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2		DISCIPLINARY BOARD
4		OF THE

DISCIPLINARY BOARD

WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

In re

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Proceeding No. 13#00112

BAKARY FANSU CONTEH,

Lawyer (WSBA No.35098)

DISCIPLINARY BOARD ORDER DECLINING SUA SPONTE REVIEW AND ADOPTING HEARING OFFICER'S **DECISION**

This matter came before the Disciplinary Board for consideration of sua sponte review pursuant to ELC 11.3(a). On July 6, 2015, the Clerk distributed the attached decision to the Board.

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT the Board declines sua sponte review and adopts the Hearing Officer's decision1.

Dated this ¹ day of July, 2015.

Jennifer A. Il Vernousis Disciplinary Board Chair

¹ The vote on this matter was 14-0. The following Board members voted: Dremousis, Bloomfield, Davis, Carney, Coy, McInvaille, Fischer, Andeen, Berger, Cottrell, Smith, Mesher, Egeler and Myers.

Board Order Declining Sua Sponte Review and Adopting Decision Page 1 of 1

WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION 1325 4th Avenue, Suite 600 Seattle, WA 98101-2539 (206) 727-8207

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

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BEFORE THE DISCIPLINARY BOARD OF THE WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

In re

BAKARY FANSU CONTEH

Lawyer (Bar No. 35098).

Proceeding No. 13#00112

FINDINGS OF FACT, CONCLUSIONS OF LAW, AND HEARING OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATIONS

Pursuant to Rule 10.13 of the Rules for Enforcement of Lawyer Conduct ("ELC"), a hearing was held before the undersigned Hearing Officer on January 14 and 15, 2015.

Disciplinary counsel Debra Slater appeared for the Office of Disciplinary Counsel ("ODC") of the Washington State Bar Association. Respondent Bakary Fansu Conteh appeared *pro se*.

I. FORMAL COMPLAINT

Respondent was charged by formal complaint dated December 23, 2013, with 5 counts of violation of the rules of professional conduct. Counts 1 – 2 involve Respondent's representation of Ms. Saffie Badjie in an immigration matter. Counts 3 – 5 involve Respondent's representation of Mr. John Muthaka in a personal injury matter.

COUNT 1

By failing to file his appeal brief on time, and/or by failing to file a Motion to Accept Late-Filed Brief that complied with the Board of Immigration Appeals' ("BIA") rules, Respondent violated RPC 1.1 and/or RPC 1.3.

FINDINGS OF FACT, CONCLUSIONS OF LAW, AND HEARING OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATIONS - 1

COUNT 2

By failing to inform Ms. Badjie that he had filed his appeal brief after it was due, Respondent violated RPC 1.4.

COUNT 3

By failing to communicate the basis or rate of his fee to Mr. Muthaka, and/or by having a contingent fee agreement that was not in writing and/or did not communicate the information required under RPC 1.5(c)(2), Respondent violated RPC 1.5(b) and/or RPC 1.5(c).

COUNT 4

By failing to make reasonably diligent efforts to settle Mr. Muthaka's claim, by failing to protect Mr. Muthaka's interests by filing suit before the statute of limitations expired, and/or by failing to understand the significance of allowing the statute of limitations to expire, Respondent violated RPC 1.1 and RPC 1.3.

COUNT 5

By failing to keep Mr. Muthaka reasonably informed about the status of his claim, by failing to inform him when the statute of limitations would expire, and/or by failing to inform him that the statute of limitations had expired, Respondent violated RPC 1.4.

II. HEARING

At the hearing on January 14 and 15, 2015, six witnesses were sworn and presented testimony, and various exhibits were admitted into evidence. The transcript in this matter was received in late January, and post-hearing briefs and proposed finding of fact and conclusions of law were successfully received by mid-March.

III. FINDINGS OF FACT

After having considered the testimony of the witnesses and other exhibits, and having reviewed the post hearing written arguments of counsel and proposed findings of fact and conclusions of law, the Hearing Officer finds the following facts were established by a clear

FINDINGS OF FACT, CONCLUSIONS OF LAW, AND HEARING OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATIONS - 2

preponderance of the evidence. ELC 10.14(b). The following findings regarding Counts 1 through 5 are based on the evidence presented at the hearing, specific exhibits or testimony reflected in the hearing record.

A. <u>Jurisdictional Facts.</u>

- 1. Respondent was admitted to practice law in Washington on June 21, 2004.
- 2. Respondent is a sole practitioner. More than 50% of his practice is in the area of immigration law. (TR 49). He also has a limited practice in family law and has done some very limited personal injury work (TR 49).

B. Findings of Fact Regarding Counts 1-2 of the Bar Complaint.

- 1. Saffie Badjie entered the United States in 2002 from the Gambia on a visitor visa and remained in the United States beyond the date authorized by her visa. (EX 106).
- 2. Concerned about Ms. Badjie's immigration status, Ms. Badjie's husband contacted Respondent in November 2008 about having him assist with her immigration matter. Ms. Badjie and her husband lived in Minnesota and had resided previously in Atlanta (TR 309), (TR 50-51).
- 3. In January 2008, while travelling from Minnesota to Seattle, Ms. Badjie was arrested and detained by the United States Department of Homeland Security. Ms. Badjie then had her 11 month old United States Citizen daughter with her. She was placed in removal proceedings and issued a Notice to Appear at a date to be determined. (EX 106).
- 4. Ms. Badjie had previously received a letter from her mother that placed her in fear of returning to the Gambia. In the letter, her mother wanted to have Ms. Badjie's daughter subjected to female genital mutilation ("FGM"). (EX 107).
- 5. Respondent met with Ms. Badjie in January 2008. (TR 52).
- 6. Ms. Badjie had been subjected to FGM herself and did not want this for her daughter. Respondent advised her that this fear for her daughter, along with her own past persecution, gave Ms. Badjie a basis for seeking asylum. (TR 59-62, 311).
- 7. Respondent filed his Notice of Appearance in Ms. Badjie's case on April 20, 2009. (EX 109).
- 8. On November 12, 2009, Respondent filed an Application for Asylum on behalf of Ms. Badjie. (TR 68; EX 110).

FINDINGS OF FACT, CONCLUSIONS OF LAW, AND HEARING OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATIONS - 3

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- 9. On March 8, 2011, a Merits or Individual Hearing on Ms. Badjie's asylum case took place in the Immigration Court in Bloomington, Minnesota. Respondent represented Ms. Badjie at the hearing. Evidence was presented and testimony was taken. (TR 69).
- 10. On the same day, Immigration Judge Susan Castro delivered her oral decision denying Ms. Badjie's request for asylum and denying her request for voluntary departure. (TR 70; EX 115).
- 11. Respondent was present when the judge delivered her decision from the bench, including her reasoning, at the March 8, 2011 hearing and therefore knew the result of her decision and the reasons therefor. (TR 58).
- 12. Respondent received a copy of the Order of the Immigration Judge on the day of the hearing. The proof of service reflects that a copy was served on Respondent on March 8, 2011. (EX 116).
- 13. Following the hearing, Respondent and Ms. Badjie discussed the options available to her. Ms. Badjie decided to appeal the judge's decision. She hired Respondent to handle the appeal and agreed to pay him an additional \$1,500. (TR 71, 319).
- 14. On March 25, 2011, Respondent filed a Notice of Appeal, EOIR Form 26 and Notice of Appearance with the BIA. (EX 116).
- 15. In item #8 of the Notice of Appeal, Respondent indicated that he intended to file a separate brief. Immediately below that statement, the following admonition appeared on the form:

WARNING: If you mark "Yes" in item #8, you will be expected to file a written brief or statement after you receive a briefing schedule from the Board. The Board may summarily dismiss your appeal if you do not file a brief or statement within the time set in the briefing schedule. (EX 116).

- 16. Respondent was aware of the warning when he signed the Notice of Appeal. (TR 73).
- 17. On April 6, 2011, the BIA sent Respondent an acknowledgement that it had received the appeal. The receipt contained the following language:

If you have any questions about how to file something at the Board, you should review the Board's <u>Practice Manual</u> at <u>www.justice.gov/eoir</u>. (EX 117).

- 18. Respondent had access to the Practice Manual and was familiar with it. (TR 75).
- 19. The Practice Manual describes procedures, requirements, and recommendations for practice before the BIA. (EX 105, pg. 1).
- 20. The Practice Manual provides that the BIA date stamps all filings and strongly recommends that parties file as far in advance of the deadline as possible. (EX 105, pg. 31; TR 75).
- 21. The Practice Manual also states:

If a brief is untimely, it is rejected and returned to the party with an explanation for the rejection. Parties wishing to refile an untimely brief must file a motion asking the Board to accept the untimely brief and include documentary evidence to support their motion, including such evidence as affidavits and declarations under penalty of perjury. (EX 105, Ch. 3.1(c)(iii), pg. 32).

- 22. The BIA Practice Manual emphasizes the importance of timely filing of briefs. For example, "Briefs must arrive at the Board by the dates set in the briefing schedule," (EX 105, pg. 46, Sec. 4.2(e)). "Briefs must be timely." (EX 105, pg. 53, Sec. 4.6(a)). In non-detained cases, the appealing party has 21 calendar days to file their brief. If a brief is untimely, it is rejected. The Board may reject a brief as untimely at any time prior to the final adjudication of the appeal. (EX 105, pg. 60, Sec 4.7(a)(i) and (b)).
- On May 26, 2011, the BIA sent Respondent a "Notice-Briefing Schedule." The brief in Ms. Badjie's case was due on June 16, 2011. The briefing schedule contained a warning that the brief must be **RECEIVED** at the Board on or before that date. [emphasis in original]. There was also a warning that if the brief is not filed within the time set for filing in the briefing schedule, the appeal may be summarily dismissed. The Notice also stated that extensions of briefing time will only be granted for good cause, that it is the policy of the Board that no additional extensions will be granted. (EX 118).
- 24. The briefing schedule also refers to 8 CFR § 1003.1(d)(2)(i)(E), which provides that an appeal may be summarily dismissed if a brief is not filed within the time set for filing. (EX 103).
- 25. Respondent knew of the BIA's requirements that briefs be timely filed. (TR 76-82).

2	20.	Ine May 26, 2011, Notice also stated that a copy of the decision of the Immigration Judge was enclosed, as well as a copy of the transcript of the testimony of record. (EX 118).	
3	27.	Respondent testified that a copy of the decision of the Immigration Judge was not enclosed and that the signed oral decision was sent to him on June 9, 2011. (TR 85; EX 119).	
5	28.	Elizabeth Holmes, an expert in the area of immigration law and Ms. Badjie's	
6 7		current lawyer, testified that although it could happen, she never had an experience where the decision of the judge was not enclosed with the Notice – Briefing Schedule. (TR 274-275).	
9	29.	Respondent's testimony on this issue appeared to reflect his belief that this delay was a justification for filing his brief late. Respondent's position on this issue is unwavering.	
10 11 12	30.	Respondent filed a Motion for Extension of Time to File Appeal Brief one day before the brief was due. The Motion was received by the BIA on June 15, 2011. (EX 120).	
13	31.	Respondent did not attach any affidavits, declarations, or other evidence to the motion, as required by the BIA. (TR 350).	
14 15	32.	Ms. Holmes, the expert in immigration law, testified that filing a request one day before the original deadline was risky. (TR 286).	
16 17	33.	Nonetheless, on June 15, 2011, the BIA granted the extension and set July 7, 2011, as the date the brief must be received at the BIA. (EX 121).	
18	34.	The appellant's brief was finally received by the BIA on July 8, 2011. The brief was not timely filed and Respondent knew that it had been filed late. (TR 351;	
19		EX 122).	
20	35.	Respondent testified that by June 10, 2011, about 29 days before the brief was due, he had everything he needed to prepare and file the brief. (TR 360).	
22 23	36.	Respondent's explanation at the hearing for filing the brief late was that he did not have enough time. Respondent's explanation was confusing and not credible. (TR 361).	
24	37.	Respondent filed a Motion for Permission to Accept Late Appeal Brief. (EX 123).	
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1 38. The motion did not include affidavits or declarations as required by the BIA. Respondent testified that he knew that the Practice Manual stated that 2 statements made in motions are not evidence. (TR 372). 3 39. In that motion, Respondent alleged that on July 6, 2011, the day before the brief was due, he had been "held up" in a bond hearing at the Immigration Court at 4 the Detention Center in Tacoma, and he had been further delayed because of heavy traffic in Tacoma. He stated that he had attempted to send the brief by 5 courier, but the "mails to the East Coast leave early in the afternoon." (EX 6 123). 7 40. The Immigration Judge Detainee Calendar shows that the hearing for Respondent's client, David Njenga, was scheduled to begin at 1:00 PM on July 8 6, 2011. (EX 132). 9 41. The Detention Center security procedures require visitors to the Detention Center, including attorneys, to sign in and be issued a pass and to sign out when 10 finished. (TR 366). 11 42. The Attorney Visitation Log for July 6, 2011, shows that Respondent, who was 12 assigned Pass #21, signed in on July 6, 2011, at 12:46 PM and signed out at 1:29 PM. Respondent spent a total of 43 minutes at the Detention Center. (EX 13 132). 14 43. Respondent had sufficient time to file the brief on or before July 6, 2011. His statement that he was delayed at the Detention Center is not credible and does 15 not justify filing the brief late. 16 44. Respondent testified that he sent a copy of the brief and the motion to Ms. 17 Badjie without any explanation. He testified that this was his ordinary practice and if Ms. Badjie had any questions, she would call him. (TR 373-374). 18 On August 23, 2012, Respondent was suspended from the practice of law for six 45. 19 months by the Washington State Supreme Court. Respondent sent a letter to 20 Ms. Badjie notifying her of his suspension and advising her to seek new counsel. (EX 303; TR 320). 21 46. Ms. Badjie consulted with lawyer Elizabeth Holmes in August 2012. Ms. 22 Badjie brought with her all of the documents she had received from Respondent, which she believed was her complete file. (TR 322). 23 Ms. Holmes telephoned the BIA's automated information system to obtain 47. 24 information about Ms. Badjie's case. Based on the information she obtained 25 from the information system and the documents Ms. Badjie brought to her, Ms. Holmes concluded that the documents Ms. Badjie had provided her were not FINDINGS OF FACT, CONCLUSIONS OF LAW, AND HEARING

OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATIONS - 7

1 2		complete. She also concluded that it appeared the brief had been filed late. (TR 263-266).
3	48.	The Motion for Permission to Accept Late Filed Brief was not among the documents Ms. Badjie brought to Ms. Holmes. (TR 263-266).
4	49.	Ms. Holmes advised Ms. Badjie to contact Respondent and request her complete
5 6		file, which she did. Respondent then provided the complete file to Ms. Badjie. The complete file contained the Motion for Permission to Accept Late Filed Brief. (TR 263-266; EX 127; TR 277).
7	50.	
8]	Ms. Holmes informed Ms. Badjie that the brief had been filed late. This was the first time Ms. Badjie knew that the brief had been filed late. (TR 277, 323).
9	51.	Ms. Badjie was concerned and worried that because the brief had been filed late, she would be deported to the Gambia. (TR 324).
10	52.	Ms. Holmes filed a motion to remand the case back to the Immigration Court.
11		One of the bases for the motion was the ineffective assistance of counsel based
12		on the late filing of the brief and the fact that Respondent did not tell Ms. Badjie that the brief had been filed late. (EX 129).
13	53.	As part of the motion to remand, Ms. Badjie filed an Affidavit of Ineffective
14		Assistance of Counsel, stating that Mr. Conteh did not tell her that the brief had been filed late. (EX 128).
15 16	54.	The BIA thereafter remanded the case. The case is now pending before the Immigration Court. (TR 278; EX 130).
17		55. Had the Motion to Remand not been filed, the BIA could have rejected
18		the late filed brief and dismissed s. Badjie's appeal. (TR 278).
19	C. Findir	ngs of Fact Regarding Counts 3-5 of the Bar Complaint.
20	1.	On August 14, 2009, Mr. John Muthaka was injured in an automobile accident.
21		His vehicle was totaled. His vehicle was rear-ended while stopped, so he had no fault in the accident. (TR 96, 98, 186).
22	2.	Mr. Muthaka only carried liability insurance which did not cover his bodily injury or property damage. He did not have medical insurance. (TR 99).
23	3.	After the accident, Mr. Muthaka consulted with Respondent about the accident
24		because Respondent was already representing him on an immigration matter. (TR 205). Mr. Muthaka did not know how to proceed because he had never
25		been involved in an accident before. (TR 100).

1	14.	After the transcript of the deposition, Respondent made numerous corrections to his deposition testimony. However, he did not correct his deposition testimony
2		on this point. (TR 220-221; EX 407).
3	15.	In his response to ODC's analysis letter, Respondent stated that he did not have a contingent fee agreement with Mr. Muthaka. Respondent admitted that this
4 5		statement contradicted his deposition testimony. (TR 2212; EX 403).
6	16.	Respondent also testified that the fee arrangement was a flat fee of \$3,000 plus an hourly component. (TR 223).
7 8	17.	Respondent's testimony about the fee arrangement is contradictory and inconsistent. Respondent's testimony about the fee arrangement is ultimately not credible.
9 10	18.	Mr. Muthaka testified at hearing that Respondent did not discuss his fee arrangement with him except to tell him to wait until the case settled and then Respondent would let him know what the fees were. (TR 125).
11 12	19.	Mr. Muthaka consulted with Respondent several times concerning his case. Respondent told him to continue seeing his chiropractor. (TR 104).
13 14	20.	Mr. Muthaka testified that Respondent did not discuss settling the case with him, did not advise him that a lawsuit might have to be filed, and did not advise him that the statute of limitations was three years. (TR 104).
15 16 17	21.	Respondent testified that he told Mr. Muthaka that generally they have a three-year period to come up with the claim and it is important he get well before the case was settled. Respondent's testimony on this point is not credible. (TR 211).
18	22.	Mr. Muthaka provided his medical bills to Respondent. (TR 109).
19 20	23.	Victoria Schubert, Allstate Insurance claims adjuster, testified that Allstate maintains a log, the Allstate Claim History Report, that chronicles the actions
21		taken on a case. (TR 145; EX 206).
22	24.	The Report shows that on February 17, 2010, Allstate sent a letter to Mr. Muthaka enclosing forms for him to sign and return to Allstate. (EX 202).
23 24	25.	On April 20, 2010, Respondent returned the forms by fax to Heather Blau, one of the Allstate employees handling Mr. Muthaka's case. He also faxed Ms. Blau his letter of representation. One of the forms Respondent faxed to Ms.
25		Blau was an "Authorization to Disclose Wage/Employer Information" that Mr.

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- 68. Respondent was suspended from the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit on October 2, 2012. (EX 309).
- 69. Respondent was suspended from the U.S. District Court Western District of Washington on October 16, 2012. (EX 310).
- 70. Respondent was suspended for practicing before the Board of Immigration Courts and the Department of Homeland Security on October 22, 2012. (EX 311).

IV. SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS OF LAW ON COUNTS OF THE COMPLAINT

Based on the foregoing Findings of Fact found to have been established by a clear preponderance of the evidence, the Hearing Officer makes the following Conclusions of Law:

COUNT 1: By failing to file his appeal brief on time, and by failing to file a Motion to Accept Late-Filed Brief that complied with the BIA's rules, Respondent's conduct violated RPC 1.1 and RPC 1.3.

COUNT 2: By failing to inform Ms. Badjie that he had filed his appeal brief after it was due, Respondent's conduct violated RPC 1.4.

COUNT 3: By failing to communicate the basis or rate of his fee to Mr. Muthaka, and by having a contingent fee agreement that was not in writing and did not communicate the information required under RPC 1.5(c)(2), Respondent's conduct violated RPC 1.5(b) and RPC 1.5(c).

COUNT 4: By failing to make reasonably diligent efforts to settle Mr. Muthaka's claim, by failing to protect Mr. Muthaka's interests by filing suit before the statute of limitations expired, and by failing to ascertain the significance of allowing the statute of limitations to expire, Respondent's conduct violated RPC 1.1 and RPC 1.3.

COUNT 5: By failing to keep Mr. Muthaka reasonably informed about the status of his claim, by failing to inform him when the statute of limitations would expire, and by failing

FINDINGS OF FACT, CONCLUSIONS OF LAW, AND HEARING OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATIONS - 15

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to inform him that the statute of limitations had expired, Respondent's conduct violated RPC 1.4.

V. PRESUMPTIVE SANCTIONS

A presumptive sanction must be determined for each ethical violation.¹ Applying the Presumptive Sanctions sections as the Hearing Officer is required to do under Washington law set forth in the American Bar Association ("ABA") Standards for Imposing Lawyer Sanctions ("ABA Standards") is a two-step process. The first step is to determine the presumptive sanction, considering the ethical duty violated, the lawyer's mental state, and the extent of the harm caused by the misconduct.² The second step is to consider whether aggravating or mitigating factors should alter the presumptive sanction.³

ABA Standard 4.0 Violations of Duties Owed to Clients

ABA Standard 4.4 Lack of Diligence.

Absent aggravating or mitigating circumstances, upon application of the factors set out in Standard 3.0, the following sanctions are generally appropriate in cases involving a failure to act with reasonable diligence and promptness in representing a client:

- **4.41** Disbarment is generally appropriate when:
- (a) a lawyer abandons the practice and causes serious or potentially serious injury to a client; or
- (b) a lawyer knowingly fails to perform services for a client and causes serious or potentially serious injury to a client; or
- (c) a lawyer engages in a pattern of neglect with respect to client matters and causes serious or potentially serious injury to a client.
- 4.42 Suspension is generally appropriate when:
- (a) a lawyer knowingly fails to perform services for a client and causes injury or potential injury to a client, or

¹ In re Anschell, 149 Wn.2d 484, 69 P.3d 844, 852 (2003).

² ABA Standard 3; In re Whitt, 149 Wn.2d 707, 717, 72 P.3d 173 (2003).

³ In re Johnson, 118 Wn.2d 693, 701, 826 P.2d 186 (1992).

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- (b) a lawyer engages in a pattern of neglect and causes injury or potential injury to a client.
- **4.43** Reprimand is generally appropriate when a lawyer is negligent and does not act with reasonable diligence in representing a client, and causes injury or potential injury to a client.
- **4.44** Admonition is generally appropriate when a lawyer is negligent and does not act with reasonable diligence in representing a client, and causes little or no actual or potential injury to a client.

ABA Standard 4.5 Lack of Competence.

Absent aggravating or mitigating circumstances, upon application of the factors set out in Standard 3.0, the following sanctions are generally appropriate in cases involving failure to provide competent representation to a client:

- **4.51** Disbarment is generally appropriate when a lawyer's course of conduct demonstrates that the lawyer does not understand the most fundamental legal doctrines or procedures, and the lawyer's conduct causes injury or potential injury to a client.
- 4.52 Suspension is generally appropriate when a lawyer engages in an area of practice in which the lawyer knows he or she is not competent, and causes injury or potential injury to a client.
- 4.53 Reprimand is generally appropriate when a lawyer:
- (a) demonstrates failure to understand relevant legal doctrines or procedures and causes injury or potential injury to a client; or
- (b) is negligent in determining whether he or she is competent to handle a legal matter and causes injury or potential injury to a client.
- 4.54 Admonition is generally appropriate when a lawyer engages in an isolated instance of negligence in determining whether he or she is competent to handle a legal matter and causes little or no actual or potential injury to a client

ABA Standard 7.0 Violations of Duties Owed As a Professional

ABA Standard 7.1 Disbarment is generally appropriate when a lawyer knowingly engages in conduct that is a

violation of a duty owed as a professional with the intent to obtain a benefit for the lawyer or another, and causes serious or potentially serious injury to a client, the public or the legal system.

ABA Standard 7.2 Suspension is generally appropriate when a lawyer knowingly engages in conduct that is a violation of a duty owed as a professional and causes injury or potential injury to a client, the public, or the legal system.

ABA Standard 7.3 Reprimand is generally appropriate when a lawyer negligently engages in conduct that is a violation of a duty owed as a professional and causes injury or potential injury to a client, the public, or the legal system.

ABA Standard 7.4 Admonition is generally appropriate when a lawyer engages in an isolated instance of negligence that is a violation of a duty owed as a professional, and causes little or no actual or potential injury to a client, the public, or the legal system.

Having carefully weighed applicable presumptive sanctions and having considered aggravating and mitigating circumstances set forth in Section 9.22, the Hearing Officer finds the following aggravating factors present:

- (a) prior disciplinary offenses (Respondent received a reprimand in 2009 for violating RPC 8.4(c), and he was suspended for six months in 2012 for violating RPC 3.3, RPC 8.4(c), and RPC 8.4(d));
- (b) dishonest or selfish motive;
- (c) a pattern of misconduct;
- (d) multiple offenses;
- (g) refusal to acknowledge wrongful nature of conduct;

No mitigating factors are applicable.

Respondent acted knowingly in failing to diligently represent Ms. Badjie and Mr. Muthaka, resulting in injury to both Ms. Badjie and Mr. Muthaka. Mr. Muthaka has received no compensation for his bodily injuries or his property loss due to the running of the statute of limitations on his claims, and he has substantial medical bills that have been turned over to collection agencies. In Ms. Badjie's circumstance, there was injury to the legal system because

FINDINGS OF FACT, CONCLUSIONS OF LAW, AND HEARING OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATIONS - 18

additional time and resources had to be expended on her case because Respondent filed her brief late. Ms. Badjie was injured because she suffered the anxiety of her case not proceeding as she thought it would and the emotional distress as a result of Respondent's actions. She also suffered potential injury in that her case might have been dismissed and ultimately possible deportation had she not obtained new counsel who filed a Motion to Remand. The presumptive sanction is suspension.

Respondent acted knowingly in failing to keep Mr. Muthaka reasonably informed about the status of his case, failing to inform him when the statute of limitations would run, and failing to inform him that the statute of limitations had expired. Mr. Muthaka was injured because had Respondent informed him about when the statute of limitations ran, he could have taken steps to ensure that his claim was protected. Instead, he was deprived of that opportunity.

Respondent also acted knowingly in failing to inform Ms. Badjie that he had filed the brief in her case late. Similarly, Respondent knowingly did not send Ms. Badjie a copy of the Motion for Permission to Accept Late Filed Brief, which would have alerted her to the fact that he had filed the brief late. She suffered potential injury as a result. If Ms. Holmes had not investigated her case and discovered the untimely brief, Ms. Badjie's appeal might have been dismissed, and she would have been subject to being deported.

Respondent also acted knowingly in failing to competently represent Ms. Badjie and Mr. Muthaka. Respondent lacked an understanding of and appreciation for the necessity of timely filing Ms. Badjie's brief. He also clearly lacked a basic understanding of how to handle a personal injury case. Further, he demonstrated that he did not understand the importance of the statute of limitations. Ms. Badjie and the legal system were injured. Ms. Badjie has suffered emotional distress and the legal system has been burdened because court time has been expended in the remand of Ms. Badjie's case. Mr. Muthaka was injured in that he has

received no compensation for his injuries or property damage, even though Allstate would have compensated him potentially making him whole for his losses. The presumptive sanction is suspension.

Respondent acted knowingly in failing to communicate the basis or rate of his fee to Mr. Muthaka and by having a contingent fee agreement that was not in writing and did not communicate the information required by RPC 1.5(c)(2). Mr. Muthaka suffered potential injury. Had there been any monetary recovery on his case, it is unclear what fees would have been. This uncertainty constitutes injury. The presumptive sanction is suspension.

Based on this review of aggravating and mitigating factors, the Hearing Officer specifically finds, pursuant to the ABA Standards for Imposing Lawyer Sanctions, the following conclusions under the Presumptive Section Standards, which are again set out by individual count.

COUNT 1: After finding Respondent engaged in an area of practice knowing he was not competent by failing to file his appeal brief on time and failing to file a Motion to Accept Late Filed Brief which complied with the BIA's rules, in violation of RPC 1.1 and RPC 1.3. The Hearing Officer, after weighing appropriate aggravating and mitigating factors, finds the presumptive ABA Standards of 4.4 and 4.5 apply, and in applying the mitigating and aggravating factors, also finds there is no basis to depart from the presumptive standard of suspension.

COUNT 2: After finding the Respondent knowingly failed to inform Ms. Badjie that he had filed his appeal brief after it was due in violation of RPC 1.4, the Hearing Officer, after weighing appropriate aggravating and mitigating factors, finds the presumptive ABA Standard 4.4 applies, and in applying the mitigating and aggravating factors, also finds there is no basis to depart from the presumptive standard of suspension.

COUNT 3: After finding the Respondent knowingly failed to communicate the basis or rate of his fee to Mr. Muthaka and had a contingent fee agreement that was not in writing and did not communicate the information required under RPC 1.5(c)(2) in violation of RPC 1.5(b) and RPC 1.5(c), the Hearing Officer, after weighing appropriate aggravating and mitigating factors, finds the presumptive ABA Standard 7.0 applies, and in applying the mitigating and aggravating factors, also finds there is no basis to depart from the presumptive standard of suspension.

COUNT 4: After finding the Respondent knowingly failed to make reasonably diligent efforts to settle Mr. Muthaka's claim, failed to protect Mr. Muthaka's interests by filing suit before the statute of limitations expired, and failed to apprehend the significance of allowing the statute of limitations to expire in violation of RPC 1.1 and RPC 1.3, the Hearing Officer, after weighing appropriate aggravating and mitigating factors, finds the presumptive ABA Standards 4.4 and 4.5 apply, and in applying the mitigating and aggravating factors, also finds there is no basis to depart from the presumptive standard of suspension.

COUNT 5: Finally, after finding the Respondent knowingly failed to keep Mr. Muthaka reasonably informed about the status of his claim, failed to inform him when the statute of limitations would expire, and failed to inform him that the statute of limitations had expired in violation of RPC 1.4, the Hearing Officer, after weighing appropriate aggravating and mitigating factors, finds the presumptive ABA Standard 4.4 applies, and in applying the mitigating and aggravating factors, also finds there is no basis to depart from the presumptive standard of suspension.

FINDINGS OF FACT, CONCLUSIONS OF LAW, AND HEARING OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATIONS - 21

VI. RECOMMENDATION SANCTION AND CONCLUSION, AND RESTITUTION

When multiple ethical violations are found, the ultimate sanction imposed should at least be consistent with the sanction for the most serious instance of misconduct. Based on the ABA Standards and the aggravating and mitigating factors evaluated at length above, the Hearing Officer recommends that Respondent Bakary Fansu Conteh be suspended for two years. Finally, I further recommend that restitution to grievant Mr. Muthaka be ordered in the amount of \$11,324.41 (which Respondent's own Closing Argument and Response to ODC's Proposed Findings, et al apparently accepts as "appropriate and fair here"), reflecting Mr. Muthaka's unpaid medical bills and that future reinstatement of Respondent from suspension be conditioned on the payment of restitution noted here.

DATED this 20th day of April, 2015

David W. Wiley, WSBA #08614 Hearing Officer

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

to be delivered to the Office of Disciplinary Counsel and to be mailed to Man 1990 to 1990 to

⁴ In re the Matter of the Disciplinary Proceeding Against Richard A. Peterson, 120 Wn.2d 833, 854 (1993); In re the Matter of the Disciplinary Proceeding Against Alec M. Schwimmer, 153 Wn.2d 752, 759, 108 P.3d 761 (2005); In re Disciplinary Proceeding Against Romero, 152 Wn.2d 124, 135, 94 P.3d 939 (2004).

⁵ Respondent's Closing Argument, and Response to ODC's Proposed Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law and Hearing Officer's Recommendation at p. 7.

Allison Sato

From:

Gruber, Maggi <MGruber@williamskastner.com>

Sent:

Tuesday, April 21, 2015 5:15 PM

To: Cc: Allison Sato Wiley, Dave

Subject:

FW: Proceeding No. 13#00112 | Bakary Fansu Conteh Lawyer Bar #35098 | Findings of

and with the second

Fact and Conclusions of Law and Hearing Officer's Recommendations

Attachments:

 $WKG-\#5377518-v3-Conteh_FOF_COL_Hearing_Officer_s_recommendations.pdf$

Document attached.

From: Gruber, Maggi

Sent: Tuesday, April 21, 2015 5:14 PM

To: allisons@wsba.org Cc: Wiley, Dave

Subject: Proceeding No. 13#00112 | Bakary Fansu Conteh Lawyer Bar #35098 | Findings of Fact and Conclusions of

Law and Hearing Officer's Recommendations

Ms. Sato,

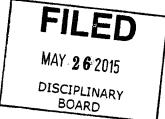
Please see attached Findings of Fact, conclusions of Law, and Hearing Officer's Recommendations signed by Hearing Officer David Wiley for filing today in the above-referenced proceeding. The original will be sent via US mail.

Thank you.

Maggi Gruber

Williams Kastner | Legal Assistant to David Wiley 601 Union Street, Suite 4100 Seattle, WA 98101-2380 P: 206.233.2972 | F: 206.628.6611 www.williamskastner.com

SEATTLE PORTLAND



3 5 BEFORE THE 6 DISCIPLINARY BOARD OF THE 7 WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION 8 In re-Proceeding No. 13#00112 9 BAKARY FANSU CONTEH ORDER GRANTING OFFICE OF DISCIPLINARY COUNSEL'S MOTION 10 Lawyer (Bar No. 35098). TO AMEND HEARING OFFICER'S FINDINGS OF FACT AND 11 CONCLUSIONS OF LAW 12 THIS MATTER having come before the Hearing Officer on the Motion to Amend 13 Hearing Officer's Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law by the Office of Disciplinary 14 Counsel ("ODC"), and the Hearing Officer having reviewed the arguments of counsel and files 15 pertaining to this action, including the following: 16 1. Office of Disciplinary Counsel's Motion to Amend; 17 18 2. Respondent Bakary Fansu Conteh's Response. 19 ODC did not file a Reply to Respondent's Response. 20 ACCORDINGLY, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that: 21 1. There is sufficient evidence in the record to support ODC's proposed language 22 that "Respondent's fee was contingent upon the outcome of the matter." On this first 23 modification request, the Hearing Officer finds the additional sentence underscores the 24 25

ORDER GRANTING OFFICE OF DISCIPLINARY COUNSEL'S MOTION TO AMEND HEARING OFFICER'S FINDINGS OF FACT AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW - 1

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contingent fee nature of the Agreement and approves and grants the Motion with respect to revision to Finding of Fact #10.

2. There is also sufficient evidence in the record to support ODC's proposed language explaining why the "dishonest or selfish motive" aggravating factor applies.

Regarding the second requested change to Section V, Page 18, while the Hearing Officer will grant that additional parenthetical addition, he finds its inclusion to be cumulative considering the explanation at page 19, lines 13-18 of the Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, the narrative there describes the Respondent's motive in failing to disclose the late filing of the Appeal Brief which motivation was self-interested in seeking to obfuscate that fact. While that modification, again, is being granted, the Hearing Officer does not believe that parenthetical finding is material in revising the original Findings and Conclusions entered by the undersigned in April, 2015.

DATED this 26th day of May, 2015

David W. Wiley WSBA #08614 Hearing Officer

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I certify that I caused a copy of the WANTIM PROS Wohen To MINA HIS to be delivered to the Office of Disciplinary Counsel and to be mailed FOF to WANTIME SCANE HESpondent's Counsel at PROS UNIT SCANE WILLIAM TO LONG THE STANDARD THE STANDA

postage prepaid on the 110 day of _

Clerk Counsel to the Disciplinary Board

ORDER GRANTING OFFICE OF DISCIPLINARY COUNSEL'S MOTION TO AMEND HEARING OFFICER'S FINDINGS OF FACT AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW - 2

Allison Sato

From:

Gruber, Maggi < MGruber@williamskastner.com>

Sent:

Tuesday, May 26, 2015 3:22 PM

To: Cc: Allison Sato Wiley, Dave

Subject:

Proceeding No. 13#00112 | Bakary Fansu Conteh Lawyer Bar #35098 | Order Granting

ODC Counsel's Motion to Amend Hearing Officer's Findings of Fact and Conclusions of

Law

Attachments:

Conteh Order - Proceeding No. 13#00112.pdf

Ms. Sato,

Please see attached Order Granting ODC Counsel's Motion to Amend Hearing Officer's Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law signed by Dave Wiley in the above-referenced proceeding. The original will follow today via US Mail.

Thank you.

Maggi Gruber

Williams Kastner | Legal Assistant to David Wiley 601 Union Street, Suite 4100 Seattle, WA 98101-2380 P: 206.233.2972 | F: 206.628.6611 www.williamskastner.com

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