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Contractor who stole property gets 30 years

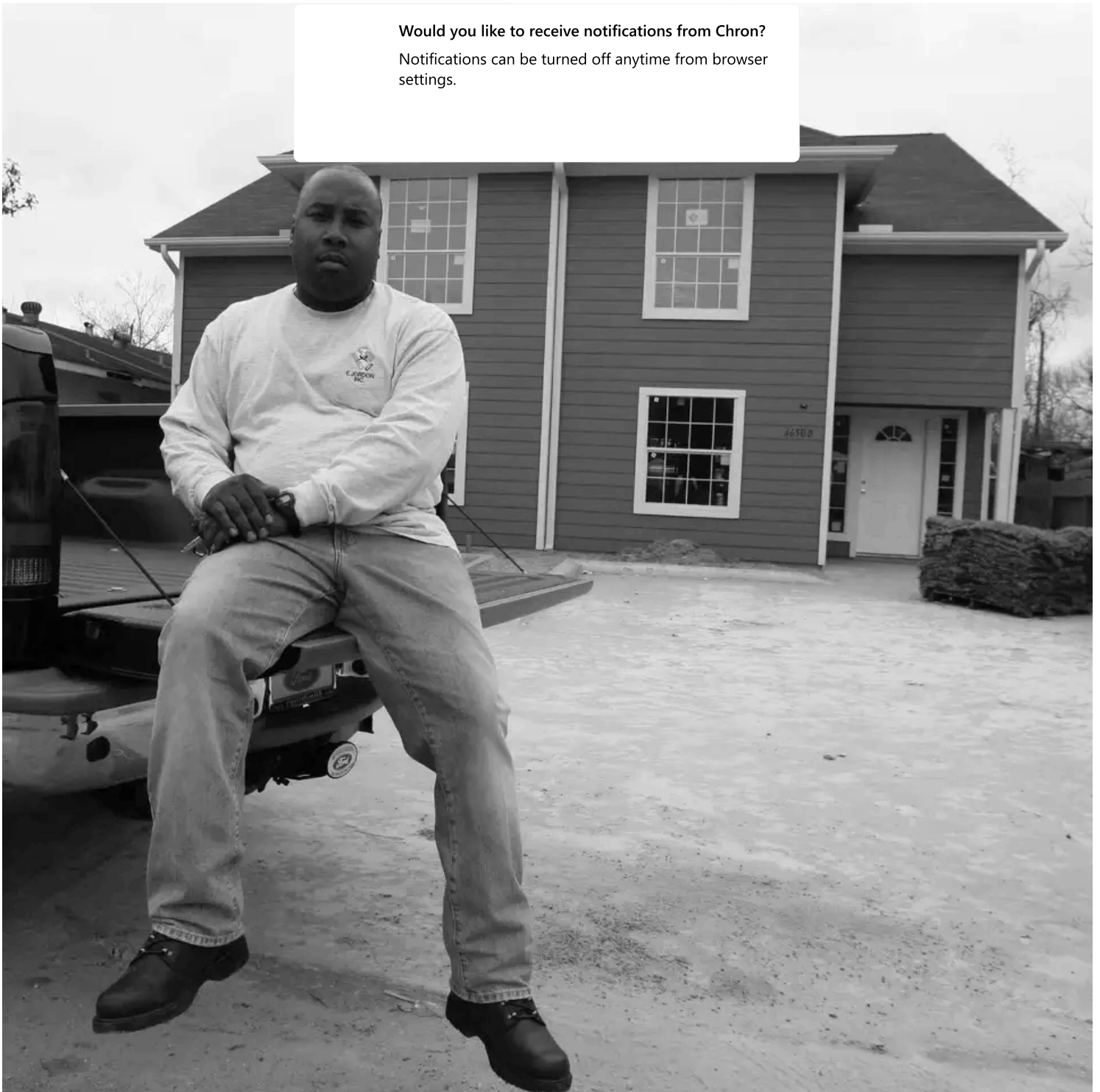
By **Lise Olsen**, *Investigative Reporter, Houston Chronicle*

Updated Sep 14, 2012 10:49 p.m.



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Houston Developer Dwayne Jordon (cq) in front of on of his many developments in the Sunnyside neighborhood of Houston Texas, Thursday, January 11, 2007. (BILLY SMITH II/STAFF)

Billy Smith II

Contractor who stole property gets 30 years

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Despite an unusual plea for leniency from Houston's city controller, five-time felon and swindler Dwayne Jordon was handed a 30-year sentence Friday after admitting to stealing 23 properties from rightful owners by forging

deeds and building new hom

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He then resold the properties to unsuspecting victims.

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Harris County District Judge David Mendoza said he weighed competing factors to find a "sentence that fit the crime." He said he considered Jordon's construction work on stolen and legitimate lots in a blighted neighborhood, evidence of his continuing scams while free on bond and Jordon's role as a father and community leader.

Ultimately, Mendoza found that Jordon's business was "built on a poor foundation."

"This was built on theft," Men
"trust," "security" and even "p
while free on bond since 20C

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d money, but also his victims'
mal efforts to pay restitution
crimes.

Defense lashes out

Jordon's defense attorney Chip Lewis, who sought deferred prosecution, blamed the Houston Chronicle's coverage of his crimes for Jordon's long sentence, although his client pleaded guilty to two felony thefts and could have gotten a 99-year sentence based on an extensive criminal history.

"It is beyond shameful that a man, who brought so much pride to Sunnyside, is now just another imprisoned African American as a result of your smear campaign and the political agendas of others," said Lewis, who promised to appeal.

A preliminary estimate of restitution Jordon may owe from the real estate thefts was \$517,790 – not including losses to title companies, according to statements in court. A final amount remains under review.

Darlene Sims, whose family fought Jordon's theft of their land with a successful civil suit but never collected a cent, said afterward she hoped by the time of his release Jordon will "be too old to commit these crimes again. I doubt he'll ever be pay restitution."

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Harris County Assistant District Attorney John J. Green said, "It's time coming. These victims have been waiting since 2008. Justice has been done on their behalf."

Justice has been done on their behalf."

The Chronicle previously reported on other crimes Jordon allegedly committed while free on bond, including auto and identify theft, bank fraud, check fraud and other swindles reported in civil and criminal records and by police and victims in five different Texas counties. Two 2012 felony cases involving theft through the use of stolen identification remain pending in Montgomery and Tarrant counties. Another 2010 felony bank fraud charge in Harris County was dismissed Friday as part of his guilty plea.

Connections to Greens

Jordon has several personal and financial connections to City Controller Ron Green, who served as Jordon's character witness in March, and to Green's wife, Hilary Green, an elected justice of the peace who ruled on Jordon's eviction cases and a property dispute.

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Ron Green, who also employed Jordon as a contractor and briefly served as Jordon's defense attorney, did not attend the hearing. Green told the Chronicle by email this week that prior to reading newspaper reports he "did not know of any (other) civil or criminal allegations pending against Mr. Jordon."

"I respect the sentence Judge Mendoza will impose in this matter," Green said in the same email.

Mendoza also sentenced co-defendant Kendall Radley, a builder who worked with Jordon but cooperated with prosecutors, to 12 years in prison. Mendoza described Radley as a "junior partner," who profited much less than Jordon from the joint thievery and construction projects. Mendoza said he could not understand why Radley knowingly participated in a deed scam though already on probation. Restitution for him was set at \$395,296.

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About a dozen victims of the swindles gathered after the hearing, many still puzzled over how Jordon, the man chiefly responsible for so much theft and fraud, prospered so long without being questioned or stopped by the city officials, bankers, title companies and others who reviewed or backed him.

"I think my mother is smiling today," said Larry Renfro, whose deceased mother, Helen, was one of the first to blow the whistle on Jordon's property crimes.

"I'm just appalled for (the city controller's) support for Jordon. Why would (Green) say this is a community guy when Jordon's actions clearly say he's not a community guy?"

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Sep 14, 2012 | Updated Sep 14, 2012 10:49 p.m.



Lise Olsen

INVESTIGATIVE REPORTER, HOUSTON CHRONICLE



Lise Olsen is deputy investigator with more than 20 years' experience covering many Texas investigations including pesticide plant disaster, oilfield, rogue pill mills and VA guardia networks run by a figure known as covered federal judicial corruption sagas, including the initially secret sexual assault complaint and subsequent impeachment of a federal judge as well as other misconduct cases. Her reports have inspired laws and reforms, spurred official investigations and prosecutions, restored names to unidentified murder victims and freed dozens of wrongfully held prisoners.

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