hingham and Abington Police Departments, and supported by the Coupon Information Center.

