

# The Arab American News

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## Two charged in real estate fraud scheme

DETROIT - This week the Wayne County Prosecutor announced charges against Darious Morris, 22 and James Smith, 31 both of Detroit, in connection with a real estate fraud scheme. The charges are a result of a collaborative effort by the Wayne County Deed Fraud Task Force as well as Michigan State Police, Housing and Urban Development, the Secret Service and the Detroit Arson Squad. The Deed and Mortgage Fraud Task Force was established in 2005 through funding provided by Register of Deeds, Bernard J. Youngblood.

It is alleged that from July 2009 until October 2009 Morris and Smith conducted a criminal enterprise where they received money to sell homes they did not own to unsuspecting buyers. The defendants claimed to represent various sellers in Detroit and Dearborn Heights and would ask the unwitting buyers for a down payment in cash or a cashier's check. They would set up fictitious business entities by filing, or causing others to file, Doing Business As (D .B .A.) certificates with the Wayne County Clerk's Office. The D.B.A. is then used as the name of the business "representing" the seller. If someone checked the title and found that HUD or a bank owned the property, the defendants would use their business name to give an air of legitimacy to their claim to be the legal representative authorized to sell the property. It is estimated that the enterprise stole approximately \$70,000 in proceeds from people who were duped by Morris and Smith.

The two face multiple charges. The case will be prosecuted by Wayne County Assistant Prosecutor Abed Hammoud, head of the Wayne County Deed Fraud Unit.

Morris and Smith were arraigned at 36th District Court on Saturday, April 3, 2010 and Morris received a \$90,000 cash or surety bond and Smith received a \$75,000/10% bond. Their preexamination conference hearing will be held on Monday, April 12, 2010 at 9:00 a.m. in the Wayne County 3rd Circuit Court. During a pre-examination conference the defendants can decide whether they will plea guilty, demand a preliminary examination or waive the preliminary examination. If die defendants demand a preliminary examination it will be scheduled during the pre-examination conference.