PRESS RELEASE

Former Hollywood-Based Anti-Poverty Nonprofit CEO Sentenced to Six Months in Federal Prison for Embezzlement and Cheating on Taxes

Tuesday, December 12, 2023

For Immediate Release
U.S. Attorney's Office, Central District of California

LOS ANGELES – The former president and CEO of a Los Angeles-based anti-poverty nonprofit agency was sentenced today to six months in federal prison for embezzling money from the nonprofit for his personal benefit, failing to report these funds on his tax returns, and intentionally misapplying more than $600,000 in grant money to pay for unauthorized expenses.

Howard Dixon Slingerland, 54, of Studio City, was sentenced by United States District Judge Dolly M. Gee, who also ordered him to serve six months of home confinement, pay a fine of $10,000, pay $750,470 in restitution and to perform 200 hours of community service.

Slingerland pleaded guilty on March 8 to one count of conversion and intentional misapplication of funds from an organization receiving federal money and one count of subscribing to a false federal income tax return.

From 1996 until he was fired in September 2019, Slingerland led the Youth Policy Institute Inc. (YPI), a Hollywood-based nonprofit agency that worked to eradicate poverty, eventually becoming president and CEO. YPI operated in some of the highest needs neighborhoods in Los Angeles, running programs aimed at supporting youth education, development, safety, job training, and health and wellness. As the head of YPI, Slingerland had check-signing authority over YPI's bank accounts and was the personal guarantor of YPI's credit card.

From January 2015 to February 2019, Slingerland caused at least $71,533 of YPI funds to be spent on unauthorized expenditures, including Slingerland's personal property tax bill that exceeded $14,000; a Slingerland family dinner at an upscale New York City restaurant costing more than $6,000; private tutoring for a family member costing nearly $11,000; and a home computer and software valued at nearly $2,000.

Slingerland also caused federal grant money YPI had received under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, administered by the United States Department of Labor, to be used for unauthorized purposes. The grant was awarded to support a YPI education and training program designed to prepare young adults in Los Angeles for jobs in growing industries such as construction, customer service, food preparation and service. Instead, in July 2019, Slingerland caused approximately $401,561 of these funds to be used for the unauthorized payment of YPI payroll. That same month, he caused another approximately $201,466 of the federal grant money to be illegally used to pay off YPI's credit card bill, including for expenses Slingerland had incurred.

Slingerland underreported on his individual federal income tax returns more than $100,000 in income each year for the tax years 2015 through 2018. Slingerland did not report the money he obtained from YPI through the embezzlement or the value of benefits he received from YPI, including retirement plan contributions and a housing allowance and a vehicle allowance. Slingerland admitted to owing the United States Treasury a total of approximately $147,398 in unpaid taxes – not including penalties and interest – for these years.

"Entrusted with the management of a large non-profit organization on which many community members had come to depend, [Slingerland] ignored the rules and used the organization's money to pay for his own personal expenses, some of which were extravagant, even profligate," prosecutors argued in a sentencing memorandum. In November 2019, two months after Slingerland was fired, YPI declared bankruptcy.

IRS Criminal Investigation; the FBI; the United States Department of Labor Office of Inspector General; the United States Department of Education Office of Inspector General; the United States Department of Justice Office of Inspector General; and the Los Angeles Unified School District investigated this matter. The Office of the United States Trustee provided substantial assistance.

Assistant United States Attorney Ranee A. Katzenstein of the Major Frauds Section prosecuted this case.

Contact

Ciaran McEvoy
Public Information Officer
ciaran.mcevoy@usdoj.gov
(213) 894-4465

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