



RICHARD A. BROWN
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

**DISTRICT ATTORNEY
QUEENS COUNTY
125-01 QUEENS BOULEVARD
KEW GARDENS, NEW YORK 11415-1568
718-286-6000**

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CONTACT: PRESS OFFICE
(718) 286-6315

**D.A. BROWN: ST. ALBANS MAN ARRAIGNED ON CHARGES
OF ARMED ROBBERY AND ASSAULT AT LOCAL CHURCH AND PIZZERIA**

Victims Include Bishop and Off-Duty Police Officer; Defendant Faces Up to 32 Years in Prison

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown announced today that a 25-year-old St. Albans man has been arraigned on charges of robbing the bishop of a neighborhood church at gunpoint earlier this week, and, less than four hours later, assaulting a middle-aged woman and an off-duty New York City police officer outside a nearby pizzeria.

District Attorney Brown said, "Every cliché – even a bad one – has a kernel of truth attached to it. In this instance, the defendant proved the cliché about 'returning to the scene of the crime' when he allegedly showed up a short while after he and two other unapprehended individuals allegedly robbed a church and its bishop at gunpoint and allegedly assaulted a woman and an off-duty police officer who had come to her rescue."

The District Attorney identified the defendant as Oluwafemi Olowofela, 25, of 120-13 194th Street, in St. Albans. The defendant is charged with first- and second-degree robbery and second- and third-degree burglary in connection with the church robbery and second-degree assault, second-degree menacing, resisting arrest, fourth-degree criminal possession of a weapon and second-degree harassment in connection with the incident outside of the pizzeria. If convicted, Olowofela faces up to 25 years in prison for the church robbery and seven years in prison for the assault at the pizzeria or a total of 32 years if convicted of both incidents.

District Attorney Brown said that, according to the criminal complaints filed in the case, the defendant – and two other unapprehended individuals – entered the Greater Universal Highway Deliverance Church at 200-16 Linden Boulevard at approximately 4:20 p.m. on May 8, 2007, approached 67-year-old Bishop Melvin Artis, and aimed a black handgun directly at the bishop's face while one of his accomplices said, "Shoot him, shoot him." As the defendant allegedly continued to hold the gun on Bishop Artis, one of his accomplices rifled through the bishop's pockets and stole \$1,423 in cash before all three suspected robbers fled the church.

The District Attorney said that it is further alleged that at approximately 7:50 p.m. that same day, the defendant Olowofela assaulted 43-year-old Saliaha Fardan, who walks with the aid of a cane, by pushing her into the doorway of a pizzeria located at 200-14 Linden Boulevard and repeatedly hitting her in the head with a blunt object, causing her to suffer cuts to the head which required nine stitches to close. Hearing a commotion, off-duty NYPD Officer Malik Kirkland came to Ms. Fardan's aid and, according to the charges, Olowofela grabbed the officer's shirt and attempted to punch him in the face before Officer Kirkland was able to subdue the defendant and hold him until on-duty officers arrived to make the arrest. In the struggle, Officer Kirkland allegedly injured one of his fingers. Both Ms. Fardan and Officer Kirkland were taken to a local Queens hospital, treated for their injuries and released.

Olowofela was arraigned last night before Queens Criminal Court Judge Mary O'Donoghue who ordered the defendant held on \$200,000 bail and set a return date of May 25, 2007.

Assistant District Attorney Shlomit Metz, of the District Attorney's Career Criminal Major Crimes Bureau, is prosecuting the case under the supervision of James W. Evangelou, Bureau Chief, and Robert J. Hanophy, Deputy Bureau Chief, and the overall supervision of Senior Executive Assistant District Attorney for Trials James Clark Quinn and Deputy Executive Assistant District Attorneys for Trials John H. Larsen and Robert Masters.

It should be noted that criminal charges are merely accusations and that a defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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Note to Editors: E-version of this press release posted at www.queensda.org