

**BEFORE THE DISCIPLINARY BOARD OF THE
SUPREME COURT OF PENNSYLVANIA**

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| OFFICE OF DISCIPLINARY COUNSEL | : | No. 218 DB 2015 |
| Petitioner | : | |
| | : | File Nos. C1-14-1149 & C1-15-650 |
| v. | : | |
| | : | Attorney Registration No. 47344 |
| MICHAEL COARD | : | |
| Respondent | : | (Philadelphia) |

PUBLIC REPRIMAND

Michael Coard, you stand before the Disciplinary Board, your professional peers and members of the public for the imposition of a Public Reprimand. It is an unpleasant task to publicly reprimand one who has been granted the privilege of membership in the bar of this Commonwealth. Yet as repugnant as this task may be, it has been deemed necessary that you receive this public discipline.

Mr. Coard, you are being reprimanded in connection with your conduct in two matters. You were court-appointed to represent Jerry Ransome in a criminal case filed in the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas. Following jury trial in December 2012, Mr. Ransome was found guilty of murder in the second degree and other criminal offenses and was sentenced to 40 years to life imprisonment by the Honorable Benjamin Lerner. On August 5, 2013, you filed a Notice of Appeal on behalf of your client with the Superior Court. You were directed to file a Docketing Statement, but failed to do so. By Order of October 2, 2013, the Superior Court dismissed the appeal. You then failed to advise Mr. Ransome of the dismissal of his appeal, the reason for the dismissal, and Mr. Ransome's legal options.

In February 2014, Mr. Ransome sent two letters to you. The first inquired as to the status of his appeal and the second stated that he had learned of the dismissal of the appeal on his own and he inquired as to why you had not told him of the dismissal. You failed to respond to these letters.

Mr. Ransome filed a PCRA Petition in March 2014, which was granted by the court on February 18, 2015. Judge Lerner reinstated Mr. Ransome's direct appeal rights and directed that you remain counsel for Mr. Ransome. On March 9, 2015, you filed a Notice of Appeal.

In the second matter, you represented Bilaal Powell in a criminal case in the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas. On September 28, 2012, you filed a Notice of Appeal on behalf of your client with the Superior Court. By Order dated December 3, 2012, the Court directed that you file a Docketing Statement. By Order dated December 17, 2012, the Court dismissed the appeal because you failed to timely file the Docketing Statement. Mr. Powell requested that the Court reinstate his direct appeal rights, which request was granted and you were directed again to file a Docketing Statement. Again, you failed to comply and the Court dismissed the appeal on March 4, 2013. On April 1, 2013, you filed an Application to Reinstate with the Court, which was granted. You filed the required Docketing Statement but failed to file an appellate brief. The Court dismissed the appeal on December 4, 2013, due to your failure to file an appellate brief. Mr. Powell filed a PCRA Petition and was able to have his appeal rights reinstated.

Since the time frame of your misconduct, you moved to a new office, hired additional staff and reduced your non-legal responsibilities to avoid a recurrence of these problems. You did not charge the City of Philadelphia for the legal service you rendered to Mr. Ransome and Mr. Powell.

Your conduct in this matter has violated the following Rules of Professional Conduct:

1. RPC 1.3 – A lawyer shall act with reasonable diligence and promptness in representing a client.
2. RPC 1.4(a)(3) – A lawyer shall keep the client reasonably informed about the status of the matter.
3. RPC 1.4(a)(4) – A lawyer shall promptly comply with reasonable requests for information.
4. RPC 1.4(b) – A lawyer shall explain a matter to the extent reasonably necessary to permit the client to make informed decisions regarding the representation.
5. RPC 8.4(d) – It is professional misconduct for a lawyer to engage in conduct that is prejudicial to the administration of justice.

We note that you have a record of professional discipline. In July of 2008, you received an Informal Admonition for violation of the Rules in two separate matters. In December of 2011, you received a Private Reprimand for violation of the Rules in three separate matters. In April 2015, you received a Public Reprimand for violation of the Rules in one matter. As part of that Public Reprimand, you were placed on probation for two years, commencing on March 12, 2015. Since misconduct in the appellate matters you handled on behalf of Mr. Ransome and Mr. Powell predates the start of your probationary term, your actions do not constitute a violation of your probation. We remind you that you are still on probation and that failure to abide by the terms of your probation shall result in further disciplinary action. Your record of discipline is extremely troubling and supports the imposition of this Public Reprimand.

Mr. Coard, your conduct in this matter is now fully public. This Public Reprimand is a matter of public record.

As you stand before the Board today, we remind you that you have a continuing obligation to abide by the Rules of Professional Conduct and Rules of Disciplinary Enforcement. This Public Reprimand is proof that Pennsylvania lawyers will not be permitted to engage in conduct that falls below professional standards. Be mindful that any future dereliction will subject you to disciplinary action.

This Public Reprimand shall be posted on the Disciplinary Board's website at www.padisciplinaryboard.org.

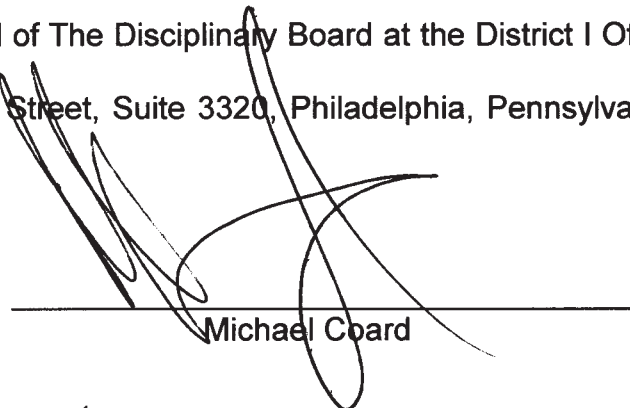


Designated Member
The Disciplinary Board of the
Supreme Court of Pennsylvania

Administered by a designated panel of three Members of The Disciplinary Board of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on April 14, 2016.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The undersigned, Respondent in the above proceeding, herewith acknowledges that the above Public Reprimand was administered in his presence and in the presence of the designated panel of The Disciplinary Board at the District I Office of the Disciplinary Board, 1601 Market Street, Suite 3320, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on April 14, 2016.



Michael Coard