



REAL ESTATE BROKER INDICTED!

Charges Include Wire Fraud, As Well as Money Laundering

She Could Get Sentence of 60 Years in Prison

By W. ORLANDO PIERCE
Special to the Chronicle

A former local real estate agent has been hit with a three-count federal indictment charging her with fraud.

Safiyah Tahir Battles, 35, who had been affiliated with the now-defunct T&T Realty, was indicted earlier this month on charges related to mortgage fraud, according to U.S. Attorney Sanford C. Coats.

The indictment, handed down by a federal grand jury on Nov. 15, charges Mrs. Battles with making a false statement to a bank, wire fraud and money laundering.

Her Mother

The federal indictment comes a year after Mrs. Battles' mother and the owner of T&T Realty was indicted for her alleged role in a separate scheme to defraud lenders.

Trina Tahir, Mrs. Battles' mother, was indicted last year on conspiracy, wire fraud and money laundering charges.

Federal prosecutors claimed that Mrs. Tahir was involved with a scheme to con lenders into financing mortgages based on inflated real estate prices through T&T Realty.

Mrs. Tahir pleaded guilty in April to the charges against her, but her lawyer filed a motion last week to reverse her guilty plea, on the grounds that she was abusing prescription medication for problems with stress and anxiety at the time of her guilty plea, and did not fully understand the legal process.

"Basically, I've raised questions about her competence," Stephen Jones, Mrs. Tahir's de-



The house at 5404 N. Lottie Ave. in the Wildewood neighborhood, which Safiyah Tahir Battles built after allegedly defrauding the First Security Bank.

fense lawyer, said, "because it appears she was self-medicating herself on some depressants at the time."

Nov. 15

The Nov. 15 indictment against Mrs. Battles alleges that, in 2007, Mrs. Battles, while working for T&T Realty, took out two loans at First Security Bank to fund construction of a house at 5404 N. Lottie Ave.

Wildewood

The house is a 3,900 sq. ft., five-bedroom home in the posh Wildewood neighborhood of northeast Oklahoma City.

According to the indictment, Mrs. Battles used a 2006 federal income tax return as proof of her income when she had not yet filed a tax return.

The tax return she submitted to First Security Bank substantially inflated her actual annual income, the indictment alleges.

In that way, Mrs. Battles, the indictment says, conned First Security Bank into lending her more than \$300,000 in 2006 to

build the new home on N. Lottie Avenue.

Count Two

Also, according to the indictment, Mrs. Battles defrauded Saxon Mortgage when she applied for a large, six-figure loan by making false claims about her income and assets.

In 2007, the indictment says, Mrs. Battles refinanced her new home through Saxon Mortgage to the tune of \$500,000.

To obtain the loan, Mrs. Battles stated on a mortgage application that she had more than \$165,000 in a personal bank account, the indictment continues.

In fact, the indictment says, Mrs. Battles had less than \$1,000 in cash at the time.

The home on Lottie Avenue sold for the bargain price of \$173,000 in May 2010, after Mrs. Battles lost it to foreclosure, Oklahoma County property records say.

Count Three

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Former Coach Nate Harris (right) reacts after the Tulsa Board of Education voted to name the new field house at Washington High School after him. Lillie and David Doyle were among his supporters at Monday's board meeting. (Photo/Jeff Lautenberger/Tulsa World)

In Tulsa

Field House at Washington High to Be Named for Harris

By ANDREA EGER
Tulsa World

TULSA—A divided school board on Monday approved the naming of the new Booker T. Washington High School field house for former basketball Coach Nate Harris.

Brian Hunt, president of the board, and Board Member Lois Jacobs voted "No," and the four other board members at Monday night's meeting voted "Yes."

Board Member Oma Copeland, who has publicly supported the recommendation, was absent.

"I appreciate the work that the *ad hoc* committee did," the former coach told the *Tulsa*

World after Monday's meeting. "I was very pleased with their recommendation, and I appreciate the board and their vote tonight."

An *ad hoc* committee's selection of Coach Harris proved to be a controversial choice when introduced in February.

The board then tabled the matter and sent it back to the committee for additional consideration.

Michael "Mike" Mims, athletic director at Washington High, and a current student were added to the committee, because of concern about a lack of input by current employees and students. Ultimately, the reconvened committee's unanimous conclusion was the same as the one

reached in February.

"We studied this very diligently, considered many other names and determined that this was the most appropriate name," said Joe Williams, a former city councilor, who served on the committee.

Lana Turner Addison, vice president of the board, acknowledged a petition that was signed by 120 current Washington High students advocating a different name: "Hall of Champions."

"That's wonderful, but equally wonderful is the community... alumni supporters, parents of the students," she said. "There is history behind this recommendation."

"It was based on significant achievements obtained by Nate Harris, both on the court and in life."

Before casting his "No" vote, Mr. Hunt said he liked the idea in the student petition.

Mrs. Jacobs voted "No" without comment.

Coach Harris led the Hornets to 10 state titles during his 25 seasons with the team, but his more than three-decade-long coaching career came to an abrupt end in 2006-07.

Then-Supt. Michael Zolkoski suspended Coach Harris and recommended that the school board fire him.

No reason was ever announced because of confidentiality rules governing pending personnel matters.

District officials, ultimately, reached a resignation agreement with Coach Harris, and he retired in June 2007.

Before Monday's meeting, about 50 lined a hallway and held signs of support for embattled Stephanie Spring, the embattled athletic director for the Tulsa Public School District.

No one commented about the silent protest during the meeting.

Athletic Director Spring and Assistant Athletic Directors Latricia Pruitt and Jon Wheeler

Florine Wilkes Jones

Retired Longtime Receptionist At Rolfe Funeral Home Is Dead

By ALBERT J. LINDSEY
Executive Editor

Florine Wilkes Jones, 89, who was the receptionist at Rolfe Funeral Home for 27 years before retiring in 1991, died on Nov. 12.

A funeral mass was said in her honor on Nov. 15 at the St. Philip Neri Roman Catholic Church of Midwest City. Fr. Charles Murphy officiated.

Interment was held at Arlington Memory Gardens under the direction of Rolfe Funeral Home.

Florine M. Wilkes was born on Oct. 13, 1922, in Savannah, Ga., to Mr. and Mrs. William A. Wilkes.

She graduated in 1940 from Beach High School in Savannah, and went on to graduate in 1944 from South Carolina State College, having majored in business administration.

Mrs. Jones and her family moved to Oklahoma City after her husband (Eugene D. Jones Jr., who had been serving with the U.S. Army in Europe during World War II) was discharged



Florene Wilkes Jones

from the service.

She joined the St. Peter Claver Roman Catholic Church upon moving here, and was a member of the Ladies Auxiliary until the parish was closed in the early 1960's.

After St. Peter Claver's closing, the Joneses were members of the Corpus Christi Roman

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Mayor Warns

Mayor Dave Bing of Detroit warned during a televised address last week that the city is facing a dire economic crisis.

