



City of Arts & Innovation

PRESS RELEASE

Police Department
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Chief of Police

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: October 16, 2014

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CHECK FRAUD SUSPECT TARGETS COLLEGE STUDENTS

Riverside, CA – In June 2014, Riverside Police began receiving complaints of a suspect approaching college age victims and asking that they help cash checks for him. The suspect claimed to own a struggling smog check business and his bank would not allow him to cash checks. Victims would deposit the suspect's checks and then withdraw cash, usually \$200.00 to \$400.00, which was given to the suspect. The victim would be notified days later by their bank that the checks were fraudulent.

Riverside Police Economic Crimes detectives and Robbery detectives identified ten victims, who had been approached by the same suspect between June and October, 2014. In several cases, the suspect became aggressive when the victim said they would not help. The victims described the suspect as a Black male with a muscular build, about 6' foot 3" inches tall and about 230 pounds. Many of the victims were college students with small physical statures. In several cases, the victims were ordered into the suspects blue Chrysler minivan, where they were driven to their bank. The suspect would follow the victim to the ATM machine where the victim was ordered to deposit the check and withdraw cash.



One victim was able to take cell phone photos of the suspect and his vehicle. Detectives distributed information flyers to patrol officers and the suspect was positively identified as Michael Cornelius Gaines, Jr., 29, of Moreno Valley, CA. As detectives searched for Gaines, they learned that a suspect matching a similar description was committing similar crimes in the City of San Bernardino. An arrest warrant for Gaines was requested by Riverside Police detectives on charges of Kidnapping, Check Fraud, False Imprisonment, and Receiving Stolen Property. On 10-09-14, the Riverside Superior Court issued a warrant for Gaines' arrest with a \$215,000.00 bail.

Riverside Police officers located and arrested Gaines in Riverside on 10-14-14. Riverside Detectives are working with San Bernardino authorities to help investigate the similar crimes committed in their jurisdiction.

If you have additional information concerning this investigation and/or crimes similar in nature, please contact Detective Andy Cook or Detective Greg Rowe at (951) 353-7117.

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