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MIDDLE DISTRICT *of* FLORIDA

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Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

Middle District of Florida

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, March 18, 2022

## **Disbarred Attorney Sentenced To Four Years For Conspiring To Commit Bankruptcy Fraud And Defrauding Clients Of \$1.3 Million**

Tampa, Florida – U.S. District Judge Thomas Barber has sentenced James Lee Clark (61, Wilton Manors) to 48 months in federal prison for conspiracy to commit bankruptcy fraud and wire fraud. Clark had pleaded guilty on December 14, 2021.

According to court documents, from January 2010 through February 2017, Clark, who was a licensed attorney, conspired with his paralegal, Eric Liebman, to defraud mortgage creditors and guarantors holding notes on properties in foreclosure. Clark and Liebman falsely and fraudulently represented to distressed homeowners that they would negotiate with creditors and guarantors to prevent foreclosures in exchange for the homeowners' execution of quitclaim or warranty deeds for the properties to an entity controlled by Liebman. Clark and Liebman also convinced the homeowners to pay rent or agree to sell their houses. In order to continue collecting ill-gotten rents and/or profit from the property sales, Clark filed fraudulent bankruptcy petitions in the names of the homeowners to prevent the mortgage creditors from lawfully foreclosing and taking title to the properties.

Additionally, from January 2012 to February 2017, Clark defrauded his clients out of approximately \$1.3 million. As part of his practice, Clark acted as a trustee for clients and held their money in various bank accounts. Instead of using the funds for the purpose intended by his clients, Clark diverted the money into his law firm's bank accounts, and used it for personal expenses, like gambling, travel, and automobiles.

Liebman previously pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit bankruptcy fraud. He was sentenced to 15 months' imprisonment.

This case was investigated by the Federal Housing Finance Agency – Office of Inspector General and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The Office of the United States Trustee for the Middle District of Florida (Tampa Division) provided substantial investigative support. It was prosecuted by Special Assistant United States Attorney Chris Poor.

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**Topic(s):**

Bankruptcy  
Financial Fraud  
Mortgage Fraud

**Component(s):**

USAO - Florida, Middle  
U.S. Trustee Program

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