



1 Respondent has consistently throughout the proceeding in this matter refused to comply with the  
2 court orders regarding his disbarment and rule 15 mandates, by utilizing rhetorical positions and arguments  
3 that set forth frivolous arguments such as the non-existent automatic stay, which he extensively argued at  
4 the October hearing and subsequent submissions.<sup>1</sup>  
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6 In addition, he has placed the blame for everything he is encountering with these and other ethical  
7 problems and proceedings by challenging the court's jurisdiction, blaming his clients, the Disciplinary  
8 Committee and its chairman, the Disciplinary Counsel, this court, the Supreme Court, the United States  
9 District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands, the United States Board of Immigration Appeals, and the  
10 Hawaii State Bar Association. Respondent has also accused the undersigned Judge of this court of being  
11 biased and prejudiced, although Respondent has never filed a written motion pursuant to the rules of court,  
12 nor has he ever stated any grounds for his accusations.  
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14 The court has been very patient with Respondent's reluctance and repeated attempts to avoid full  
15 compliance with said mandates to comply with the court's orders, however, the court's patience and  
16 temperance shall not prevent it from entering appropriate sanctions when warranted in order to protect and  
17 preserve the public's confidence in the administration of justice. Notwithstanding these allegations of blame  
18 there are still numerous clients who have been found to be harmed as well as those who have alleged harm  
19 as a result of Respondent's inactions and actions. At this point the court will place the events of this  
20 proceeding in chronological order.  
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22 ▶ On June 7, 2013, the court filed an order disbarring Respondent. The order also required him  
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25 <sup>1</sup>On October 21, 2013, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Supreme Court denied Respondent's motion for stay pursuant to Northern Mariana Islands Supreme Court Rule 8.

1 to submit a list of clients, return unearned fees, and to comply with Rule 15 of the  
2 Commonwealth Disciplinary Rules and Procedures. Pursuant to Rule 15(d), Respondent was  
3 required to file an affidavit showing compliance within ten days of disbarment. Respondent  
4 failed to file anything.

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- 6 ▶ On September 19, 2013, far past the timetable of required submissions by Respondent the  
7 court issued an order for Respondent to show cause why he should not be held in contempt  
8 for his failure to comply with the court's disbarment order.
- 9 ▶ On October 2, 2013, the court after a hearing, issued an order finding Respondent in  
10 contempt. The court gave Respondent a certain date to comply with its orders, including  
11 filing the Rule 15 affidavit. The court ordered a five day sentence for the contempt which  
12 it suspended on the condition that Respondent comply with its orders.
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- 14 ▶ On October 15, 2013, Respondent filed what he deemed to be an affidavit in compliance  
15 with Rule 15. The purported affidavit, however, was not in compliance with Rule 15 and  
16 additionally contained arguments previously rejected by this court.
- 17 ▶ On November 22, 2013, the court issued an order giving Respondent until November 26,  
18 2013, at 9:00 a.m. to comply with the court's disbarment order and Rule 15. The court also  
19 ordered Respondent to take certain actions regarding his former clients who testified at the  
20 November 21, 2013 hearing about the ongoing prejudice they were experiencing as a result  
21 of Respondent's actions or inactions.
- 22
- 23 ▶ On November 26, 2013, Respondent filed a document labeled as a supplemental affidavit,  
24 which also fails to comply with Rule 15 and the Disbarment Order, and attempted to submit  
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1 an unauthorized in camera list of clients in federal matters.

2 In his supplemental affidavit, Respondent again argues that his original rule 15 affidavit was self  
3 explanatory and claims he is at a loss as to what more is required of him. The Disbarment Order was clear  
4 and unambiguous in ordering the following:  
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6 [ ] Mr Woodruff shall comply with all provisions of Rule 15 of the NMI  
7 Disciplinary Rules, which includes, among other things, notices to clients and  
8 others and certifications to the court.

9 [ ] Mr Woodruff shall submit a list of current and pending clients to the  
10 Commonwealth Superior Court within thirty days of the date of this order,  
11 and shall pay to any and all clients the sum of any unearned retainer fees.

12 *In re the Matter of Stephen C. Woodruff*, Civ. No. 13-0017 (NMI Super. Ct. June 17, 2013)  
13 (Disciplinary Action: Disbarment at 27).

14 Rule 15(d) requires Respondent to submit an affidavit indicating compliance with the rule:

15 Within ten (10) days after the effective date of disbarment or suspension  
16 order, the disbarred or suspended attorney shall file with the Superior Court  
17 an affidavit showing:

18 (1) that he or she has complied with the provisions of the order and with these  
19 rules; and

20 (2) that he or she has notified all other state, territorial, federal and  
21 administrative jurisdictions to which he or she is admitted to practice of the  
22 disciplinary action as may be required by the rules of such jurisdiction(s).  
23 Such affidavit shall also set forth the residence or other addresses of the  
24 disbarred or suspended attorney where communications may thereafter be  
25 directed to him.

26 Rule 15 has several subparts; however, sections (a), (b), and (d) are material to this proceeding.

27 These sections also require a disbarred attorney to notify all clients in pending matters of his disbarment and  
28 to advise them to substitute another attorney. These sections additionally prohibit a disbarred attorney from  
29 accepting any new retainers or engaging as an attorney in any new case or legal matters, giving thirty days  
30 from the order of disbarment to wind down any pending matters.

1 Respondent, in his supplemental affidavit, claimed that there are no unearned fees due to his clients.  
2 At the November 21, 2013 hearing, however, Mr. Nakamura and Mr. Cepeda testified essentially that this  
3 was untrue. Mr. Nakamura testified that he paid Respondent \$200 to complete a CW-1 application for him,  
4 which was never filed with USCIS, jeopardizing his right to remain and work in the CNMI. Mr. Nakamura  
5 also testified that Respondent never notified him that he had been disbarred or suspended. Mr. Cepeda  
6 testified that he paid Respondent \$3,120.00 for his wife's I-1-30. Respondent never completed the process  
7 and because Mrs. Cepeda was already in the removal process, Respondent essentially jeopardized any chance  
8 Mrs. Cepeda had for remaining in the CNMI with her family.  
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10 The supplemental affidavit also claims that Respondent had no clients as of the date of the Court's  
11 Disbarment Order because the Commonwealth Supreme Court had suspended him back in February 2013.  
12 Respondent then submitted only a list of clients which he claims are in the "federal fora." Respondent then  
13 gives excuses as to why he has not notified other courts or jurisdictions of his disbarment.  
14

15 As a result of Respondent's willful noncompliance, the court finds it necessary and appropriate to  
16 partially revoke Respondent's five day suspended sentence. Because Respondent did submit something that  
17 partially complied with said orders, the court will not impose the whole five day sentence at this time.  
18 However, because what Respondent submitted was also noncompliant, and what the court finds to be  
19 significant misrepresentations to the court regarding the three former clients the court heard testimony from,  
20 as well as from an attorney who also testified of her representation of a former client of Respondent, and  
21 how the client's immigration and work status are jeopardized by Respondent's actions and inactions, the  
22 court now partially revokes suspension of three days of the five day sentence. The court finds this action  
23 to be necessary based on the testimony presented at the November 21, 2013 hearing, the refusal of  
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1 Respondent to accept any responsibility for the harm caused to former clients by his inactions and actions,  
2 and the record in this case. The court is very concerned about potential ongoing prejudice and injury to the  
3 rights of Respondent's former clients and finds it so disheartening that Respondent expresses no remorse  
4 or acceptance of any responsibility for the harm he has caused to many and listens to their testimony in his  
5 state of indifference.  
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7 The court will allow Respondent to report voluntarily to the Department of Corrections (DOC) at  
8 8:00 a.m. on December 5, 2013. This option to report voluntarily to DOC shall cease to exist at 8:01 a.m.  
9 on December 5, 2013, and thereafter, Respondent shall be arrested and processed as any other person  
10 brought to DOC for detention to serve his three day sentence. Upon release, Respondent shall have five  
11 calendar days to comply with the aforementioned mandates. At the end of the five days, the court will set  
12 a hearing date to determine compliance and any other sanctions, if necessary.  
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14 Although Respondent maintains a position that this court has no jurisdiction for Rule 15 to apply  
15 with respect to clients he alleges are represented by him in the federal tribunals, the court disagrees with such  
16 position.  
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18 First, the only federal venue that Respondent is still allowed to practice in, is the U.S. District Court  
19 for the NMI.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, the list of nine persons that Respondent submitted to the court as being his federal  
20 clients are here in the CNMI, and if receiving advice from Respondent, are in the court's opinion, entitled  
21 to know, that their lawyer has been disbarred in the CNMI and is prohibited from practicing law in the  
22 CNMI although still allowed to practice in the U.S. District Court. Such clients should be aware of such  
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25 <sup>2</sup>Respondent, by order of March 20, 2013 was suspended from practicing before the Board of Immigration Appeals,  
Immigration Courts or the Department of Homeland Security.

1 fact, especially since his license to practice in said U.S. District Court is at the present time based solely on  
2 his license in the CNMI.

3 **IN VIEW OF THE FOREGOING**, the Court hereby partially revokes Respondent's suspended  
4 sentence and orders Respondent to serve three days by reporting to DOC on December 5, 2013 by 8:00 a.m.,  
5 as detailed above.  
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7 **IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** Respondent shall file a certificate of compliance that he has informed  
8 those nine persons or clients pursuant to Rule 15, whose names he submitted to this court erroneously in-  
9 camera.  
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11 **IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that upon release, Respondent shall have five calendar days to  
12 comply with the aforementioned mandates. At the end of the five days, the court will set a hearing date to  
13 determine compliance and any other sanctions, if necessary.  
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15 **SO ORDERED this 2<sup>nd</sup> day of December, 2013.**  
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19 David A. Wiseman, Associate Judge  
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