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DISBARRED LAWYER CHARGED WITH SWINDLING MORE THAN HALF A MILLION DOLLARS FROM 44 CLIENTS

*Defendant Charged with Grand Larceny and Other Crimes;
Allegedly Stole Personal Injury Settlements from Victims;
Faces up to 15 Years in Prison if Convicted*

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz announced today that disbarred lawyer Yohan Choi, 47, has been charged with grand larceny and other crimes for allegedly bilking more than 40 clients out of nearly \$620,000. Between August 2015 and August 2020, the Queens practitioner represented the victims in personal injury claims and allegedly failed to give his clients their share of the settlements.

District Attorney Katz said, “Despite being disbarred, this defendant allegedly continued to represent clients and successfully reached settlements on dozens of personal injury cases. But, instead of taking his fair share of the proceeds, this former attorney is accused of pocketing all of the settlement money – victimizing his clients a second time.”

Choi, 47, of 23rd Avenue in Bayside, Queens, operated a law office on Northern Boulevard in Flushing for many years. The defendant was arraigned late yesterday afternoon before Queens Criminal Court Judge Scott Dunn on a 44-count complaint. Choi is charged with grand larceny in the second degree, 41 counts of grand larceny in the third degree and the practice of law by attorney who has been disbarred, suspended or convicted of a felony. Judge Dunn set the defendant’s return date for December 30, 2021. If convicted Choi faces up to 15 years in prison.

According to the charges, the defendant held bank accounts for his law practice at Chase, Capitol One and HSBC dating back to at least August 2015. A forensic examination of the accounts showed dozens of deposits for lawsuit settlements on behalf of Choi’s clients.

DA Katz said, according to the complaint, in November 2016 a woman the defendant represented in a personal injury case agreed to a settlement for \$52,500. The victim was entitled to just over \$35,000. Even though a check from the insurance company paying the settlement was allegedly deposited into the defendant’s account, the woman never received any money.

Another woman Choi represented in a personal injury case agreed to settle for \$75,000 in May 2018, according to the complaint. After the lawyer’s fee and other expenses were deducted, the victim was entitled to

\$50,250. Choi allegedly never turned over that money, despite the insurance company depositing a check for \$75,000 into his account.

Continuing, the DA said, a man who also hired the defendant to represent him in a personal injury matter agreed to settle his case for \$45,000 and was entitled to receive \$30,150. The investigation showed that Choi's bank account on May 12, 2020, allegedly received a check for \$45,000 from an insurance company. However, three days later that same escrow account's balance totaled just \$423. The victim never received the money he was due.

According to the charges, the defendant repeated this scheme at least 41 times over the course of five years. Clients due varying sums of money – from as little as \$1,000 to more than \$50,000 – were left empty-handed. In all these instances, Choi's business accounts received the settlement checks that totaled more than \$600,000, but his victims were never issued a check for their injuries.

Choi's license to practice law was suspended on November 20, 2017.

The investigation was conducted by Detective Thomas Kaup, of the District Attorney's Detective Bureau, under the supervision of Deputy Chief Daniel O'Brien. Also assisting in the investigation was Accountant Investigator Barak Haimoff, under the supervision of Supervising Accountant Investigator Joseph Plonski.

Assistant District Attorney James Liander, Bureau Chief of the DA's Public Corruption Bureau, is prosecuting the case under the supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Gerard Brave.

Criminal complaints and indictments are accusations. A defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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