



**OFFICE OF THE ULSTER COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY
Emmanuel C. Nneji, District Attorney**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**ALBANY PAIR SENTENCED TO STATE PRISON AS PART OF LARCENY
RING THAT INCLUDED TOWN OF ULSTER ULTA BEAUTY STORE**

KINGSTON, NY – On March 20, 2025, Jonneasias Welcome, age 21, of Albany, and on March 25, Kamel Pickens, age 33 of Albany, were sentenced to up to three years in state prison following their guilty pleas to Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree before the Honorable Bryan Rounds.

On October 24, 2023, both defendants along with minors traveled from Albany to steal from the Ulta Beauty Store located in the Town of Ulster, stealing over 100 items, including perfumes, with a total value of over \$10,000. The theft was captured on video surveillance showing masked individuals in the store. Defendant Pickens served as the getaway driver, taking members of the Town of Ulster Police Department and the New York State Police on a dangerous high-speed chase, causing over \$1,400 of damage to a state trooper's vehicle during the pursuit which continued onto Interstate 87. All stolen items were recovered and the vehicle was impounded.

After the incident, an investigation revealed that defendant Pickens was the ringleader in an organized retail theft ring based in Albany, which was being investigated by the Capital District Crime Analysis Center. Defendant had been using young women and children to commit larcenies at numerous retail stores in counties near Albany. Pickens has been remanded without bail at the Ulster County Jail since February 26, 2024 when the Office of the Ulster County District Attorney argued successfully for remand based on the repeated commission of larcenies in multiple counties.

District Attorney Emmanuel C. Nneji said, "This is scary and dangerous to the employees, law enforcement, and the public. Our criminal laws may have been reformed to improve the process for the accused, but the doors have not been taken off the hinges for brazen criminal activities such as "smash and grab" thefts

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which are traumatic for employees, especially when the perpetrators are masked and appear to be armed. In this County we must treat them as the violent felonies which they are in common sense.”

Deputy Chief Assistant District Attorney Paul Derohannesian prosecuted the cases. Mark Formichelli, of the Dutchess County Office of the Public Defender represented Welcome, and attorney Matthew Mahan of Marlborough, NY represented Pickens.

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