

NEWS RELEASE

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Crimes Against Property Team convicts 33 defendants

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – The Mecklenburg County District Attorney's Crimes Against Property Team convicted 33 defendants during the week of January 13, 2014. The defendants entered their guilty pleas in courtroom 5350 before The Honorable Jesse B. Caldwell, III, Superior Court Judge. The convictions were for crimes that included identity theft, altering court documents, breaking or entering, possession of stolen vehicles and breaking or entering motor vehicles. Based on the structured sentencing laws in North Carolina, sentences ranged from probation to active prison sentences. Additionally, some of the convicted defendants were determined to be habitual breaking or entering status offenders because of previous felony breaking or entering convictions, which allow more punishment to be imposed.

Among the defendants who pled guilty were:

Chante Sterling, 37, pled guilty to 1) altering court documents, 2) obtaining property by false pretense, 3) possession of a stolen motor vehicle and 4) two counts of identity theft. She was sentenced to 11-14 months in prison. She was also sentenced to an additional 16-20 months in prison; that sentence was suspended pending her successful completion of 30 months of supervised probation. These sentences will run consecutively to sentences imposed in December 2013, when Sterling was convicted at trial and sent to prison for other fraud-related charges. Sterling used coworkers' and a friend's personal identifying information to purchase a car, obtain an apartment lease and obtain a personal loan. She also used stolen credit cards to make multiple retail purchases. After she was charged, Sterling attempted to dismiss her own cases by forging an Assistant District Attorney's name on court documents and faking her death with a forged death certificate and funeral program.

Phillip Mackey, 22, pled guilty to 1) breaking or entering, 2) possession of a firearm by a convicted felon and 3) being a habitual breaking or entering status offender. Mackey was sentenced to 26-44 months in prison and ordered to pay \$3,200 in restitution.

Eric Luna, 18, pled guilty to possession of a firearm by a convicted felon. Luna was sentenced to 12-24 months in prison.

Note: Almost all guilty pleas entered in criminal administrative court are the result of an agreed upon plea arrangement between the State and the defendant, which is then approved by the sentencing judge. For more information about why most cases must be resolved by plea negotiation instead of jury trial, please visit the "Understanding Criminal Court" section of the DA's website at www.charmeckda.com.

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