Public Matter

FILED AD

STATE BAR OF CALIFORNIA 1 NOV 14 2023 STACIA LAGUNA, No. 292446 SPECIAL DEPUTY TRIAL COUNSEL – ADMINISTRATOR STATE BAR COURT ROBERT HENDERSON, No. 173205 **CLERK'S OFFICE** SPECIAL DEPUTY TRIAL COUNSEL SAN FRANCISCO RIZAMARI GONZAGA SITTON, No. 138319 SPECIAL DEPUTY TRIAL COUNSEL 1191 Huntington Drive, #104 Duarte, California 91010 5 Telephone: (626) 784-5914 Email: rcgsitton@outlook.com 6 7 THE STATE BAR COURT 8 HEARING DEPARTMENT - LOS ANGELES 9 Case No. SBC-23-O-30973 In the Matter of: 10 DAVID JONATHAN COHEN, NOTICE OF DISCIPLINARY CHARGES 11 State Bar No. 145748, 12 (OCTC Case No. 21-O-13539 and OCTC Case No. 22-O-3336) An Attorney of the State Bar. 13 **NOTICE - FAILURE TO RESPOND!** 14 IF YOU FAIL TO FILE A WRITTEN ANSWER TO THIS NOTICE 15 WITHIN 20 DAYS AFTER SERVICE, OR IF YOU FAIL TO APPEAR AT THE STATE BAR COURT TRIAL: 16 (1) YOUR DEFAULT WILL BE ENTERED; 17 (2) YOUR STATUS WILL BE CHANGED TO INACTIVE AND YOU WILL NOT BE PERMITTED TO PRACTICE LAW; 18 (3) YOU WILL NOT BE PERMITTED TO PARTICIPATE FURTHER IN THESE PROCEEDINGS UNLESS YOU MAKE A TIMELY MOTION 19 AND THE DEFAULT IS SET ASIDE, AND; (4) YOU SHALL BE SUBJECT TO ADDITIONAL DISCIPLINE. 20 SPECIFICALLY, IF YOU FAIL TO TIMELY MOVE TO SET ASIDE OR VACATE YOUR DEFAULT, THIS COURT WILL ENTER AN 21 ORDER RECOMMENDING YOUR DISBARMENT AND MAY RECOMMEND THE IMPOSITION OF MONETARY SANCTIONS 22 WITHOUT FURTHER HEARING OR PROCEEDING. (SEE RULES PROC. OF STATE BAR, RULES 5.80 ET SEQ. & 5.137.) 23 The State Bar of California, through the Rule 2201 Special Deputy Trial Counsel 24 Administrator, alleges: 25 26

27

JURISDICTION

1. David Jonathan Cohen ("respondent") was admitted to the practice of law in the State of California on January 22, 1990. Respondent was a licensed attorney at all times pertinent to these charges, and is currently a licensee of the State Bar of California.

COUNT ONE

Case No. 21-O-13539
Business and Professions Code section 6106
[Moral Turpitude - Misappropriation]

- 2. On or about September 8, 2018, respondent received on behalf of his incarcerated client, Joshua Galang Gamos ("Gamos"), to whom respondent owed a contractual, statutory, or other legal duty, advanced attorney fees, in the form of a cashier's check from the client's wife, Elaine Gamos, in the amount of \$50,000. Respondent did not deposit the \$50,000 into a client trust account.
- 3. On or about September 10, 2018, respondent received on behalf of Gamos, additional advanced attorney fees, in the form of a cashier's check from the client's spouse, Elaine Gamos, in the sum of \$27,580.20. On or about September 11, 2018, respondent deposited the \$27,580.20 into respondent's client trust account at Wells Fargo Bank, account number xxxxxx0213.
- 4. On or about September 12, 2018, respondent willfully and intentionally misappropriated at least \$4,725.00 that belonged to respondent's client, and thereby committed an act involving moral turpitude, dishonesty or corruption in violation of Business and Professions Code section 6106.
- 5. A violation of section 6106 may result from intentional conduct or grossly negligent conduct. Respondent is charged with committing an intentional misappropriation. However, should the evidence at trial demonstrate that respondent misappropriated funds as a result of grossly negligent conduct, respondent must still be found culpable of violating 6106 because misappropriation through gross negligence is a lesser included offense of intentional misappropriation.

COUNT TWO

Case No. 21-O-13539
Rules of Professional Conduct, rule 1.15(a)
[Failure to Deposit Funds in Client Trust Account]

- 6. On or about January 11, 2019, respondent accepted the appointment as the successor trustee of The Joshua G. Gamos Revocable Living Trust.
- 7. On or about January 15, 2019, respondent received on behalf of The Joshua G. Gamos Revocable Living Trust, to whom respondent owed a contractual, statutory, or other legal duty, funds in the amount of \$562,429.34, in the form of a check from Investment Property Exchange Services, Inc. Respondent failed to deposit the \$562,429.34 check in a bank account identified as respondent's client trust account, in willful violation Rules of Professional Conduct, rule 1.15(a).

COUNT THREE

Case No. 21-O-13539
Business and Professions Code section 6106
[Moral Turpitude - Misappropriation]

- 8. On or about January 11, 2019, respondent accepted the appointment as the successor trustee of The Joshua G. Gamos Revocable Living Trust.
- 9. On or about January 15, 2019, respondent received, on behalf of The Joshua G. Gamos Revocable Living Trust, a check from Investment Property Exchange Services, Inc. (IPX1031), in the approximate sum of \$562,435.
- 10. On or about January 25, 2019, respondent opened a bank account in the name of the Gamos's living trust, and deposited the approximate sum of \$562,435 into the account at Wells Fargo bank, account number xxxxxx4349 (hereinafter "Living Trust Account").
- 11. Between approximately January 25, 2019 and July 18, 2019, respondent made several disbursements from the Living Trust Account, and each time, he transferred the funds into his operating accounts, as follows.
 - On or about February 4, 2019, respondent transferred \$200,000 from the
 Living Trust Account to respondent's client trust account, at Wells Fargo
 Bank, account number xxxxxx0213 (hereinafter "CTA"). On the same date, on or

about February 4, 2019, respondent transferred \$200,000 from his CTA to his business operating account.

- On or about March 5, 2019, respondent transferred \$40,000 from the Living Trust Account to respondent's CTA. On the same date, on or about March 5, 2019, respondent transferred \$40,000 from his CTA to his business operating account.
- On or about March 13, 2019, respondent transferred \$320,000 from the Living
 Trust Account to respondent's CTA. On the same date, on or about March 13,
 2019, respondent transferred \$320,000 from his CTA to his business operating
 account.
- On or about April 9, 2019, respondent transferred \$10,000 from the Living Trust Account to respondent's CTA. On the same date, on or about April 9, 2019, respondent transferred \$10,000 from his CTA to his business operating account.
- On or about July 17, 2019, respondent transferred \$1,000 from the Living Trust
 Account to respondent's CTA. On or about July 18, 2019, respondent transferred
 \$1,000.00 from his CTA to his business operating account.
- 12. On or about April 30, 2019, the balance in respondent's CTA dropped to \$180.80.
- 13. Between approximately February 4, 2019 and July 18, 2019, respondent willfully and intentionally misappropriated a minimum of \$276,741.00 that belonged to respondent's client, and thereby committed an act involving moral turpitude, dishonesty or corruption in violation of Business and Professions Code section 6106.
- 14. A violation of section 6106 may result from intentional conduct or grossly negligent conduct. Respondent is charged with committing an intentional misappropriation. However, should the evidence at trial demonstrate that respondent misappropriated funds as a result of grossly negligent conduct, respondent must still be found culpable of violating 6106 because misappropriation through gross negligence is a lesser included offense of intentional misappropriation.

COUNT FOUR

Case No. 21-O-13539
Rules of Professional Conduct, rule 1.15(a)
[Failure to Maintain Funds in Trust Account]

15. Between approximately February 4, 2019, and July 18, 2019, respondent deposited at least five installments of payments totaling approximately \$571,000.00, into respondent's client trust account at Wells Fargo Bank, account number xxxxxx0213 (CTA), purportedly as advanced fees on behalf of respondent's client, Joshua Galang Gamos. Between approximately February 4, 2019, and July 18, 2019, the CTA balance fell below the amount that belonged to the client on several occasions, including but not limited to the following:

<u>Date</u>	Approx. Amount Required in CTA	CTA Balance
02/04/19	\$ 60,319	\$ 1,280.80
03/05/19	\$ 2,041	\$ 1,280.80
03/13/19	\$ 278,022	\$ 1,280.80
04/09/19	\$ 254,215	\$ 1,280.80
04/30/19	\$ 237,293	\$ 180.80
07/18/19	\$ 163,772	\$ 1,265.80

16. Respondent repeatedly failed to maintain a balance that belonged to respondent's client, in respondent's client trust account, in willful violation of Rules of Professional Conduct, rule 1.15(a).

COUNT FIVE

Case No. 21-O-13539
Rules of Professional Conduct, rule 1.15(d)(4)
[Failure to Render Accounts of Funds]

17. Between approximately September 8, 2018 and January 15, 2019, respondent received on behalf of respondent's incarcerated client, Joshua Galang Gamos, the sum of over \$632,000 ("entrusted funds"), which included cash assets in the amount of \$562,429.34 that belonged to the Joshua G. Gamos Living Trust.

capacity, regarding a criminal law matter, and there was a significant risk the respondent's

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representation of the client would be materially limited by his responsibilities to or relationship with the other client or by the lawyer's own interests because respondent had sole control and authority over assets of the living trust which he used to pay himself attorney fees and legal costs incurred in Gamos's criminal law matter. Respondent did not inform both clients of the relevant circumstances nor of the actual and reasonably foreseeable adverse consequences to the clients, and he did not obtain the written informed consent from each affected client, in willful violation of the Rules of Professional Conduct, rule 1.7(b).

COUNT EIGHT

Case No. 21-O-13539
Business and Professions Code section 6106
[Moral Turpitude – Breach of Fiduciary Duty]

22. On or about January 15, 2019, respondent received funds in the amount of \$562,429.34, belonging to The Joshua G. Gamos Revocable Living Trust. Between approximately January 25, 2019 and April 9, 2019, respondent, in his capacity as successor trustee of the living trust, disbursed the entire amount from the Living Trust as payment of attorney fees and legal costs to himself. In so doing, respondent breached the terms of the living trust, he failed to safeguard the funds for the benefit of the beneficiaries of the trust, and he failed to avoid self-interest transactions, thereby breaching respondent's fiduciary duties owed to the trust. Respondent thereby committed an act involving moral turpitude, dishonesty or corruption in willful violation of Business and Professions Code section 6106.

COUNT NINE

Case No. 21-O-13539
Business and Professions Code section 6068(a)
[Failure to Comply With Laws - Breach of Common Law Fiduciary Duty as a Trustee]

23. On or about January 14, 2019, respondent received funds in the amount of \$562,429.34, belonging to The Joshua G. Gamos Revocable Living Trust. Between approximately January 25, 2019 and April 9, 2019, respondent, in his capacity as successor trustee of the living trust, disbursed the entire amount as payment to himself of legal fees and legal costs. In so doing, respondent breached the terms of the living trust, he failed to safeguard the funds for the benefit of the beneficiaries of the trust, and he failed to avoid self-interest

1	transactions, thereby breaching respondent's fiduciary duties owed to the trust. By breaching				
2	common law fiduciary duties owed to the trust, respondent failed to support the Constitution and				
3	laws of the United States and of this state, in wilful violation of Business and Professions Code				
4	section 6068(a).				
5	COUNT TEN				
6 7	Case No. 21-O-13539 Rules of Professional Conduct, rule 1.15(b)(1) [Failure to Give Written Disclosure to Client Re: Flat Fee Payment]				
8	24. On or about February 4, 2019, respondent received \$200,000 purportedly as advanced				
9	flat fees for the benefit of a client, Joshua Galang Gamos, for representation in a certain criminal				
10	case.				
11	25. On or about February 4, 2019, respondent deposited the \$200,000 into respondent's				
12	business operating account at Wells Fargo Bank, without notifying the client, in writing, of the				
13	client's right to require the flat fee be deposited in a Client Trust Account until the fee is earned,				
14	in willful violation Rules of Professional Conduct, rule 1.15(b)(1).				
15	COUNT ELEVEN				
16 17	Case No. 21-O-13539 Rules of Professional Conduct, rule 1.15(b)(1) [Failure to Give Written Disclosure to Client Re: Flat Fee Payment]				
18	26. On or about March 13, 2019, respondent received \$320,000 purportedly as advanced				
19	flat fees for the benefit of a client, Joshua Galang Gamos, for representation in a certain criminal				
20	case.				
21	27. On or about March 13, 2019, respondent deposited the \$320,000 into respondent's				
22	business operating account at Wells Fargo Bank, without notifying the client, in writing, of the				
23	client's right to require the flat fee be deposited in a Client Trust Account until the fee is earned,				
24	in willful violation Rules of Professional Conduct, rule 1.15(b)(1).				
25	///				
26	///				
27	///				

1	COUNT TWELVE				
2	Case No. 21-O-13539				
3	Rules of Professional Conduct, rule 1.15(b)(2) [Failure To Obtain Client's Written Agreement To Deposit Flat Fee				
4	Exceeding \$1,000 in Operating Account				
5	28. On or about February 4, 2019, Respondent received \$200,000.00 purportedly as				
6	advanced flat fees for the benefit of a client, Joshua Galang Gamos, for representation in a				
7	certain criminal case.				
8	29. On or about February 4, 2019, Respondent deposited the \$200,000.00 into				
9	respondent's operating account at Wells Fargo Bank, without obtaining the client's signed,				
10	written agreement to deposit the funds in the respondent's operating account, in willful violation				
11	Rules of Professional Conduct, rule 1.15(b)(2).				
12	COUNT THIRTEEN				
13	Case No. 21-O-13539 Rules of Professional Conduct, rule 1.15(b)(2)				
14 15	[Failure To Obtain Client's Written Agreement To Deposit Flat Fee Exceeding \$1,000 in Operating Account]				
16	30. On or about March 13, 2019, Respondent received \$320,000.00 purportedly as				
17	advanced flat fees for the benefit of a client, Joshua Galang Gamos, for representation in a				
18	certain criminal case.				
19	31. On or about March 13, 2019, Respondent deposited the \$320,000.00 into				
20	respondent's business operating account at Wells Fargo Bank, without obtaining the client's				
21	signed, written agreement to deposit the funds in the respondent's operating account, in willful				
22	violation Rules of Professional Conduct, rule 1.15(b)(2).				
23	COUNT FOURTEEN				
24	Case No. 21-O-13539 Rules of Professional Conduct, rule 1.2(b)				
25	[Limited Scope of Representation without Client Consent]				
26	32. In or about December 2018, respondent purportedly entered into a legal services				
27	verbal agreement with a client, Joshua Galang Gamos, which limited the scope of his				

1 representation, without obtaining the client's informed consent to his limited scope of 2 representation, in willful violation of Rules of Professional Conduct, rule 1.2(b). 3 COUNT FIFTEEN 4 Case No. 21-O-13539 Rules of Professional Conduct, rule 1.16(e)(2) [Failure to Refund Unearned Fees/Expenses] 5 6 33. Between approximately September 8, 2018 and July 19, 2019, respondent received 7 advanced fees and advanced expenses totaling approximately \$651,200 for the benefit of an 8 incarcerated client, Joshua G. Gamos, for purposes of representing the client in a criminal case. 9 34. Respondent did not earn all of the advanced fees paid. 10 35. Respondent failed to refund promptly, upon respondent's termination of employment 11 on or about September 9, 2020, any part of the \$651,200 that was unearned, in willful violation 12 of Rules of Professional Conduct, rule 1.16(e)(2). 13 COUNT SIXTEEN 14 Case No. 22-O-3336 Rules of Professional Conduct, rule 1.15(b)(2) [Failure To Obtain Client's Written Agreement To Deposit Flat Fee 15 Exceeding \$1,000 in Operating Account 16 17 36. Between approximately July 3, 2019, and April 10, 2020, respondent received a sum 18 of \$14,550 as a flat fee payment for the benefit of a client, Muhammad Khan, as advanced fees for 19 representation in a connection with a petition for habeas corpus. Respondent deposited the fee into 20 respondent's operating account without obtaining the client's signed, written agreement to deposit 21 the flat fee in the respondent's operating account, in willful violation Rules of Professional 22 Conduct, rule 1.15(b)(2). 23 **COUNT SEVENTEEN** 24 Case No. 22-O-3336 Rules of Professional Conduct, rule 1.15(a) 25 [Failure to Deposit Funds in Client Trust Account] 26 37. On or about December 9, 2020, respondent received for the benefit of respondent's 27 client, Muhammand Khan, funds in the amount of \$924.82. Respondent failed to deposit the

1 funds in a bank account identified as respondent's client trust account, in willful violation Rules 2 of Professional Conduct, rule 1.15(a). 3 COUNT EIGHTEEN 4 Case No. 22-O-3336 Rules of Professional Conduct, rule 1.15(a) [Failure to Deposit Funds in Client Trust Account] 5 6 38. On or about January 24, 2022, respondent received for the benefit of respondent's 7 client, Muhammand Khan, funds in the amount of \$3,000.00. Respondent failed to deposit the 8 funds in a bank account identified as respondent's client trust account, in willful violation Rules 9 of Professional Conduct, rule 1.15(a). 10 COUNT NINETEEN 11 Case No. 22-O-3336 Rules of Professional Conduct, rule 1.15(d)(4) 12 [Failure to Render Accounts of Funds] 13 39. Respondent did not account in writing to Muhammad Khan regarding the advanced fees respondent received between July 2019 and April 2020, for services related to habeas 14 15 representation, until approximately March 2023, and respondent thereby failed to promptly 16 account in writing to a client for whom respondent held funds, in willful violation of the Rules of 17 Professional Conduct, rule 1.15(d)(4). 18 **COUNT TWENTY** 19 Case No. 22-O-3336 Rules of Professional Conduct, rule 1.15(d)(4) 20 [Failure to Render Accounts of Funds] 21 40. Respondent did not account in writing to Muhammad Khan regarding the advanced fees and/or advanced costs that respondent received between December 2020 and January 2022, 22 23 for services related to remand and diversion proceedings, until approximately March 2023, and 24 respondent thereby failed to promptly account in writing to a client for whom respondent held 25 funds, in willful violation of the Rules of Professional Conduct, rule 1.15(d)(4). 26

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1	COUNT TWENTY-ONE				
2	Case No. 22-O-3336				
3	Rules of Professional Conduct, rule 1.5(a) [Unconscionable Fee]				
4	41. On or about December 9, 2020, respondent entered into an agreement for payment of				
5	advanced fees of \$8,000 to perform legal services to represent Muhammad Khan in diversion				
6	proceedings. The fees were unconscionable for the following reasons, in willful violation of				
7	Rules of Professional Conduct, rule 1.5(a):				
8	(a) Respondent engaged in overreaching in negotiating or setting the fee;				
9	(b) Respondent failed to disclose material facts;				
10	(c) The client was vulnerable;				
11	(d) The client did not give his informed consent to the fee.				
12	COUNT TWENTY-TWO				
13	Case No. 22-O-3336 Rules of Professional Conduct, Rule 1.8.6 [Accepting Fees From a Non-Client]				
14					
15	42. On or about December 9, 2020, respondent accepted \$924.82 from Faryal Shahid as				
16	compensation for representing a client, Muhammad Khan, without obtaining the client's				
17	informed written consent to receive such compensation in willful violation of Rules of				
18	Professional Conduct, rule 1.8.6.				
19					
20	NOTICE - INACTIVE ENROLLMENT!				
21	YOU ARE HEREBY FURTHER NOTIFIED THAT IF THE STATE BAR COURT FINDS, PURSUANT TO BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONS CODE				
22	SECTION 6007(c), THAT YOUR CONDUCT POSES A SUBSTANTIAL THREAT OF HARM TO THE INTERESTS OF YOUR CLIENTS OR TO				
23	THE PUBLIC, YOU MAY BE INVOLUNTARILY ENROLLED AS AN				
24	INACTIVE ATTORNEY OF THE STATE BAR. YOUR INACTIVE ENROLLMENT WOULD BE IN ADDITION TO ANY DISCIPLINE RECOMMENDED BY THE COURT.				
25	RECOMMENDED DI THE COURT.				
26	NOTICE - COST ASSESSMENT!				
27	IN THE EVENT THESE PROCEDURES RESULT IN PUBLIC				
28	DISCIPLINE, YOU MAY BE SUBJECT TO THE PAYMENT OF COSTS				

INCURRED BY THE STATE BAR IN THE INVESTIGATION, HEARING AND REVIEW OF THIS MATTER PURSUANT TO BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONS CODE SECTION 6086.10. **NOTICE – MONETARY SANCTION!** IN THE EVENT THIS MATTER RESULTS IN ACTUAL SUSPENSION, DISBARMENT, OR RESIGNATION WITH CHARGES PENDING, YOU MAY BE SUBJECT TO THE PAYMENT OF A MONETARY SANCTION NOT TO EXCEED \$5,000 FOR EACH VIOLATION, TO A MAXIMUM OF \$50,000 PER DISCIPLINARY ORDER, PURSUANT TO BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONS CODE SECTION 6086.13. SEE RULE 5.137, RULES OF PROCEDURE OF THE STATE BAR OF CALIFORNIA. Respectfully submitted, THE STATE BAR OF CALIFORNIA DATED: November 14, 2023 Bv: RIZAMARI GONZAGA SITTON Special Deputy Trial Counsel

DECLARATION OF SERVICE

CASE NUMBER(s): 21-O-13539, 22-O-3336

I, the undersigned, am over the age of eighteen (18) years and not a party to the within action, whose business address and place of employment is the State Bar of California, 180 Howard Street, San Francisco, California 94105 declare that:

	NOTICE OF DISCIP	LINARY CHARGES				
By U.S. First-Clas	s Mail: (CCP §§ 1013 and 1013(a))					
By U.S. Certified M - in accordance with City and County of Los Angel	Tail: (CCP §§ 1013 and 1013(a)) the practice of the State Bar of California for colle es.	ection and processing of mail, I de	posited or placed for collection and mailing in the			
	very: (CCP §§ 1013(c) and 1013(d)) ar with the State Bar of California's practice for co	llection and processing of corresp	ondence for overnight delivery by the United			
Based on agreement o	ion: (CCP §§ 1013(e) and 1013(f)) f the parties to accept service by fax transmission, machine that I used. The original record of the fa	I faxed the documents to the person x transmission is retained on file a	ons at the fax numbers listed herein below. No nd available upon request.			
By Electronic Service: (CCP § 1010.6 and Rules of Proc. of State Bar, rule 5.26.2) Based on rule 5.26.2, a court order, or an agreement of the parties to accept service by electronic transmission, I caused the above-named document(s) to be transmitted by electronic means to the person(s) at the electronic address(es) listed below. If there is a signature on the document(s), I am the signer of the document(s), I am the agent of, or I am serving the document(s) at the direction of, the signer of the document(s). I did not receive, within a reasonable time after the transmission, any electronic message or other indication that the transmission was unsuccessful.						
(for U.S. First-Class Ma	in a sealed envelope placed for collection	and mailing at Los Angeles, a	addressed to: (see below)			
(for Certified Mail) in a sealed envelope placed for collection and mailing as certified mail, return receipt requested, Article at San Francisco, addressed to: (see below) No.:						
(for Overnight Delivery)	together with a copy of this declaration, in	an envelope, or package design	nated by UPS,			
Tracking No.:	9414 7266 9904 2204 7188 30	addressed to: (see below)				
Person Served	Business Address	Fax Number	Courtesy Copy to:			
David Jonathan Cohen	Bay Area Criminal Lawyers, PC 7567 Amador Valley Blvd Ste 302 Dublin, CA 94568-2443	Electronic Address	*			
via inter-office mail regul	arly processed and maintained by the Stat	e Bar of California addresse	d to:			
	N/A					
Service, and overnight delivery	th the State Bar of California's practice for collect by the United Parcel Service ('UPS'). In the ordin of California would be deposited with the United Sor, with UPS that same day.	ary course of the State Bar of Cali	fornia's practice, correspondence collected			
I am aware that on moti	ion of the party served, service is presumed invalid	if postal cancellation date or post	age meter date on the envelope or package is			

I declare under penalty of perjury, under the laws of the State of California, that the foregoing is true and correct.

DATED: November 14, 2023

SIGNED:

Yadira Medina Declarant

State Bar of California **DECLARATION OF SERVICE**