

BEFORE THE DISCIPLINARY BOARD OF THE WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

In re

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QUETA ROMERO,

Lawyer (Bar No. 38986).

Proceeding No. 16#00092

ODC File No(s), 16-00041 and 16-00921

STIPULATION TO TWO REPRIMANDS

Following settlement conference conducted under ELC 10.12(h)

Under Rule 9.1 of the Rules for Enforcement of Lawyer Conduct (ELC), and following a settlement conference conducted under ELC 10.12(h), the following Stipulation to Two Reprimands is entered into by the Office of Disciplinary Counsel (ODC) of the Washington State Bar Association (Association) through disciplinary counsel Francesca D'Angelo, Respondent's Counsel Anne I. Seidel and Respondent lawyer Queta Romero.

Respondent understands that she is entitled under the ELC to a hearing, to present exhibits and witnesses on her behalf, and to have a hearing officer determine the facts, misconduct and sanction in this case. Respondent further understands that she is entitled under the ELC to appeal the outcome of a hearing to the Disciplinary Board, and, in certain cases, the Supreme Court. Respondent further understands that a hearing and appeal could result in an

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1	outcome r	nore favorable or less favorable to her. Respondent chooses to resolve this proceeding
2	now by e	ntering into the following stipulation to facts, misconduct and sanction to avoid the
3	risk, time,	expense and publicity attendant to further proceedings.
4		I. ADMISSION TO PRACTICE
5	1.	Respondent was admitted to practice law in the State of Washington on June 19,
6	2007.	
7		II. STIPULATED FACTS
8	A. Partid	la-Nunez Representation
9	2.	In or around 1990, Adan Partida-Nunez entered the United States without inspection.
10	3.	Mr. Partida-Nunez's father, a lawful permanent resident, filed a petition for an alien
11	relative (I-	-130 petition) on behalf of Mr. Partida-Nunez.
12	4.	The petition was approved and Mr. Partida-Nunez was given a priority date of
13	February 7	7, 1992.
14	5.	In 2009, Mr. Partida-Nunez was arrested and placed in removal proceedings. Mr.
15	Partida-N	anez hired lawyer Antonio Salazar to represent him.
16	6.	Mr. Salazar submitted an Application for Cancellation of Removal And Adjustment
17	of Status f	or Certain Non-Permanent Residents.
18	7.	On May 12, 2010, Mr. Salazar was disbarred.
19	8.	On or about July 23, 2010, Mr. Partida-Nunez hired Respondent to represent him.
20	9.	On August 5, 2010, Respondent filed an Employment Authorization application on
21	Mr. Partid	a-Nunez's behalf.
22	10	. The United States Customs and Immigration Service (USCIS) issued a notice of
23	intent to d	eny the application because additional documentation was needed.
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1	cautioned that if she did not provide a waiver application, the Court would find Mr. Partida-
2	Nunez ineligible for adjustment of status.
3	34. At the November 8, 2013 hearing, the court told Respondent that, due to changes in
4	the law, Mr. Partida-Nunez was eligible to apply for cancellation of removal, notwithstanding
5	his criminal history. Ms. Romero informed the court that Mr. Partida-Nunez wanted to submit a
6	new application for cancellation of removal.
7	35. The matter was continued to July 17, 2014 to allow Mr. Partida-Nunez to submit his
8	cancellation of removal case.
9	36. On November 25, 2013, USCIS advised Respondent that Mr. Partida-Nunez's new I-
10	130 petition was insufficient to establish his eligibility. USCIS requested Respondent to
11	provide additional information within 87 days.
12	37. Respondent did not provide additional information to USCIS.
13	38. USCIS denied Mr. Partida-Nunez's new I-130 petition.
14	39. At the July 17, 2014 hearing, Respondent advised the court that Mr. Partida-Nunez's
15	I-130 application had been denied and that she would have to file the I-130 petition again.
16	40. Respondent also advised the court that she would not be submitting a cancellation of
17	removal application. Respondent asserts that she did so because she did not believe that Mr.
18	Partida-Nunez was eligible for cancellation of removal.
19	41. The court determined that since Mr. Partida did not have a pending I-130 petition, he
20	was ineligible to proceed with an application for adjustment of status. Respondent requested
21	that the court close the matter administratively. The court held a hearing on Respondent's
22	request for administrative closure, denied administrative closure, and ordered that Mr. Partida-
23	Nunez be removed.
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1	withholding of removal, and relief pursuant to Article 3 of the United Nations Conventions
2	Against Torture for failure to prosecute.
3	54. The court ordered that Mr. Caballero-Reyes be removed to Mexico.
4	55. After the July 22, 2015 hearing, Respondent told Mr. Caballero-Reyes that he could
5	file an appeal. She did not inform him that he may have a claim against her or the basis for a
6	motion to re-open based on her ineffective assistance in failing to provide documents in support
7	of his claims.
8	56. On or about July 26, 2015, Respondent filed an appeal with the Board of
9	Immigration Appeals (BIA) that stated as grounds "an abuse of discretion by the IJ
10	[Immigration Judge] in denying all applications for relief."
11	57. The deadline for filing Mr. Caballero-Reyes' appeal brief was November 24, 2015.
12	58. Respondent received notice of the November 24th deadline on November 27, 2015.
13	59. Respondent did not file Mr. Caballero-Reyes' brief until November 30, 2015.
14	60. The BIA rejected the brief as untimely and provided instructions for filing a late
15	brief.
16	61. Respondent did not attempt to resubmit Mr. Caballero-Reyes' brief.
17	62. Respondent asserts that she believed that she could not re-submit Mr. Caballero's
18	brief because her brief had contained a request that the BIA accept it as a late filing.
19	63. The BIA dismissed Mr. Caballero-Reyes' appeal stating that the notice of appeal did
20	not contain statements that meaningfully apprised the Board of specific reasons underlying the
21	challenge to the immigration judge's decision and that no brief was filed.
22	C. Non-cooperation
23	64. On June 14, 2016, lawyer Andrew James White filed a grievance against Respondent
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1	regarding her conduct in Mr. Caballero-Reyes' case.
2	65. On June 16, 2016, ODC sent Respondent a copy of Mr. White's grievance along
3	with a request to provide a written response.
4	66. Respondent did not provide ODC a written response to Mr. White's grievance.
5	67. On July 20, 2016, ODC sent Respondent a 10-day letter requesting a written
6	response by August 2, 2016.
7	68. Respondent did not provide ODC a written response by August 2, 2016.
8	69. On August 3, 2016, ODC issued a subpoena setting Respondent's deposition for
9	August 17, 2016.
10	70. On August 5, 2016, the subpoena was personally served on Respondent.
11	71. Respondent did not appear for her deposition on August 17, 2016. The deposition
12	was rescheduled and later cancelled after counsel for Respondent submitted a response.
13	III. STIPULATION TO MISCONDUCT
14	72. By failing to act with reasonable diligence and promptness in representing Mr.
15	Partida-Nunez, Respondent violated RPC 1.3.
16	73. By failing to act with reasonable diligence and promptness in representing Mr.
17	Caballero-Reyes, Respondent violated RPC 1.3.
18	74. By failing to explain matters to Mr. Caballero-Reyes to the extent reasonably
19	necessary to make informed decisions regarding the representation, Respondent violated RPC
20	1.4(b).
21	75. By failing to provide a prompt written response to Mr. White's grievance when
22	requested and/or by failing to appear for her deposition, Respondent violated ELC 5.3(f), ELC
23	5.5(d), ELC 1.5, RPC 8.1(b), and RPC 8.4(<i>l</i>).
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1		IV. PRIOR DISCIPLINE
2	76. Re	espondent has no prior discipline in Washington.
3		V. APPLICATION OF ABA STANDARDS
4	77. Th	ne following American Bar Association Standards for Imposing Lawyer Sanctions
5	(1991 ed. & F	Feb. 1992 Supp.) apply to this case:
6	4.4 Lack of D	diligence
7 8	in Standard 3	at aggravating or mitigating circumstances, upon application of the factors set out .0, the following sanctions are generally appropriate in cases involving a failure to mable diligence and promptness in representing a client:
9	4.41	
10	4.41	Disbarment is generally appropriate when: (a) a lawyer abandons the practice and causes serious or potentially serious injury to a client; or
11		(b) a lawyer knowingly fails to perform services for a client and causes serious or potentially serious injury to a client; or
12		(c) a lawyer engages in a pattern of neglect with respect to client matters and causes serious or potentially serious injury to a client.
13	4.42	Suspension is generally appropriate when:
14		(a) a lawyer knowingly fails to perform services for a client and causes injury or potential injury to a client, or
15		(b) a lawyer engages in a pattern of neglect and causes injury or potential injury to a client.
16	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
17		injury to a client.
18	4.44	Admonition is generally appropriate when a lawyer is negligent and does not act
19		with reasonable diligence in representing a client, and causes little or no actual or potential injury to a client.
20	7.0 Violations	s of Duties Owed as a Professional
21	Absen	t aggravating or mitigating circumstances, upon application of the factors set out
22	misleading co	.0, the following sanctions are generally appropriate in cases involving false or ammunication about the lawyer or the lawyer's services, improper communication
23	of fields of pr	actice, improper solicitation of professional employment from a prospective client, or improper fees, unauthorized practice of law, improper withdrawal from
24	representation Stipulation to Di	, or failure to report professional misconduct.
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2	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.
4 5	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.
6 7	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.
8 9	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.
10	A. Partida-N	Junez Representation
11 12	78. W	ith respect to the misconduct relating to the representation of Mr. Partida-Nunez,
13	ODC asserts 1	that Ms. Romero acted knowingly. Respondent asserts that she acted negligently.
14	Both parties a	gree there was a pattern of neglect.
	79. Th	ere was injury to Mr. Partida-Nunez.
15	80. Th	e presumptive sanction under ABA Standard 4.4 is suspension.
16	B. Caballero	-Reves Representation
17	81. Wi	ith respect to the misconduct related to the representation of Mr. Caballero-
18	Reyes's, ODO	C asserts that Ms. Romero acted knowingly. Respondent asserts that she acted
19	negligently. H	Both parties agree there was a pattern of neglect.
20	82. Th	ere was injury to Mr. Caballero-Reyes.
21	83. Th	e presumptive sanction under ABA <u>Standard</u> 4.4 is suspension.
22	C. Non-coop	eration
23	84. Ms	s. Romero acted knowingly in failing to respond to Mr. White's grievance and in
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1	failing to attend her deposition.
2	85. There was injury to the lawyer discipline system.
3	86. The presumptive sanction under ABA <u>Standard</u> 7.0 is suspension.
4	D. Aggravating/Mitigating Factors
5	87. The following aggravating factors apply under ABA Standard 9.22:
6	(d) multiple offenses.
7	88. The following mitigating factors apply under ABA Standard 9.32:
8	 (a) absence of a prior disciplinary record; (c) personal or emotional problems; (f) inexperience in the practice of law [Ms. Romero was admitted to practice
10	in June 2007. At the time of the misconduct in Mr. Partida-Nunez's matter, she had been in practice for less than 5 years]; and
11	(l) remorse.
12	89. The mitigating factors support a departure from the presumptive sanction to reprimand.
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14	VI. STIPULATED DISCIPLINE
15	90. The parties stipulate that Respondent shall receive two reprimands for her conduct.
1.6	91. Respondent will be subject to probation for a period of two years beginning when
7	this stipulation receives final approval.
18	92. The conditions of probation are set forth below. Respondent's compliance with
19	these conditions shall be monitored by the Probation Administrator of the Office of Disciplinary
20	Counsel ("Probation Administrator"). Failure to comply with a condition of probation listed
21	herein may be grounds for further disciplinary action under ELC 13.8(b).
	93. Respondent agrees to comply with the conditions in the Confidential Attachment.
22	Upon approval of this stipulation, this attachment will be filed under seal with this stipulation.
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94. During the period of probation, Respondent's practice will be supervised by a practice monitor as follows.

- The practice monitor must be a WSBA member with no record of public discipline and who is not the subject of a pending public disciplinary proceeding.
- b) The role of the practice monitor is to consult with and provide guidance to Respondent regarding case management, office management, and avoiding violations of the Rules of Professional Conduct, and to provide reports and information to the Probation Administrator regarding Respondent's compliance with the terms of probation and the RPC. The practice monitor does not represent the Respondent.
- c) At the beginning of the probation period, the Probation Administrator will select a lawyer to serve as practice monitor for the period of Respondent's probation.
 - 1. Initial Challenge: If, within 15 days of the written notice of the selection of a practice monitor, Respondent sends a written request to the Probation Administrator that another practice monitor be selected, the Probation Administrator will select another practice monitor. Respondent need not identify any basis for this initial request.
 - 2. Subsequent Challenges: If, after selection of a second (or subsequent) practice monitor, Respondent believes there is good cause why that individual should not serve as practice monitor, Respondent may, within 15 days of notice of the selected practice monitor, send a written request to the Probation Administrator asking that another practice monitor be selected. That request must articulate good cause to support the request. If the Probation Administrator agrees, another practice monitor will be selected. If the Probation Administrator disagrees, the Office of Disciplinary Counsel will submit its proposed selection for practice monitor to the Chair of the Disciplinary Board for appointment pursuant to ELC 13.8(a)(2), and will also provide the Chair with the Respondent's written request that another practice monitor be selected.
- d) In the event the practice monitor is no longer able to perform his or her duties, the Probation Administrator will select a new practice monitor at his or her discretion.
- During the period of probation, Respondent must cooperate with the named practice monitor. Respondent must meet with the practice monitor at least once per month. Respondent must communicate with the practice monitor to schedule all required meetings. In the event that Respondent has no current clients and no issues with past clients, the practice monitor may make a determination about whether a meeting

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1	2. \$250 due within 6 months of the start of the probation period;
2	3. \$250 due within 12 months of the start of the probation period; and
3	4. \$250 due within 18 months of the start of the probation period.
4	 All payments should be provided to the Probation Administrator for processing.
5	VII. RESTITUTION
6	95. Respondent agrees to pay restitution to Adan Partida-Nunez in the amount of \$2,000
7	in accordance with ELC 13.7(b).
8	96. Respondent agrees to pay restitution to David Caballero-Reyes in the amount of
9	\$6,000 in accordance with ELC 13.7(b).
10	VIII. COSTS AND EXPENSES
11	97. Respondent shall pay costs of \$1,143.00, in accordance with ELC 13.9(i). The
12	Association will seek a money judgment under ELC 13.9(<i>l</i>) if these costs are not paid within 30
13	days of approval of this stipulation.
14	98. Respondent's failure to pay costs and expenses or to comply with the terms of a
15	periodic payment plan may be grounds for discipline.
16	IX. VOLUNTARY AGREEMENT
17	99. Respondent states that prior to entering into this Stipulation she has consulted
18	independent legal counsel regarding this Stipulation, that Respondent is entering into this
19	Stipulation voluntarily, and that no promises or threats have been made by ODC, the
20	Association, nor by any representative thereof, to induce the Respondent to enter into this
21	Stipulation except as provided herein.
22	100. Once fully executed, this stipulation is a contract governed by the legal principles
23	applicable to contracts, and may not be unilaterally revoked or modified by either party.
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This Stipulation is a compromise agreement intended to resolve this matter in 101. accordance with the purposes of lawyer discipline while avoiding further proceedings and the expenditure of additional resources by the Respondent and ODC. Both the Respondent lawyer and ODC acknowledge that the result after further proceedings in this matter might differ from the result agreed to herein.

X. LIMITATIONS

This Stipulation is not binding upon ODC or the respondent as a statement of all existing facts relating to the professional conduct of the respondent lawyer, and any additional existing facts may be proven in any subsequent disciplinary proceedings.

This Stipulation results from the consideration of various factors by both parties, 103. including the benefits to both by promptly resolving this matter without the time and expense of hearings, Disciplinary Board appeals, and Supreme Court appeals or petitions for review. As such, approval of this Stipulation will not constitute precedent in determining the appropriate sanction to be imposed in other cases; but, if approved, this Stipulation will be admissible in subsequent proceedings against Respondent to the same extent as any other approved Stipulation.

Under ELC 9.1(d)(4), the Disciplinary Board reviews a stipulation based solely 104. on the record agreed to by the parties. Under ELC 3.1(b), all documents that form the record before the Board for its review become public information on approval of the Stipulation by the Board, unless disclosure is restricted by order or rule of law.

If this Stipulation is approved by the Disciplinary Board and Supreme Court, it 105. will be followed by the disciplinary action agreed to in this Stipulation. All notices required in the Rules for Enforcement of Lawyer Conduct will be made.

1	106. If this Stipulation is not approved by the Disciplinary Board and Supreme Court,
2	this Stipulation will have no force or effect, and neither it nor the fact of its execution will be
3	admissible as evidence in the pending disciplinary proceeding, in any subsequent disciplinary
4	proceeding, or in any civil or criminal action.
5	WHEREFORE the undersigned being fully advised, adopt and agree to this Stipulation
6	to Discipline as set forth above.
7.	to Discipline as set forth above. Dated: 327/18 for courts Cueta Romero, Bar No. 38986 Respondent Respondent
8	Queta Romero, Bar No. 98986 Respondent
9	Cel 1 - 1
10	Anne I. Seidel, Bar No. 22742 Dated: 3/28/18
11	Counsel for Respondent
12	Francesca D'Angelo, Bar No. 22979 Dated: 3/28/18
13	Senior Disciplinary Counsel
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