



**U.S. Department of Justice**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**OWNERS OF FINE DINING RESTAURANTS INDICTED**  
**FOR OBSTRUCTING FEDERAL LABOR DEPARTMENT INVESTIGATION**  
**INTO FAILURE TO PAY MINIMUM WAGES AND OVERTIME**

SAN JUAN, P.R. - On March 2, 2017, a Federal Grand Jury in the District of Puerto Rico returned an indictment charging José Manuel Abreu-Ramírez and Milagros De los Santos-De Abreu with obstructing a U.S. Department of Labor investigation into their failure to pay minimum wage and overtime to their employees at the restaurants José José and El Catador D'Abreu in violation of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938. Both restaurants were owned and operated by the defendants and located in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

The United States Attorney for the District of Puerto Rico, Rosa Emilia Rodríguez Vélez and Special Agent-in-Charge Michael Mikulka of the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, New York Regional Office made the announcement.

The 25 count Indictment charges Abreu-Ramírez and De los Santos with eight counts of false statements to a federal agency, three counts of wire fraud, eight counts of aggravated identity theft and five counts of tampering with a witness, victim or informant by intimidation, threats, corrupt persuasion or misleading conduct.

The allegations in the indictment indicate that instead of making payment to the employees in the amounts the defendants had agreed to pay pursuant to an investigation conducted by the Wage and Hour Division of the U.S. Department of Labor and the Office of Inspector General of the U.S. Department of Labor, the defendants made their employees endorse checks that had been issued to prove compliance with federal law and then withheld the checks from the employees. Abreu-Ramírez and De los Santos either cashed or deposited the endorsed checks into their own bank accounts and kept the funds for their own benefit. The amounts Abreu-Ramírez and De los Santos unlawfully retained from their employees in violation of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 was approximately \$23,448.47.

According to the Indictment, on different occasions between April and July, 2014, Abreu-Ramírez and De los Santos also procured the signature of U.S. Department of Labor forms from 20 employees. In those forms the employees were coerced to falsely represent to the U.S. Department of Labor that they had been paid amounts owed to satisfy minimum wage and overtime payment obligations under federal law. Abreu-Ramírez delivered those forms and other fraudulent documents in person and through email communications to the Wage and Hour Division of the U.S. Department of Labor knowing that they contained false statements.

The Indictment also alleges that Abreu-Ramírez and De los Santos forged the signature of an employee in forms and documents submitted to the Wage and Hour Division of the U.S. Department of Labor.

“This Indictment is evidence of our commitment to work closely with our law enforcement partners to enforce U.S. Department of Labor programs and protect workers from unscrupulous employers. We will support federal agencies in their efforts to uphold the workplace protections and wages to which workers are entitled under federal law,” said Rosa E. Rodríguez-Vélez, U.S. Attorney for the District of Puerto Rico. “The United States Attorney’s Office will vigorously prosecute individuals who exploit their employees and attempt to conceal their actions by obstructing investigations into employer compliance with federal law.”

“An important part of the mission of the Office of Inspector General is to investigate alleged obstruction of Department of Labor agencies, including the Wage and Hour Division. We will continue to work with our Department of Labor and law enforcement partners to vigorously investigate these types of allegations,” stated Special Agent-in-Charge Michael Mikulka of the New York Regional office of the U.S Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General.

The investigation was conducted by the United States Department of Labor’s Wage and Hour Division and Office of Inspector General in coordination with the United States Attorney’s Office for the District of Puerto Rico. Assistance has been provided by the United States Marshal Service and the case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Dennise N. Longo Quiñones of the Financial Fraud and Corruption Unit.

Pursuant to the charges, Abreu- Ramírez and De los Santos face potential penalties of up to five years of imprisonment for making false statements to a federal agency, up to 20 years of imprisonment for conspiracy to commit wire fraud, a mandatory minimum term of two years of imprisonment for aggravated identity theft, and up to a term of imprisonment of 20 years for tampering with a witness. Indictments contain only charges and are not evidence of guilt. Defendants are presumed to be innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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