

# Facebook Diversity Manager Sentenced to Prison for \$5 Million DEI Scam



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*bin L. Marshall | Getty Images*

[Lucas Nolan](#)

A former diversity manager at Facebook and Nike has been sentenced to five years and three months in prison for stealing over \$5 million from the companies, which was intended for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives.

CNBC [reports](#) that Barbara Furlow-Smiles, a 38-year-old Georgia resident, pleaded guilty to wire fraud in December after being accused of stealing more than \$4.9 million from Facebook and an additional six-figure sum from Nike. According to Atlanta U.S. Attorney Ryan Buchanan, Furlow-Smiles used a scheme involving “fraudulent vendors, fake invoices, and cash kickbacks” to siphon funds from Facebook, where she worked as a lead strategist and global head of employee resource groups and diversity engagement.



Mark Zuckerberg Meta Selfie (Facebook)



Mark Zuckerberg surrounded by guards ( Chip Somodevilla /Getty)

Prosecutors stated that Furlow-Smiles began the scheme within months of joining Facebook in 2017. She linked PayPal, Venmo, and Cash App accounts to her Facebook credit cards and used those accounts to pay friends, relatives, and others for purported goods and services that were never delivered. The majority of the money was then kicked back to Furlow-Smiles.

After being fired from Facebook in mid-2021, Furlow-Smiles continued her fraudulent activities at Nike, where she worked as a senior director of diversity, equity & inclusion from November 2021 to February 2023. Prosecutors said she executed a similar theft scheme while at Nike.

The stolen money was used by Furlow-Smiles to fund a luxurious lifestyle in California, Georgia, and Oregon. In addition to the prison sentence, District Judge Steven Grimberg ordered her to pay restitution of \$4.98 million to Facebook and \$121,000 to Nike.

Mark Zuckerberg's Meta, Facebook's parent company, cooperated with law enforcement during the investigation and noted that the harm caused by Furlow-Smiles' actions went beyond financial losses, stating that her "crimes also resulted in anguish amongst those employees that worked closely with her."

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Similarly, Nike expressed disappointment in Furlow-Smiles' actions, stating that she violated the company's trust and devastated the employees who worked with her. The company also noted her "complete lack of accountability or remorse."