



Neighbors shocked at allegations against Ellenwood couple

By [Mashaun D. Simon](#)
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

8:38 p.m. Thursday, December 10, 2009

Residents of the Holly Hill subdivision in Ellenwood are shocked by the news that a couple who have been their neighbors for years are accused of holding a "worker" against her will.

Juna Gwendolyn Babb, 54, and Michael J. Babb, 53, live in the 4200 block of Ivy Run in Ellenwood. They were indicted last week by a federal grand jury in Atlanta and charged with conspiracy, forced labor and document servitude.

The pair is accused of convincing a woman to come to their home from the Kingdom of Swaziland by promising her a "lucrative, short-term opportunity to provide catering services at the wedding of a family member," the Justice Department said.

When the woman arrived, the couple took her passport and return-trip airline ticket and told her that she needed to repay them for the cost of travel to the United States, according to court documents. She was made to clean the homes of friends and associates of the Babbs and also help with Michael Babb's construction business, working long hours for little or no pay.

This took place for a little over two years, from March 2005 until February 2007.

Neighbors refused to believe that such a nice and quiet couple could do such a thing, especially since Michael Babb is known to be an itinerant preacher.

Felisha Denton is one of them. She has lived in the subdivision for almost 10 years. The Babbs, she said, moved in not long after she did.

"There were never any signs that such a thing was going on there," she said. "In the years they have lived here I may have talked to the wife less than half a dozen times."

There was never a lot of activity at the house and the blinds were always drawn closed, said neighbors.

"I never saw the woman," said Denton of the Swaziland woman. "It was always just him and her."

The FBI and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Office, or ICE, arrested the Babbs on Wednesday

following their indictment, which has been sealed.

They appeared before a U.S. magistrate who set their bond at \$20,000.

It is unclear how federal officials learned of the woman and the allegations.

In 2003, federal documents show that Michael Babb filed bankruptcy three times between 2003 and 2004.

After posting bond, Babb and his wife asked for permission to travel out of town on a church related trip, said a spokesman for the Department of Justice.

According to their Web site, the Babbs operate Christ Embassy Atlanta Ministry and alledge to minister to churches throughout America in New Jersey, Texas and Boston, Mass., as well as overseas in Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, South Africa and Swaziland.

Find this article at:

<http://www.ajc.com/news/neighbors-shocked-at-allegations-237300.html>

 [Print this page](#) [Close](#)