

## Ex-Aide To Bronx State Senator Pleads Guilty To Grand Larceny

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The former fiscal chief of a Bronx charity founded by state Sen. Ruben Diaz, Sr. pleaded guilty to embezzling tens of thousands of dollars from the organization.

Clement Gardner pleaded guilty to one count of grand larceny on Thursday after charges against him were brought up in December by New York State Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman. Originally facing two counts of grand larceny and six counts for falsifying business records, Gardner will be sentenced to two to six years in a state prison on March 20. The judge will also enter an order for restitution equal to the amount — \$560,000 — he was convicted of embezzling.

Gardner [as the fiscal chief](#) for the Christian Community Benevolent Association, as well as for Christian Community in Action Inc. — a now-defunct charity that had ties to the benevolent association.

In March 2012, the attorney general's office first suspected Gardner of embezzling at least \$75,000 from the charities, during which time he also received between \$48,000 to \$54,000 in yearly pay. Gardner, who also worked in finance for the Diaz senate campaign, pled guilty to embezzling from both charities.

When the charges were first brought up against Gardner, Diaz fought off speculation that he was involved in any wrongdoing, [distancing himself from the organization he founded](#) by saying he was no longer with it.

"If Mr. Gardner did something wrong and he put that organization to shame, he deserves it," Diaz told the New York Times.

The groups received [almost half a million dollars in member item allocations](#) in fiscal year 2006-07 through Diaz .

The funds for both Bronx-based organizations were supposed to be directed to education and recreational programs. The city's Department of Investigation said it found, however, that [Gardner was writing checks that directed hundreds of thousands of dollars to his personal account.](#)

"This defendant played a shell game with public funds, cheating the Bronx community and pocketing hundreds of thousands of dollars," wrote DOI Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn in a statement on Thursday.

A lawyer who had been previously listed as Gardner's attorney didn't immediately respond to an email Thursday.

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