

APPELLATE DIVISION OF THE SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK, FIRST DEPARTMENT

Matter of Janet Lindsay Richardson-Vargas

2026 NY Slip Op 00019 · No. Motion No. 2025-04989; Case No. 2025-05567 · Decided January 6, 2026

SUMMARY

The Appellate Division, First Department imposed reciprocal discipline on Janet Lindsay Richardson-Vargas based on her Colorado disbarment. The court found that she abandoned vulnerable immigration clients, mishandled and converted client funds, falsified trust-account records, and failed to participate in the disciplinary proceedings. The court disbarred her from practicing law in New York, effective immediately.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Appellate Division of the Supreme Court of the State of New York, First Department
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Per Curiam
JURISDICTION	New York Appellate Division, First Department
DECIDED	January 6, 2026
DOCKET	Motion No. 2025-04989; Case No. 2025-05567
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Reciprocal attorney-discipline proceeding arising from respondent's Colorado disbarment. The Attorney Grievance Committee moved under Judiciary Law § 90(2) and 22 NYCRR 1240.13 for reciprocal discipline, seeking disbarment in New York.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	In reciprocal-discipline proceedings, the court considers whether the respondent has established one of the recognized defenses under 22 NYCRR 1240.13 and gives significant weight to the sanction imposed by the jurisdiction where the misconduct occurred.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published
PARTIES	Attorney Grievance Committee for the First Judicial Department v. Janet Lindsay Richardson-Vargas

TOPICS

immigration

u visa

adjustment of status

violence against women act

PRACTICE AREAS

attorney discipline

professional responsibility

immigration law

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether reciprocal discipline should be imposed based on respondent's Colorado disbarment.
2. Whether respondent established any defense to reciprocal discipline, including lack of notice and opportunity to be heard, infirmity of proof, or the absence of corresponding misconduct under New York law.
3. What sanction should be imposed in New York.

HOLDINGS

1. Reciprocal discipline was appropriate because respondent's Colorado disbarment was valid and the underlying misconduct constituted professional misconduct in New York.
2. New York should impose disbarment, giving significant weight to Colorado's disbarment and finding no rare circumstance warranting a different sanction.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“In a proceeding seeking reciprocal discipline pursuant to 22 NYCRR 1240.13, respondent may raise the following defenses: (1) a lack of notice and opportunity to be heard in the foreign jurisdiction; (2) an infirmity of proof establishing the misconduct; or (3) that the misconduct at issue in the foreign jurisdiction would not constitute misconduct in New York”

“significant weight should be given to the sanction imposed by the jurisdiction where the misconduct occurred because the foreign jurisdiction has the greatest interest in fashioning sanctions for misconduct”

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Respondent practiced federal immigration law in Colorado and represented multiple vulnerable immigration clients. She abandoned or inadequately handled client matters involving a U visa, adjustment of status, an I-601A provisional unlawful presence waiver, lawful permanent residence, and a work permit; failed to communicate with clients, return files, or refund unearned fees; and misused her attorney trust account. She also falsified trust-account bank statements during the Colorado disciplinary investigation.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The Colorado Office of Attorney Regulation Counsel filed a disciplinary complaint against respondent in September 2024. Respondent defaulted, and the Colorado presiding disciplinary judge deemed the allegations admitted, disbarred her, and ordered restitution of \$8,120. The Board of Immigration Appeals subsequently imposed reciprocal discipline, and the New York Attorney Grievance Committee sought reciprocal discipline in New York. Respondent did not establish any recognized defense to reciprocal discipline.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Matter of Milara, 194 AD3d 108, 110 [1st Dept 2021]
- Matter of Blumenthal, 165 AD3d 85, 86 [1st Dept 2018]
- Matter of Jaffe, 78 AD3d 152 [1st Dept 2010]
- Matter of Tustaniwsky, 204 AD3d 162, 165 [1st Dept 2022]
- Matter of Rogan, 208 AD3d 22 [1st Dept 2022]
- Matter of Toback, 199 AD3d 99 [1st Dept 2021]
- Matter of Simons, 34 AD3d 136 [1st Dept 2006]

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