

Media Statement



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TO: ALL MEDIA

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RE: ANOTHER ONLINE DATING SCAMSTER SENTENCED

The Bellville Specialised Commercial Crimes Court sentenced Christiano Ogbeifun to 20 years imprisonment in a second online dating scam conviction in this court in one week.

Ogbeifun was convicted on 24 counts of fraud and one for money laundering after he duped a lonely and smitten Swedish woman into depositing R4.594m into his bank account following his undying love declaration for her.

Ulvsgard registered herself on an online dating site, badoo.com. The 48-year-old Nigerian man from Parklands, Cape Town, introduced himself as a white successful businessman, Francis Ceed, based in New York. He told her he was an engineer and was employed in the computer industry based in New York. He sent her pictures of himself driving classic cars and engaging in yachting activities. As part of gaining her trust, he described himself as a God fearing person and a regular church goer at Hillson. He enticed her with a gift and phone calls from a South African registered cellphone. They fell in love although they have never met.

In May 2013, Ogbeifun informed her that he would go on a business trip to Johannesburg. He had a huge business contract with profitable results due to him. Later that month, he told her that computers he had ordered from China to Johannesburg were damaged in transit and he had to replace the damaged products himself before he could get the full payment of his business contract. In November, he asked her for money but she refused to send him money.

In January 2014, Ogbeifun approached her again for assistance to replace the damaged equipment and promised to reimburse her as soon as he received the full payment of the contract. In order to convince her of the legitimacy of the contract, he sent her a fictitious Bank of America cheque of \$850 000 as security for the loan. Over a period of

eight months (22/01/2014 to 03/09/2014), she deposited R4 594 591,05 into his bank account. As soon as the money was deposited, he removed it and used it for his personal use. Despite assuring her that he would pay her back, he never did.

She loved him so much that she believed most of his scams. One time he phoned her and told her he had pre-booked a flight to Gothenburg to visit her but it was a lie. He sent her a fictitious flight ticket for himself destined for Sweden with the expected date of arrival on 18 June 2013. She went to the airport to wait for him and he did not arrive. She was so stressed to such an extent that she filed a missing person report in Sweden and phoned the OR Tambo International Airport trying to locate him.

Advocate Motsipa Seroto told the court that the online romance scam affected Ulvsgard emotionally and financially.

"She lost over R4m and never recovered. The crimes were not committed on the spur of the moment, but over a period of eight months using MoneyGram and bank transfers whilst pretending to be in love. The offence was motivated by greed instead of the need. The crime of fraud is very serious and the amount involved is magnificent. This is but one of the saddest and most despicable forms of online crime. What's worse is that the victim lost her life savings albeit been lonesome and desperate," he argued.

The court sentenced Ogbeifun to 15 years imprisonment with 8 years imprisonment suspended for 5 years on condition that he is not convicted of fraud during the period of suspension. It further sentenced him to 5 years imprisonment for money laundering. The court ordered that the latter sentence run concurrently with the 7 years imprisonment sentence imposed for the charge of fraud. The court declared him unfit to possess a firearm.

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