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**THREE ARRESTED AT CORONA BOUTIQUE FOR POSSESSING STOLEN MERCHANDISE**  
*Goods Taken from Major Retailers, Sold at Significant Discounts*

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced the recovery of more than \$50,000 in merchandise allegedly stolen from major retailers including Macy's, Lululemon, Abercrombie & Fitch and American Eagle that was offered for sale at a steep discount at the Elegant Fashion boutique in Corona. Three defendants were charged with criminal possession of stolen property for their roles in the alleged fencing operation.

Queens District Attorney Katz said: "As alleged, the Elegant Fashion boutique in Corona was selling clothing and other goods at far below retail prices. Our investigation revealed that most of the inventory was stolen from major retailers. While shoppers may have believed they were getting a good deal, organized retail theft ultimately harms consumers by forcing prices to rise and putting legitimate retailers out of business. Three defendants have now been charged in connection with this operation."

Cesar Castillo, 55, of 195<sup>th</sup> Place in Hollis, was arraigned September 11 on a charge of criminal possession of stolen property in the second degree. Queens Criminal Court Judge Sharifa Nasser-Cuellar ordered him to return to court on October 27.

Maria Sirena Quiroz, 56, of Martense Avenue in Corona, and Soraya Vargas, 56, of 42<sup>nd</sup> Avenue in Corona, were arraigned September 10 on a charge of criminal possession of stolen property in the second degree. Judge Nasser-Cuellar ordered Quiroz to return to court October 27. Judge Lana Schlesinger ordered Vargas to return to court October 27.

The defendants each face up to five to 15 years in prison, if convicted.

DA Katz said that, according to the investigation and charges, on September 9, a court-authorized search warrant was executed at the Elegant Fashion boutique, a second-floor retail space at 104-10 Roosevelt Avenue in Corona. The store shelves were lined with clothing and fragrances. Additional clothing was hanging on racks.

Castillo is the owner of record of the business. Quiroz and Vargas were employees of the store.

The following items were recovered:

- 238 items of clothing and fragrances belonging to Macy's, valued at approximately \$17,170
- 68 items of clothing belong to Lululemon, valued at approximately \$8,086.

- 285 items of clothing and fragrances belonging to Abercrombie & Fitch, valued at approximately \$13,015.
- 356 items of clothing belonging to American Eagle, valued at approximately \$18,540.

Additional merchandise from Gap Inc. and Victoria's Secret was also recovered.

The stolen goods were identified by retail investigators as originating from stores in the New York area and beyond.

The investigation was conducted by organized retail crime investigators from Macy's, Lululemon, Abercrombie & Fitch, American Eagle, and Gap Inc., and members of the NYPD's Criminal Intelligence Section, led by Police Officer Nicholas Urchenko under the supervision of Sergeant Nicholas Afanasewicz, Lieutenant Jonathan Catanzaro, and Captain Daniel Spaeth.

Assistant District Attorney Jeremy H. Mo of the District Attorney's Major Economic Crimes Bureau is prosecuting the case under the supervision of Assistant District Attorneys Mary Lowenburg, Bureau Chief, Catherine Kane, Senior Deputy Bureau Chief, and Jonathan Scharf, Deputy Bureau Chief and under the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Gerard A. Brave.

*Criminal complaints and indictments are accusations. A defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.*

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