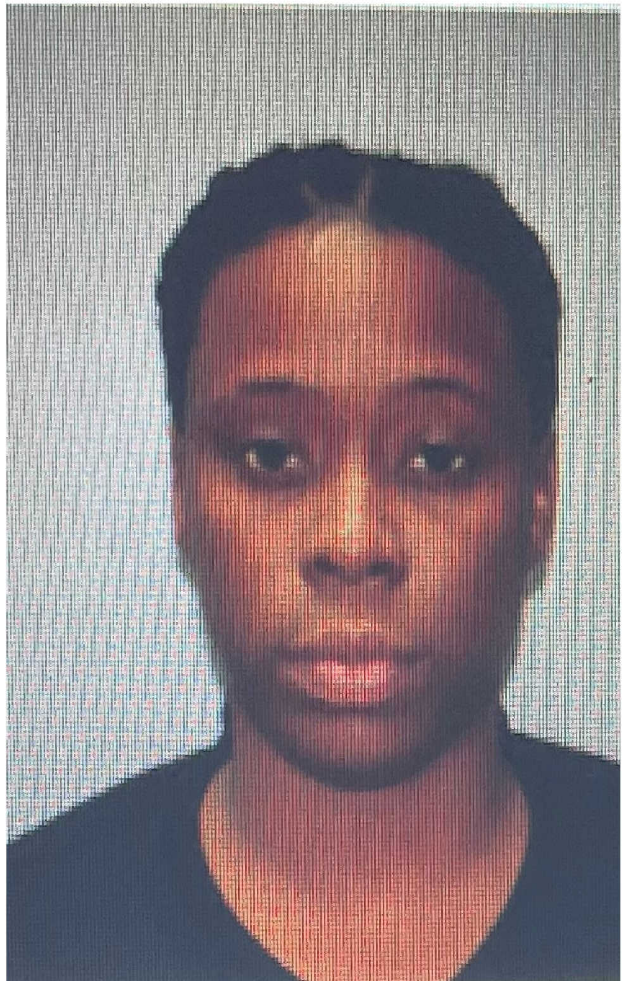
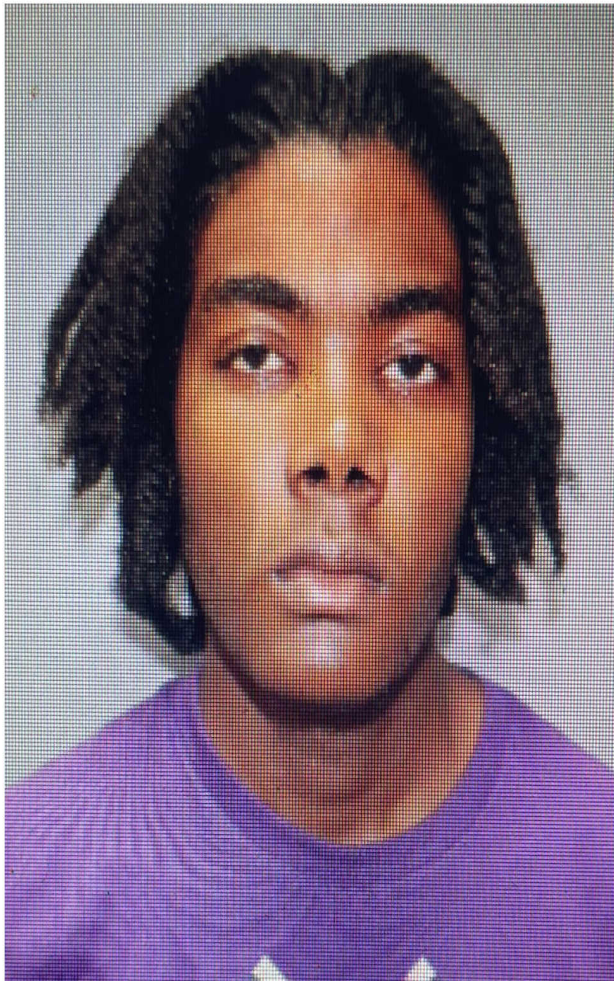


The Virgin Islands Consortium

Man Gifts Girlfriend Stolen Louis Vuitton Bags and Gets Arrested After Items Appear in Party on Snapchat Video, Police Say

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From left to right, mugshot of Reniel Francis and Shaniqua Wheatley. By. THE VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT

ST. THOMAS — Two individuals have been arrested in connection with stolen designer handbags.

Shaniqua Wheatley, age 29 and 19-year-old Reniel Francis have been charged with grand larceny, possession of stolen property and influencing the testimony of witnesses.

The pair were arrested after police initiated an investigation into a report of grand larceny which occurred on June 5, 2022. According to the probable cause fact sheet, on June 12 an individual reported that his employee wanted to turn over a stolen handbag that she was in possession of. Police met with the individual and the employee and retrieved a brown Louis Vuitton handbag.

The following day police contacted the owner of the handbag and she reported that she had left her house on the night of June 5 for a party, locking and securing her residence prior to her departure. She told police that she returned to her apartment later that night and nothing appeared to be disturbed. She then packed a few items and left the house, securing it once more. She returned home after the party and went to bed. However, the following morning she went into one of the rooms and discovered that three of her expensive designer handbags were missing. According to the woman, the bags carried a combined value of \$6,300.

The woman further recounted that on June 11 she was informed by a friend that he noticed one of his Snapchat friends with a handbag that resembled one of her missing bags. The friend then inquired where the individual had gotten the bag and she replied that someone had given it to her on the night of the party. According to the probable cause fact sheet, she then asked, "who the bag belong to? A light-skinned girl?" That individual was later confirmed to be the same woman who handed the bag to the police. When police interviewed the victim, they presented the handbag which had been retrieved and she immediately identified it as hers based on certain distinguishing marks.

Police later interviewed the woman who had handed in the bag and she stated that she was aware that a girl was missing three bags and that the girl's house was involved in a robbery on the night of the party. She further told police that she learned that the bag she had was part of the robbery after she posted a picture on Snapchat and was confronted by one of her friends. According to the probable cause fact sheet, the woman initially claimed that she had bought the bag for \$100 from a seller she had previously purchased items from.

Police later made contact with the alleged seller, however he claimed that he had sold the woman a handbag in January of 2022 and that it had been a while since he last saw her. On June 26, police contacted the woman again and she was informed that the man denied selling her the bag in question. Police spoke to a relative of the woman days later and they revealed that she had stated the bag was given to her as a gift by a man who was trying to impress her.

Police then interviewed the woman again and she admitted that her boyfriend Reniel Francis had gifted her the bag on the night of June 5th. She also told police that he gifted her a second designer bag the following day and that after she had been confronted about the bag on Snapchat, she asked her boyfriend if the bags were stolen. He denied this and stated that he had obtained them online. However, according to the woman, he eventually admitted that the bags were stolen and identified Shaniqua Wheatley as an accomplice in the theft. She told police that her boyfriend also claimed that he had paid the seller to lie on his behalf in the event that police questioned him about the stolen goods.

When law enforcement made contact with Reniel Francis, he claimed that he and Wheatley had been at the party until the end. He also denied knowing the seller and denied knowing his girlfriend who had turned in the stolen property. For her part, Wheatley denied all robbery allegations and denied knowing the seller who had allegedly been bribed. However, police later learned that Wheatley was connected to the victim of the robbery and that she and Francis were indeed close friends. They also discovered that Wheatley had previously gained entry into the victim's residence without her permission. Investigations also revealed other evidence which tied Wheatly and Francis to the stolen property.

Following their arrests, Francis and Wheatley appeared for advisement hearings on Monday where a judge ruled that they would each be allowed to post 10 percent of bail set at \$20,000. While this matter remains pending, both defendants have been prohibited from having any contact with the victim and have been ordered to remain at least 50 feet away from her at all times.