

Jackie Lacey
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NEWS RELEASE

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**Charter School Founder, Son Charged With
Money Laundering, Theft**

The founder and director of a South Los Angeles charter school and her son have been charged with funneling about \$200,000 to a company that submitted fake invoices for a shell company, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office announced.

Kendra Uzoma Okonkwo (dob 10/22/65) and Jason Chiazom Okonkwo (dob 9/7/87) were charged in case BA457205 with one count each of misappropriation of public funds, grand theft by embezzlement, money laundering and keeping a false account.

Both defendants were arrested today. Arraignment will be set for a later date.

Deputy District Attorney Dana Aratani of the Public Integrity Division is prosecuting the case.

The elder Okonkwo founded Wisdom Academy for Young Scientists more than a decade ago. She no longer worked at the charter school when it was determined she had a conflict of interest.

Roughly \$201,000 was transferred from the school to a business allegedly run by Kendra Okonkwo between January 2012 and March 2014. Jason Okonkwo is accused of approving fake invoices for purported school supplies and food from the shell company.

The money was deposited into the company's account and then allegedly transferred into Kendra Okonkwo's personal bank account.

Prosecutors are recommending bail be set at \$145,000. If convicted as charged, both defendants face up to six years, eight months in state prison.

The case remains under investigation by the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office's Bureau of Investigation.

About the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey leads the largest local prosecutorial office in the nation. Her staff of nearly 1,000 attorneys, 300 investigators and 800 support staff members is dedicated to protecting our community through the fair and ethical pursuit of justice and the safeguarding of crime victims' rights.