

## **COP GUILTY IN FALSE ARREST - DETROIT OFFICER MAY HELP IN WIDER CORRUPTION CASE**

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A Detroit police **officer** pleaded guilty to a federal misdemeanor charge Friday in what could be a major break in a Detroit police corruption case.

**Officer Hubert Brown**, 37, admitted in a plea deal with federal prosecutors that he deprived Tracy Marie **Brown** of her civil rights on May 2, 2000, by writing a bogus police report to justify her false arrest on drug charges.

**Officer Brown**, who is not related to the woman, also admitted lying at the woman's preliminary examination. She was bound over for trial in Wayne County Circuit Court, pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 18 months of probation.

**Brown** said he fabricated the police report at the behest of Police **Officers** Matthew Zani and Christopher Ruiz. **Brown** said Zani also testified falsely at the preliminary exam.

Zani, 36, and Ruiz, 29, now of Tampa, Fla., are among 17 Detroit police **officers** from the 3rd (Vernor) and 4th (Fort-Green) precincts who were indicted in June for allegedly stealing money, drugs and guns from drug dealers in southwest Detroit during 2002-03. Zani and Ruiz are central figures in the case. An 18th police **officer** was indicted last month.

The **officers**, who pleaded not guilty, also are accused of planting evidence and falsifying police reports on several victims, some of whom were imprisoned for crimes they didn't commit, federal prosecutors said.

The Wayne County Prosecutor's Office reviewed the cases and said in August that the alleged victims had conned investigators.

On Friday, **Brown** became the 19th **officer** to be charged. He is the first to plead guilty. Under the terms of the deal, he must cooperate with federal prosecutors and is expected to testify against other defendants. Investigators say they hope his decision will persuade other defendants to cooperate.

The trial for the others is set to begin in January.

**Brown** said in the plea deal that he and Zani entered a home in the 5600 block of Central without a warrant or the permission of the people inside and arrested the woman.

He said he later filed a report indicating she was arrested outside the home and had a baggie of suspected cocaine.

Court papers say Zani improperly fondled the woman and Ruiz and Zani stole \$1,242 from her.

Assistant U.S. Attorney John Engstrom wouldn't comment on the case Friday.

The Wayne County Prosecutor's Office said Friday it would review **Brown** 's information to determine whether anyone was wrongly convicted or imprisoned.

Under the terms of Friday's deal, **Brown** faces up to 12 months in prison.

But Engstrom and Assistant U.S. Attorney Michael Bullotta could recommend a shorter sentence if he provides substantial assistance to the government. No sentencing date has been set.

**Brown** , a member of a special narcotics enforcement squad, has been suspended with pay, according to the police department.

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