

Criminal Justice**Paralegal who bilked clients and got boss disbarred is sentenced to 27 months**

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By [Martha Neil](#)

A longtime secretary, paralegal and office manager for a since-disbarred California lawyer has been sentenced to two years and three months in federal prison for embezzling \$327,000 from the firm and its clients.

In addition to restitution in the mail fraud case, Ana Lissa Reyes must also pay \$67,448 to the Internal Revenue Service concerning tax evasion between 2006 and 2011, according to the [San Francisco Chronicle](#). A judge in the Oakland case ordered her to begin serving her prison term in August.

Federal prosecutors said Reyes, now 42, contacted defendants in cases brought by the law firm of Brian Ching and secretly arranged settlements, keeping the money for herself.

Clients complained to Ching in 2009, and he confronted Reyes. But she denied wrongdoing, explained an FBI agent in a sworn declaration. After more complaints and a state bar investigation, Ching fired Reyes in 2011, the newspaper reports. She had worked for the firm for 17 years.

Ching was disbarred in 2012 for failing to supervise Reyes adequately and other violations of legal ethics rules. A [California Lawyer](#) article (scroll down) provides further details.

See also:

[ABAJournal.com](#): "Paralegal admits embezzling \$327K, secretly settling law firm claims"

[GMA News](#): "Fil-Am faces 25 years in jail for embezzling over \$320,000 in US"

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Bust in loan scam

LI woman accused in mortgage modification fraud
Cops: Firm charged fees, didn't help homeowners

BY ELLEN YAN
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A key figure in a defunct loan modification company surrendered yesterday in the largest fraud investigation in Nassau police history — up to \$18 million scammed from as many as 6,000 homeowners in several states, authorities said.

Meredith Dulberg, 36, of Farmingdale was arraigned on a charge of practicing as an attorney without a license while working at The Tempelton Group, which shut down in Westbury last October after illegally charging homeowners upfront fees and doing little to save homes, Nassau police and prosecutors said. She also faces two felony counts of first-degree offering a false instrument after authorities said she appeared in Nassau small claims court as company attorney.

Dulberg, of Conklin Street, was released on her own recognizance. "I am confident that when all the facts and evidence come to light, Meredith Dulberg will be vindicated," said her attorney, Joe Girardi of North Valley Stream.

It's the first of many arrests expected in an ongoing probe into a business that operated under one name until its reputation prompted it to reopen under a new name, sometimes in a new location, police said. Tempelton cashed in on borrowers' distress by charging a



Meredith Dulberg was arrested yesterday.

NASSAU COUNTY POLICE DEPT.

average of \$3,000 for services, luring clients with an advertising campaign that cost up to \$60,000 monthly, police said.

"They took people who were down and out and struggling ... and they hurt them even more," said Det. Ron Rispoli of the squad, which is leading the probe with the Nassau District Attorney, Suffolk police, FBI and state agencies.

A core crew of about 30 people, led by founder William Wanek until his death in June, were known as All Island Capital in Baldwin in 2010, then Clarent Fund in Baldwin in 2011, before Tempelton set up in 2012, police said.

The company promised to negotiate manageable payments with lenders, police said. But a software program used by Tempelton showed only 118 out of 2,000 clients listed were eligible for modifications, police said.

When Tempelton was preparing in August to close, it still raked in fees without doing



HOWARD SCHNAPP

Police say Meredith Dulberg had appeared in Nassau County Small Claims Court as an attorney, but she does not have a license to practice law. ■ More photos: newsday.com/nassau

work, Rispoli said. In its last weeks, workers faxed reams of clients' documents to lenders as proof they tried to help, thinking this would protect them from criminal charges, said detectives who interviewed ex-workers.

Thomas Garrett wanted to trim the \$2,200 mortgage payment after superstorm Sandy wrecked his Lindenhurst home. A Tempelton worker promised a mortgage rate of 3 percent or less and a \$150,000 cut in his mortgage — or his \$3,000 fee back, the mechanic said.

Like other victims, he said the company stopped taking his

calls: "He sees I have nothing. He just takes the check."

Police started the probe about a year ago and a surprise developed Oct. 10 when a Fox News reporter and a homeowner arrived at the Tempelton office, police said. All the workers ran out, and someone slashed the reporter's tires, so officers were called.

Police saw homeowner files confiscated the records Oct. 11. Three days later, Tempelton reopened under a new name, police said.

It was last Friday when Marie Thompson of Roosevelt filed a

police complaint, after her Tempelton rep called to say his old company folded and his new one could help — for a fee.

"If I saw him right now, I'd spit on him," she said.

She said her mother, who was dying of cancer, missed several payments in 2012 when a Tempelton agent took \$7,000 in fees.

She and her brother now owe about \$250,000 on a house worth \$180,000.

"I want to sit down and kneel before you and tell you how much help I need," said Thompson, 53, crying. "I don't know who to turn to anymore."