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NEWS RELEASE

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Four Charged in Sophisticated Real Estate Fraud Scheme

Four people have been charged with running a sophisticated real estate scheme that resulted in the theft of more than \$1.4 million, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office announced today.

Angela Grace Cotton (dob 3/8/72), Lawrence Edward Cotton (dob 11/7/66), Denaysha Coleman (dob 1/13/92) and Latrese Gevon Breaux (dob 6/23/72) have each been charged with 28 felony counts, including identity theft, forgery, mortgage fraud, grand theft of personal property, attempted grand theft of personal property, money laundering and counterfeit seal, according to the criminal complaint in case BA472018.

Additionally, Angela Cotton faces one felony count of possession of a firearm by a felon with four priors, and Lawrence Cotton is charged with one felony count of receiving stolen property exceeding \$950 in value.

The charges include allegations of fraud and embezzlement resulting in the loss of more than \$500,000, taking property exceeding \$1.3 million in value and theft of more than \$100,000. The case was filed for arrest warrant on Oct. 16.

Angela Cotton, Coleman and Breaux were arraigned this week and pleaded not guilty. A preliminary hearing setting is scheduled for Dec. 6 in Department 30 of the Foltz Criminal Justice Center.

Lawrence Cotton is still at large.

From July 2014 through September 2016, Angela Cotton, assisted by her co-defendants, allegedly used fictitious escrow and title companies that she had created to deceive a lending company into believing it was funding two legitimate real estate transactions, according to Deputy District Attorney Daniel Kinney of the White Collar Crime Division's Real Estate Fraud Section.

The group is accused of stealing the identities of nine people in order to facilitate the fictitious real estate sales. Along with the fake escrow and title companies, the defendants allegedly created a

fictitious place of employment for one supposed homebuyer under whose name the two loans were approved, the prosecutor said.

To convince the lender of the legitimacy of the transactions and the entities involved, the defendants allegedly created fraudulent websites, emails and phone networks along with fake employment documentation and bank account statements from a non-existent financial institution for the borrower.

The lender transferred funds to a bank account it believed to be owned by a legitimate title company but was allegedly owned by one of the defendants.

The properties for which the defendants received loans were located in Los Angeles and La Cañada Flintridge and had not been listed for sale, the prosecutor added.

Angela Cotton was convicted in March 2010 in federal court for a similar real estate fraud scheme.

Angela and Lawrence Cotton each face a possible maximum sentence of 22 years and eight months in state prison if convicted as charged. Coleman and Breaux face a possible maximum sentence of 22 years in prison.

Bail was set at \$1.41 million for Angela Cotton, \$1 million for Coleman and \$1.37 million for Breaux. The prosecutor is requesting bail for Lawrence Cotton be set at \$1.39 million.

The case remains under investigation by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, Fraud and Cyber Crimes Bureau.

[About the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office](#)

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey leads the largest local prosecutorial office in the nation. Her staff of nearly 1,000 attorneys, 300 investigators and 800 support staff members is dedicated to protecting our community through the fair and ethical pursuit of justice and the safeguarding of crime victims' rights.