

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF FLORIDA

THE FLORIDA BAR,

Complainant,

v.

CHINAGOZI IKPEAMA,

Respondent.

Supreme Court Case
No. SC

The Florida Bar File No.
2020-30,572(07A)

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CONDITIONAL GUILTY PLEA FOR CONSENT JUDGMENT

COMES NOW, the undersigned respondent, Chinagozi Ikpeama, and files this Conditional Guilty Plea pursuant to Rule 3-7.9 of the Rules Regulating The Florida Bar.

1. Respondent is, and at all times mentioned herein was, a member of The Florida Bar, subject to the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court of Florida.

2. Respondent is currently the subject of a Florida Bar disciplinary matter which has been assigned The Florida Bar File No. 2020-30,572(07A).

3. As to The Florida Bar File No. 2020-30,572(07A), there has been a finding of probable cause by the grievance committee.

4. Respondent is acting freely and voluntarily in this matter and tenders this Plea without fear or threat of coercion. Respondent is not represented in this matter.

5. The disciplinary measures to be imposed upon respondent are as follows:

A. Public reprimand by publication.

B. Respondent shall attend the trust accounting workshop within six months of the order of the Supreme Court of Florida and pay the \$750.00 workshop fee.

C. Payment of the bar's disciplinary costs.

6. The following allegations provide the basis for respondent's guilty plea and for the discipline to be imposed in this matter:

A. Respondent represented the husband/complainant in a dissolution of marriage case. During the litigation, respondent sought attorney's fees and costs from the wife on his client's behalf. The trial court ordered that the wife pay seventy-five percent of the attorney's fees and costs sought by respondent's client. The April 7, 2017 order specifically enumerated five cost items that the wife was required to pay totaling \$1,538.50. Respondent received funds representing attorney's fees and costs from the wife.

B. During the bar investigation, it was determined that although respondent paid other costs on the client's behalf, respondent failed to disburse the funds paid by the wife for the five itemized costs contained in the April 7, 2017 order.

C. Respondent failed to comply with the Rules Regulating Trust Account. Respondent did not have a trust account nor keep the funds separate from his law firm/personal funds. Respondent failed to provide an accounting of those funds to complainant nor reimburse those costs to complainant. Respondent alleges that the funds were deposited into the wrong account by mistake. Respondent has since mailed a refund of \$1,600.00 to complainant.

7. The following rules provide the basis for respondent's guilty plea and for the discipline to be imposed in this matter: 4-1.15 Safekeeping Property. Compliance With Trust Accounting Rules; 5-1.1(a)(1) Trust Account Required; Commingling Prohibited; 5-1.1(b) Application of Trust Funds or Property to Specific Purpose; 5-1.1(e) Notice of Receipt of Trust Funds; Delivery; Accounting.

8. The following aggravation is applicable in this matter: substantial experience in the practice of law [Fla. Stds. Imposing Law. Sanctions. 3.2(b)(9)].

9. The following mitigation is applicable in this matter: absence of a prior disciplinary record [Fla. Stds. Imposing Law. Sanctions. 3.3(b)(1)]; absence of a dishonest or selfish motive [Fla. Stds. Imposing Law. Sanctions. 3.3(b)(2)]; and, full and free disclosure to the bar or cooperative attitude toward the proceedings [Fla. Stds. Imposing Law. Sanctions. 3.3(b)(1)].

10. The Florida Bar has approved this proposed plea in the manner required by Rule 3-7.9.

11. If this plea is not finally approved by the Board of Governors of The Florida Bar and the Supreme Court of Florida, then it shall be of no effect and may not be used by the parties in any way.

12. If this plea is approved, then respondent agrees to pay all reasonable costs associated with this case pursuant to Rule 3-7.6(q) in the amount of \$1,467.60. These costs are due within 30 days of the court order. Respondent agrees that if the costs are not paid within 30 days of this court's order becoming final, respondent shall pay interest on any unpaid costs at the statutory rate. Respondent further agrees not to attempt to discharge the obligation for payment of the Bar's costs in any future proceedings, including but not limited to, a petition for bankruptcy. Respondent shall be deemed delinquent and ineligible to practice law pursuant to Rule 1-3.6 if the cost judgment is not satisfied within 30 days of

the final court order, unless deferred by the Board of Governors of The Florida Bar.

13. Respondent acknowledges the obligation to pay the costs of this proceeding and that payment is evidence of strict compliance with the conditions of any disciplinary order or agreement and is also evidence of good faith and fiscal responsibility. Respondent understands that failure to pay the costs of this proceeding will reflect adversely on any other bar disciplinary matter in which respondent is involved.

14. This Conditional Guilty Plea for Consent Judgment fully complies with all requirements of the Rules Regulating The Florida Bar.

Dated this 19th day of April, 2021.

Chinagozi Ikpeama
CHINAGOZI IKPEAMA
Respondent
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Orlando, FL 328011050
(386) 960-7801
Florida Bar ID No. 77485
cikpeama@unitedyouandus.com

Dated this 20th day of April, 2021.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen Clark Bankowitz". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

KAREN CLARK BANKOWITZ
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