

**People v. Hutchings & Jirak (23CF0342)**: This case involved an elaborate scheme where the Defendants sold multiple homes without the knowledge or consent of the true owners. Defendant Hutchings executed four fraudulent real estate transactions; once on his own and three times with the help of his co-Defendant Jirak. Hutchings' modus operandi was as follows: he would contact potential property buyers (usually flippers found on Craigslist) and offer a property for sale while impersonating the true owner. Once a purchase price was agreed upon, Jirak would impersonate the true owner and forge the signatures of the true owners when meeting with a notary public to get necessary documents notarized. Finally, Hutchings would arrange for the proceeds of the sale to be wired to a precious metal dealer, where the proceeds would be converted into gold coins and delivered to a location in Orange County for retrieval. Hutchings successfully sold one property on his own in Anaheim and another in Garden Grove with Jirak's participation for a profit of \$1,115,000. On the other two transactions, the fraud was discovered before the sales were completed and the transactions were undone. Had they been successful, these transactions would have given Hutchings and Jirak an additional \$925,000. As a part of the investigation, OCDA found and seized approximately \$266,000 in gold coins that were located in a private vault in Hutchings' name, as well as six properties worth over two million dollars, all of which can be liquidated post-conviction in order to ensure that restitution, fines, and fees are paid. Andrew Hutchings is set for a hearing on a pre-trial motion scheduled for February 15, 2024. Raymond Jirak pled guilty to one felony count of conspiracy and four felony forgery-related counts and is scheduled to be sentenced on March 13, 2024.

**People v. Shepard & Peralta (22CF3258)**: The Defendants in this case attempted to sell a short-term vacation rental while it was rented out by an acquaintance. While impersonating the true homeowners, the Defendants contacted a real estate investor and offered the home for sale. After a sale price was agreed to, Shepard and Peralta met with the unsuspecting buyers and a notary public in order to complete the transaction. The necessary sales documents were signed and notarized by the Defendants, posing as the true owners. After this meeting the buyers became suspicious and were able to contact the true owners, who confirmed that the sale was fraudulent. There is currently an arrest warrant in place for Shepard. Peralta is set for a pre-trial on March 8, 2024.

**People v. Mun (23HF0941)**: Defendant John Mun jointly owned a residence in Irvine with his brother. After the brothers had a falling out, Mun forged a Power of Attorney document, which appeared to give him the legal authority to make decisions on behalf of his brother regarding the jointly owned Irvine property. The Defendant then, utilizing the fraudulent Power of Attorney document, took out a mortgage against the jointly owned property in Irvine. The victim brother had no knowledge of this mortgage and received none of the proceeds. The matter is set for a pre-trial on February 16, 2024.

**People v. Ilkhanipour, Khan, Khoshnevis, De La Paz, Orozco, Salazar, Pelzer, & Pierson (21CF1994)**: This case involves a fraudulent loan modification scheme that was entirely discovered and investigated by an OCDA Civilian Economic Crime Investigator (CECI). While speaking with a victim of a different loan modification fraud case, the investigator discovered that the victim had been targeted again by a new loan modification scam based in Orange County.

investigator began investigating this company, Regional Community Services (RCS). The investigator quickly learned that it was an illegal loan modification scheme.

Regional Community Services charged illegal up-front fees to customers who contracted for loan modifications – in violation of the California Civil Code. The employees used fake names when talking to customers. The company retained the fees regardless of whether the victims actually obtained modifications to their home loans. The investigation revealed payments of almost \$250,000 from victims nationwide. All had been required to pay fees up front. None had received an advantageous loan modification through RCS. The company operated for just a short period from April to July of 2018. Defendant Ryan Pelzer pled guilty on December 15, 2022 and is awaiting sentencing. Defendant Orozoco pled guilty on September 19, 2023 and was sentenced and ordered to pay victim restitution. The remaining Defendants are set for a preliminary hearing on April 26, 2024.

**People v. Knieling (23CF0474):** In this case the Defendant, along with her unidentified co-conspirator, took out a fraudulent mortgage on an unoccupied home in Huntington Beach. In order to commit this crime, Defendant Knieling first stole the identity of a female acquaintance and then used the stolen identity to open bank accounts and sign legal documents. Knieling and her co-conspirator then arranged for a mortgage on the Huntington Beach property. Knieling (using the stolen identity) and her male co-conspirator (impersonating the true property owner) met with a notary and notarized two documents: a Grant Deed that added the female to the title of the property and a Deed of Trust for \$900,000. After these documents were recorded, the mortgage funded into the fraudulently opened bank accounts. Defendant Knieling is scheduled for a pre-trial hearing on February 2, 2024. The investigation to identify the co-conspirator continues.

**People v. Jackson & Soria (19CF2100):** Patrick Soria and Michael Jackson ran an elaborate, nationwide real estate scheme where they recorded fraudulent documents in order to give themselves the appearance of owning properties to which they had no actual claim. In Orange County, Jackson and Soria were involved in two separate fraud schemes. In the first, Soria and Jackson convinced adistressed property owners that Soria and Jackson’s company, West, Inc., has purchased their home. Believing this, the homeowners entered into a mortgage refinance with West, Inc. and made monthly mortgage payments for a total of \$10,307.41 to the Defendants. The real mortgage was still owned by Credit Suisse/US National Bank. In the second scheme, Soria and Jackson attempted to sell three bank-owned properties in Orange County to an unsuspecting buyer. Each was a property on which the Defendants had recorded a fraudulent substitution of beneficiary making it appear that West, Inc. was the owner of the properties (which it was not). The victim agreed to purchase the properties, and wired a total of \$344,070 towards the purchase. Patrick Soria pled guilty to all 58 felony charges on September 8, 2022 and is serving a 12 year federal prison sentence. Michael Jackson pled guilty on October 26, 2022 to a count of acting as an accessory after the fact. As a part of the plea agreements, both Defendants stipulated to the requested restitution amounts and agreed that all of the assets seized at the time of their arrest (approximately \$80,000) has been put toward paying victim restitution.

**People v. Sanchez, Gonzalez, & Roa (22CF1923):** The Defendants in this case ran multiple financial schemes which frequently targeted elderly victims. The first scheme was a loan modification fraud operation, in which the Defendants collected illegal up-front fees from homeowners attempting to secure loan modifications. Then, after the victims paid the initial fees,

the Defendants convinced victims to pay them instead of their mortgage companies. The second scheme was to convince victims to obtain bank loans, then immediately turn over the proceeds to the Defendants with false promises of job offers, accelerated loan modifications, or profits. The third scheme was a simple check cashing scam in which unsuspecting victims were convinced to cash fraudulent and insufficient checks at their own banks, then immediately turn the proceeds over to the Defendants. When the checks were discovered to be insufficient or otherwise invalid, the victims' accounts were charged the money that had already been given to the Defendants. Defendants Roa and Sanchez are set for a pre-trial hearing on February 7, 2024 and a preliminary hearing on February 20, 2024. Defendant Gonzalez is in warrant status.

**People v. Daniel Rose, Daniel Callahan, and Kellie Williams (21CF3456):** Defendant Daniel Rose owned a property at 50 Lakeside Drive in Buena Park. He was severely delinquent on his mortgage and his lender had begun foreclosure proceedings. Daniel Callahan and Kellie Williams were his tenants. Callahan and Rose conspired to short-sell the property to the victims to avoid the foreclosure, and then subsequently created and filed a false quitclaim deed (utilizing a false notary acknowledgment that appeared to back-date the signing of the quitclaim such that it would have been prior to the sale) to a trust controlled by Callahan in order to cloud title. Callahan then engaged in civil litigation with the victim to try to maintain title to the property, first creating a forged document purporting to be a side agreement between the new buyer victim and Rose that "allowed" Rose to file the quitclaim because a specific payment condition (outside of escrow) wasn't met by the buyer, and then testifying under oath (personally and through Callahan's wife, Defendant Williams) that the victim had signed the agreement in 2018. The matter is set for preliminary hearing on February 29, 2024.

**People v. Phan, Phan, & Nguyen (18WF2811):** This case involves a sophisticated real estate conspiracy. Defendants were attempting to purchase a ground lease for a shopping center at 15550 Brookhurst for \$11.5 million but were short of funds and unable to close in February/March of 2017. They were also facing a \$1.5 million balloon payment due at the end of April 2017 for an office building at 13902 Harbor. Using Amerilink, an escrow company owned by Defendant Vinh Phan (a fact generally not disclosed to those with whom they were doing business), they started obtaining loans and diverting monies out of other escrows to cover these deals and to purchase other properties for themselves. At a minimum, a total of at least 10 properties were involved with an estimated loss of approximately \$20 million. Defendants Phan and Phan pled guilty on December 16, 2021 and were sentenced on May 12, 2022 to seven years in state prison each. As part of the sentencing, the Defendants also stipulated to over \$14 million in restitution awards, with 10% interest from the date of loss. In addition, the People successfully petitioned the Court to have a fraudulent title document voided to restore title for one of the victims.

**People v. Wen Jun Ho, Tony Mavusi, Lathan Adkinson, and Elsie Thompson (22CF3232):** Defendants arranged for two hard money lenders to lend a total of nearly \$1.6 million secured by Deeds of Trust on two properties owned by Defendant Ho's parents without their knowledge. Ho sent the lenders fake drivers' licenses for his parents as part of the lending process which had photos of Defendant Elsie Thompson posing as his mother and Defendant Louis Adkinson posing as his father. Ho, Mavusi, and Adkinson then arranged for the loan documents to be signed and notarized with Thompson and Adkinson posing as the parent victims. When the loan proceeds

were disbursed into bank accounts controlled by Ho, he promptly moved much of the money out to Adkinson and Mavusi, who then further laundered the money into high-dollar items and other bank accounts in Mavusi's control. Defendants Ho and Mavusi have been arraigned on the charges and the matter is set for pre-trial hearing on February 9, 2024 and a preliminary hearing on March 13, 2024. Defendant Adkinson is in warrant status. Defendant Thompson passed away of natural causes after the case was filed so the case against her has been dismissed.

**People v. Salcedo (21HF1183)**: This Defendant held herself out as a mortgage consultant, who operated two interrelated schemes to steal money from unsuspecting victims who were already financially struggling. First, the Defendant would lure clients into paying up-front fees for loan modification services on the false pretense that she was able to guarantee them better loan terms. Second, after months or sometimes years of allegedly working on their loan modifications, the Defendant would inform the victims that their lenders wanted the victims' monthly mortgage payments to come through her company, rather than directly from the victims. The Defendant would pick up the monthly checks from the victims and then deposit them into bank accounts she controlled. These payments never made it to the victims' lenders, and the vast majority of the victims were never approved for loan modifications. On October 2, 2023, the Defendant pled guilty and completely satisfied her entire restitution obligation to the victims, paying over \$150,000.

**People v. Daniel Cook & Jennifer Signorelli (21WF1070)**: This case began when Defendant Daniel Cook threw a metal cup at the elderly mother of his long-time partner. After receiving staples to close the head wound, the victim requested a civil Elder Abuse Restraining Order, which among other provisions requested that Defendant Cook stay away from the home she, her daughter (his partner), and the Defendant had been living in. Title to that home had been in the victim's daughter's name for decades. Because of a code section prohibiting the court from issuing a stay-away order from a home owned by the restrained party, Defendant Cook then falsified title documents and recorded documents to attempt to convince the court that he, in fact, was the true owner of record of the home. Defendant Jennifer Signorelli, an acquaintance of Defendant Cook's, assisted him by impersonating Daniel Cook's partner, the true owner of the residence, before a notary to falsify the documents affecting title. Defendant Cook was held to answer at the preliminary hearing and was arraigned on the seven-count felony information on January 11, 2023. The case is set for a pre-trial on February 2, 2024 and a jury trial is scheduled for March 5, 2024. Defendant Jennifer Signorelli pled guilty to all charges on April 21, 2022 and the matter was set for a restitution hearing; however, Defendant Signorelli failed to appear for that hearing and a warrant has been issued for her arrest.