



Republic of the Philippines
Supreme Court
Manila

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
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Division Clerk of Court
Third Division
MAY 07 2021

THIRD DIVISION

JUDGE ROSEMARIE V. RAMOS,
Regional Trial Court, Branch 19,
Bangui, Ilocos Norte,
Complainant,

A.C. No. 10204

Present:

LEONEN, J.,
Chairperson,
GISMUNDO,
CARANDANG,
ZALAMEDA, *and*
GAERLAN, JJ.

- versus -

ATTY. VICENTITO M. LAZO,
Respondent.

Promulgated:
September 14, 2020

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DECISION

GAERLAN, J.:

This resolves the Verified Disbarment Complaint/Letter Affidavit (With Urgent Prayer for Injunction/Gag Order)¹ filed by Judge Rosemarie V. Ramos (Judge Ramos) against Atty. Vicentito M. Lazo (Atty. Lazo) for violation of the Code of Professional Responsibility.

The Antecedents

On September 9, 2013, Atty. Lazo, a member of the *Sangguniang Panlalawigan* of Ilocos Norte delivered a speech during the Question and Privilege Hour of the *Sangguniang Panlalawigan*. In his Speech, he related that in Criminal Case Nos. 2131-2131-19, pending before the Regional Trial Court (RTC), Branch 19, Bangui, Ilocos Norte, Presiding Judge Ramos issued an Order inhibiting from the case in view of a report made to the OIC Prosecutor that she received ₱2,000,000.00 in exchange for the acquittal of the four accused. He urged Judge Ramos to inhibit, and implored the *Sangguniang Panlalawigan* to monitor the case closely to avoid the possibility of money changing hands.²

¹ Rollo, pp. 1-16.

² Id. at 35-37.

Subsequently, on September 16, 2013, Atty. Lazo again delivered a speech³ before the *Sangguniang Panlalawigan* regarding Criminal Case No. 1962 for illegal sale of dangerous drugs decided by Judge Ramos. Atty. Lazo intimated that there was something “fishy” about the case.⁴ Allegedly, the case was re-opened to receive newly discovered evidence, which eventually resulted to an acquittal. Atty. Lazo theorized that the reversal was due to Judge Ramos’ personal bias in favor of the accused’s relative who is “very, very, very, very close” to her.⁵ He likewise mentioned a rumor about justice for sale at Judge Ramos’ sala. Accordingly, Atty. Lazo implored his colleagues to scrutinize the case and file a complaint against Judge Ramos before the Office of the Court Administrator (OCA).⁶ In both instances, the media was present during the delivery of Atty. Lazo’s speeches.⁷

Thereafter, the *Sangguniang Panlalawigan* passed Provincial Resolution No. 011-2013 entitled “*A Resolution Imploring the Honorable Supreme Court to Conduct an Investigation to Determine the Moral Fitness and Competence of Judge Rosemarie V. Ramos to Continue to Sit as Presiding Judge of the Regional Trial Court, Branch 19 in Bangui, Ilocos Norte.*”⁸ However, the Complaint was returned for failure to comply with the required form.⁹

On December 9, 2013, Atty. Lazo, in his personal capacity, filed an administrative complaint against Judge Ramos. The case was docketed as OCA IPI No. 13-4177-RTJ.¹⁰

Meanwhile, Judge Ramos filed a Verified Disbarment Complaint/Letter Affidavit (With Urgent Prayer for Injunction/Gag Order)¹¹ dated October 3, 2013 against Atty. Lazo. She alleged that Atty. Lazo violated Canons 1, Rule 1.02; Canon 11, Rules 11.04 and 11.05; and Canon 13, Rule 13.02 of the Code of Professional Responsibility. She claimed that Atty. Lazo helplessly slandered and insulted her in public out of personal interest and pure malice. She likewise charged Atty. Lazo of “maliciously flaunting his unfounded, baseless and highly speculative imputations”¹² against her in the public and the media, thereby stirring “anti-sentiments against her”¹³ and the office she holds.¹⁴

³ Id. at 38-42.

⁴ Id. at 40.

⁵ Id. at 41.

⁶ Id. at 203.

⁷ Id. at 3.

⁸ Id. at 70-72.

⁹ Id. at 61-62.

¹⁰ Id.

¹¹ Id. at 1-16.

¹² Id. at 8.

¹³ Id.

¹⁴ Id. at 8-9.

IBP Report and Recommendation

On July 15, 2016, IBP Commissioner Peter M. Bantilan (Commissioner Bantilan) issued a Report and Recommendation¹⁵ recommending Atty. Lazo's suspension from the practice of law for a period of one year. Commissioner Bantilan opined that Atty. Lazo was compelled by bad faith and malice in delivering his speeches¹⁶ He knew fully well that the media was present and he attempted to publicize allegations of bribery and suspicions of irregularity in the cases handled by Judge Ramos. In turn, his acts destroyed the integrity of the RTC of Bangui, Ilocos Norte and cast doubt on the court's ability to exercise fairness and deliver justice.¹⁷ He transgressed the Code of Professional Responsibility which mandates that a lawyer must promote respect for the courts, legal processes, and judicial officers, and shall not attribute to a judge motives not supported by the records or have no materiality to the case. Moreover, his concerns about Judge Ramos' illicit conduct should have been resolved by submitting a grievance before this Court.¹⁸

The dispositive portion of the Report and Recommendation reads:

WHEREFORE, it is respectfully recommended the herein respondent be declared guilty of violating Canon 1, Rule 1.02, Canon 11, Rule 11.04, Rule 11.05, and Rule 13.02 of the Code of Professional Responsibility for which he should be suspended from the practice of law for a period of one (1) year with a stern warning that a repetition of the same or similar wrongdoing will be dealt with more severely.¹⁹

IBP Board of Governors Resolution

On May 27, 2017, the IBP Board of Governors passed a Resolution²⁰ dismissing the Complaint, viz.:

RESOLVED to REVERSE the recommendations of the Investigating Commissioner and to DISMISS the complaint.

RESOLVED FURTHER to direct CIBD Assistant Director Leo B. Malagar to prepare an extended resolution explaining the Board's action.²¹

¹⁵ Id. at 201-206.

¹⁶ Id. at 206.

¹⁷ Id. at 204-205.

¹⁸ Id. at 205.

¹⁹ Id. at 206.

²⁰ Id. at 199-200.

²¹ Id. at 199.

In an Extended Resolution²² dated June 23, 2019, the IBP Board of Governors explained that Atty. Lazo, as a member of the *Sangguniang Panlalawigan*, was well-within his rights to make a privileged speech subject to the limitations of its rules of procedure, laws and the Constitution. The manner in which Atty. Lazo delivered his speeches did not violate the Code of Professional Responsibility or Rule 138, Section 27 of the Rules of Court. In the same vein, he may not be faulted for the presence of the media because all the sessions of the *Sangguniang Panlalawigan* are open to the public.²³

Issue

The main issue raised in the instant case is whether or not Atty. Lazo is administratively liable for violating Canon 1, Rule 1.02, Canon 11, Rules 11.04 and 11.05, Canon 13, and Rule 13.02 of the Code of Professional Responsibility.

Ruling of the Court

The Court finds Atty. Lazo administratively liable.

A Lawyer Owes the Court Fidelity and Respect

Significantly, a lawyer is an “officer of the court” and is “an agency to advance the ends of justice.”²⁴ This sacred role is enshrined in the first Canon of the Code of Professional Responsibility, which reminds lawyers of their fundamental duty to “x x x uphold the Constitution, obey the laws of the land and promote respect for law and legal processes.”²⁵ To achieve this end, Rule 1.02 prohibits lawyers from engaging in activities “aimed at defiance of the law or at lessening confidence in the legal system.”²⁶

Likewise, a lawyer must uphold the dignity and authority of the courts to which he owes fidelity, and preserve the people’s faith in the judiciary.²⁷ It is every lawyer’s sworn and moral duty to help build the high esteem and regard towards the courts that is essential to the proper administration of justice.²⁸ In line with this, Canon 11 mandates that lawyers shall observe and

²² Id. at 207-210.

²³ Id. at 210.

²⁴ *Kenneth R. Mariano v. Atty. Jose N. Laki*, A.C. No. 11978 [Formerly CBD Case No. 10-2769], September 25, 2018.

²⁵ CODE OF PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY, Canon 1.

²⁶ CODE OF PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY, Canon 1, Rule 1.02.

²⁷ *Re: Letter dated 21 February 2005 of Atty. Noel S. Sorreda*, 502 Phil. 292, 302 (2005).

²⁸ Id.

maintain the respect due to the courts and judicial officers.²⁹ Relative thereto, Rules 11.04 and 13.02 forbid lawyers from attributing to a Judge “motives not supported by the record or have no materiality to the case;”³⁰ and “[making] any public statements in the media regarding a pending case tending to arouse public opinion for or against a party,” respectively.³¹ Furthermore, Rule 11.05 ordains that any grievances against judges must be submitted to the proper authorities only.³²

Compliance with the above-mentioned rules of conduct is essential for the proper administration of justice. Respect towards the courts guarantees the stability of the judicial institution, without which, it would be resting on a very shaky foundation.³³ A lawyer must build and not destroy the high esteem and regard towards the judiciary.³⁴ “To undermine the judicial edifice ‘is disastrous to the continuity of government and to the attainment of the liberties of the people.’”³⁵

Remarkably, in *Re: Letter of Atty. Noel S. Sorreda*,³⁶ this Court, citing the case of *Rheem of the Phil., Inc., et al. v. Ferrer, et al.*,³⁷ reminded lawyers of their fundamental duty to respect the courts and its judicial officers:

By now, a lawyer’s duties to the Court have become commonplace. Really, there could hardly be any valid excuse for lapses in the observance thereof. Section 20(b), Rule 138 of the Rules of Court, in categorical terms, spells out one such duty: ‘To observe and maintain the respect due to the courts of justice and judicial officers.’ As explicit is the first canon of legal ethics which pronounces that ‘[i]t is the duty of the lawyer to maintain towards the Courts a respectful attitude, not for the sake of the temporary incumbent of the judicial office, but for the maintenance of its supreme importance.’ That same canon, as a corollary, makes it peculiarly incumbent upon lawyers to support the courts against ‘unjust criticism and clamor.’ And more. The attorney’s oath solemnly binds him to a conduct that should be ‘with all good fidelity x x x to the courts.’ Worth remembering is that the duty of an attorney to the courts ‘can only be maintained by rendering no service involving any disrespect to the judicial office which he is bound to uphold.’”³⁸

²⁹ CODE OF PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY, Canon 11.

³⁰ *Id.*, *id.*, Rule 11.04.

³¹ *Id.*, Canon 13, Rule 13.02.

³² *Id.*, Canon 11, Rule 11.05.

³³ *Judge Madrid v. Atty. Dealca*, 742 Phil. 514, 529 (2014), citing *Roxas v. De Zuzuarregui, Jr.*, 554 Phil. 323, 341-342 (2007).

³⁴ *Kenneth R. Mariano v. Atty. Jose N. Laki*, *supra* note 24, citing *Cruz v. Justice Alifio-Hormachuelos, et al.*, 470 Phil. 435, 445 (2004), citing *Surigao Mineral Reservation Board v. Cloribel*, No. L-27072, January 9, 1970, 31 SCRA 1, 16-17.

³⁵ *Id.*

³⁶ *Re: Letter dated 21 February 2005 of Atty. Noel S. Sorreda*, *supra* note 27.

³⁷ 125 Phil. 551 (1967).

³⁸ *Supra* at 301-302.

***Unsubstantiated Criticisms and
Unfounded Personal Attacks Against
Judges Degrade the Administration
of Justice***

Notably, a lawyer's duty to respect the courts and its officers does not require blind reverence. The Code does not aim to cow lawyers into silence. In fact, in *Judge Lacurom v. Atty. Jacoba and Atty. Velasco*,³⁹ this Court recognized the right of a lawyer, both as an officer of the court and as a citizen, to criticize the acts of courts and judges in respectful terms and through legitimate channels.⁴⁰ Criticisms, if warranted, must be respectful and ventilated through the proper forum.

Remarkably, the lawyer's right to criticize judges and the limits thereof have been the subject of numerous rulings. In all of these, this Court struck a balance between the lawyer's right to respectfully voice his/her opinions without denigrating the administration of justice. Reprisals that transgress the boundaries of decency and fair play are unwarranted.

In *Re: Matter of Proceedings for Disciplinary Action Against Atty. Vicente Raul Almacen*,⁴¹ this Court elaborately discussed the dichotomy between fair criticism and slander:

Criticism of the courts has, indeed, been an important part of the traditional work of the bar. In the prosecution of appeals, he points out the errors of lower courts. In written for law journals he dissects with detachment the doctrinal pronouncements of courts and fearlessly lays bare for all to see that flaws and inconsistency³⁹ of the doctrines. x x x

x x x x

Hence, as a citizen and as Officer of the court a lawyer is expected not only to exercise the right, but also to consider it his duty to avail of such right. No law may abridge this right. Nor is he 'professionally answerable for a scrutiny into the official conduct of the judges, which would not expose him to legal animadversion as a citizen.'

Above all others, the members of the bar have the best opportunity to become conversant with the character and efficiency of our judges. No class is less likely to abuse the privilege, as no other class has as great an interest in the preservation of an able and upright bench.

To curtail the right of a lawyer to be critical of the foibles of courts and judges is to seal the lips of those in the best position to give advice and

³⁹ *Judge Lacurom v. Atty. Jacoba*, 519 Phil. 195 (2006).

⁴⁰ *Id.* at 209.

⁴¹ 31 Phil. 562 (1970).

who might consider it their duty to speak disparagingly. "Under such a rule," so far as the bar is concerned, "the merits of a sitting judge may be rehearsed, but as to his demerits there must be profound silence."

But it is the cardinal condition of all such criticism that it shall be *bona fide*, and shall not spill over the walls of decency and propriety. A wide chasm exists between fair criticism, on the one hand, and abuse and slander of courts and the judges thereof, on the other. Intemperate and unfair criticism is a gross violation of the duty of respect to courts. It is such a misconduct that subjects a lawyer to disciplinary action.⁴²
(Emphasis supplied and citations omitted)

Markedly, unsubstantiated accusations against judges spurred by ill-motives warrant administrative sanctions. In *Ret. Judge Alpajora v. Atty. Calayan*,⁴³ the lawyer made unsupported allegations in his pleading, claiming that the Presiding Judge antedated an Order, was in cahoots with, had "deplorable close ties with the adverse counsels," and coached said counsels.⁴⁴ This Court noted that the allegations were unsupported by evidence and reminded the lawyer of Canon 11 and Rule 11.04, which mandates maintaining respect due to the Courts and judicial officers, and abstaining from attributing to a Judge motives not supported by the records and bear no materiality to the case.⁴⁵

A similar ruling was rendered in *Cañete v. Atty. Puti*,⁴⁶ where the lawyer imputed abuse of discretion, partiality and bias against the Judge. This Court declared that criticisms must be made respectfully and aired through legitimate channels, and further reminded the lawyer of Canon 11 of the Code of Professional Responsibility:

While a lawyer, as an officer of the court, has the right to criticize the acts of courts and judges, the same must be made respectfully and through legitimate channels. In this case, Atty. Puti violated the following provisions in the Code of Professional Responsibility:

CANON 11 - A lawyer shall observe and maintain the respect due to the courts and to judicial officers and should insist on similar conduct by others.

Rule 11.03 - A lawyer shall abstain from scandalous, offensive or menacing language or behavior before the Courts.

Rule 11.04 - A lawyer shall not attribute to a Judge motives not supported by the record or have no materiality to the

⁴² Id. at 579-580.

⁴³ 823 Phil. 93 (2018).

⁴⁴ Id. at 109.

⁴⁵ Id. at 110, citing *Judge Madrid v. Atty. Dealca*, supra note 33.

⁴⁶ A.C. No. 10949 [Formerly CBD Case No. 13-3915], August 14, 2019.

case.⁴⁷

In the same vein, *In Re: Letter of Atty. Noel S. Sorreda*,⁴⁸ this Court acknowledged the right of lawyers to criticize judges, yet at the same time cautioned that said right does not grant an unbridled license to malign and insult the court and its officers:

Atty. Sorreda, as a citizen and as an officer of the court, is entitled to criticize the rulings of this Court, to point out where he feels the Court may have lapsed with error. But, certainly, this does not give him the unbridled license to insult and malign the Court and bring it into disrepute. Against such an assault, the Court is duty-bound 'to act to preserve its honor and dignity ... and to safeguard the morals and ethics of the legal profession'⁴⁹ (Emphasis supplied)

Moreover, in *Re: Supreme Court Resolution dated 28 April 2003*,⁵⁰ the lawyer made baseless accusations of bribery and corruption against a Member of this Court, to which this Court articulately responded:

In general, courts will not act as overly sensitive censors of all private conversations of lawyers at all times, just to ensure obedience to the duty to afford proper respect and deference to the former. Nevertheless, this Court will not shy away from exercising its disciplinary powers whenever persons who inpute bribery to judicial officers and bring such imputations themselves to the court's attention through their own pleadings or motions.⁵¹

Furthermore, in *Alfonso Choa v. Judge Roberto Chiongson*,⁵² this Court administratively sanctioned a lawyer for making malicious and unfounded criticisms of personal bias against a judge:

As an officer of the court and its indispensable partner in the sacred task of administering justice, graver responsibility is imposed upon a lawyer than any other to uphold the integrity of the courts and to show respect to its officers. This does not mean, however, that a lawyer cannot criticize a judge.

x x x x

Proscribed then are, inter alia, the use of unnecessary language

⁴⁷ Id.

⁴⁸ Supra note 27, citing *In the Matter of Proceedings for Disciplinary Action against Atty. Wenceslao Laureta, etc.*, 232 Phil. 353 (1987).

⁴⁹ Id. at 301, citing supra at 369-370.

⁵⁰ *In Re: Supreme Court Resolution Dated 28 April 2003 in G.R. Nos. 145817 and 145822*, 685 Phil. 751 (2012).

⁵¹ Id. at 783.

⁵² *Choa v. Judge Tiongson*, 329 Phil. 270 (1996).

which jeopardizes high esteem in courts, creates or promotes distrust in judicial administration, or tends necessarily to undermine the confidence of people in the integrity of the members of this Court and to degrade the administration of justice by this Court; or of offensive and abusive language; or abrasive and offensive language; or of disrespectful, offensive, manifestly baseless, and malicious statements in pleadings or in a letter addressed to the judge or of disparaging, intemperate, and uncalled-for remarks.⁵³ (Citations omitted)

Verily, in the cases cited, the malicious imputations were made against Judges/Justices in varying forms, *i.e.*, verbal attacks, pleadings, administrative complaints and letters. However, despite the diverse modes of attack, the rules have remained consistent – lawyers owe respect and fidelity to the courts; the right to criticize is not an unbridled freedom to malign and slander the courts and its officers; and criticisms must be supported by evidence and ventilated in the proper forum.

***The Statements of Atty. Lazo
Defamed Judge Ramos and
Tarnished Her Judicial Office***

Similar to the afore-cited cases, Atty. Lazo hurled baseless accusations against Judge Ramos, accusing her of bribery, corruption, bias, prejudice and immorality. These serious allegations were aired in public, without affording Judge Ramos an opportunity to defend herself. The statements circulated in the community, thereby resulting to infamy and misgivings about her ability to render a fair judgment. Some utterances were even calculated to humiliate her.

In his defense, Atty. Lazo claims that he was merely performing his duty to protect the people of Ilocos Norte.

His excuse fails to persuade.

To begin with, as a lawyer, Atty. Lazo knew that his grievances against Judge Ramos should be ventilated by filing a complaint before the OCA. No matter how noble his intentions were, he had no reason to disregard the proper protocol, and to malign and degrade Judge Ramos outside of legitimate channels. Nothing prevented him from directly filing a complaint before the OCA if he truly believed in his cause. In fact, he did file a complaint, albeit belatedly, after already tarnishing Judge Ramos' character in public. Worse, he knew that the media was present during the hearings. Their presence fueled the rapid spread of rumors and malicious imputations against Judge Ramos.

⁵³ *Id.* at 276-279.

The statements made by Atty. Lazo exceeded the limits of fair comment. He publicly attacked the manner in which Judge Ramos was handling her pending cases. In his first speech delivered on September 9, 2013, he discussed Criminal Case Nos. 2131-2131-19, involving four Chinese nationals who were apprehended with high-powered firearms and explosives. In this case, he related that Judge Ramos issued an Order of Inhibition in response to an allegation that she received ₱2,000,000.00 from the Chinese accused. He further declared that money might change hands, imputing bribery and corruption against Judge Ramos. He likewise cast doubt on her ability to render a fair decision, urging that the case should be closely monitored, “so that if ever a decision is rendered it would be like ‘caesar’s wife’, which is beyond suspicion x x x.”⁵⁴

In his defense, Atty. Lazo claims that his speech concerning Criminal Case Nos. 2131-2131-19, was uttered in connection with an Ordinance the Provincial Board was passing, entitled, “*An Ordinance Creating the Provincial Anti-Private Armed Group Council of the Province of Ilocos Norte under the Office of the Provincial Governor to Identify and Prosecute Private Armed Groups and Individuals, Guns-for-Hire and, Other Organized Crime Groups Operating in the Province and Providing Funds Therefor.*”⁵⁵ This measure was enacted to address the existence of private armed groups and other organized crime groups operating within the province.⁵⁶

It is difficult to see how the pending case before Judge Ramos is closely connected with the Ordinance. The issue regarding Judge Ramos’ inhibition and the accusation of bribery bore no relation to the Ordinance. At best, the statements were off tangent.

Furthermore, bad faith and malice were likewise apparent in the second speech delivered by Atty. Lazo on September 16, 2013, where he discussed the case of illegal sale of dangerous drugs resolved by Judge Ramos. He stated that the accused was acquitted due to Judge Ramos’ close personal relations with a relative of the accused. He hinted that the accused is a relative of a “very, very, very, very close friend of the Presiding Judge,” a statement imputing illicit relations and personal prejudice. In his Comment he explained that said relative of the accused was Judge Ramos’ driver, who was also known to be the Judge’s lover.⁵⁷ He likewise maliciously ascribed irregularity in the proceedings, saying “I smell fish in this case. There is something fishy here.”⁵⁸

⁵⁴ *Rollo*, p. 37.

⁵⁵ *Id.* at 65-69.

⁵⁶ *Id.* at 58.

⁵⁷ *Id.* at 62-63.

⁵⁸ *Id.* at 40.

Undoubtedly, Atty. Lazo's utterances incited public defiance and eroded the public's confidence in the court. His unsubstantiated insinuations of bias, prejudice and bribery in exchange for favorable resolutions are grave accusations that should not have been irresponsibly dangled before the public. If he sincerely desired to hold Judge Ramos accountable for her purportedly illegal acts, then he should have directly filed a case before the OCA. The substance of his rants were judicial errors, which may only be resolved by the Court, and not by the public. Airing them out in public did nothing but destroy the people's faith and trust in the judiciary, whereas filing the proper complaint would have brought a fair and just resolution to the case. In fact, the Court takes judicial notice of its Resolution dated August 19, 2019 in OCA IPI No. 13-4177-RTJ, entitled "*Atty. Vicentito M. Lazo v. Judge Rosemarie V. Ramos, Regional Trial Court, Branch 19, Ilocos Norte*," dismissing Atty. Lazo's administrative complaint for gross ignorance of the law, gross immorality and abuse of authority against Judge Ramos.

Additionally, Atty. Lazo's privilege to speak before the *Sangguniang Panlalawigan* should not have been used as a vehicle to ridicule and degrade Judge Ramos. Regardless of his conviction in the righteousness of his cause, there was no excuse to vilify Judge Ramos and her judicial office in public. He cannot conveniently claim that his speeches were uttered in the performance of his official duty.

In fine, Atty. Lazo violated Canon 1, Rule 1.02, Canon 11, Rule 11.04, Rule 11.05, and Rule 13.02 of the Code of Professional Responsibility when he uttered baseless and unsubstantiated grave accusations against Judge Ramos before the public and in the presence of the media. In turn, his acts not only maligned Judge Ramos, but tarnished her judicial office, and undermined the people's confidence in the integrity of the judicial officers and in the administration of justice. Accordingly, he must be suspended from the practice of law for a period of one (1) year.

WHEREFORE, Atty. Vicentito M. Lazo is hereby found **GUILTY** of violating the Code of Professional Responsibility. Accordingly, he is **SUSPENDED** from the practice of law for a period of one (1) year, effective immediately upon receipt of this Decision.

Atty. Vicentito M. Lazo is **DIRECTED** to inform the Court of the date of his receipt of this Decision to determine when his suspension shall take effect.

Let copies of this Decision be furnished to: (i) the Office of the Bar Confidant to be appended to Atty. Lazo's personal record as an attorney; (ii) the Integrated Bar of the Philippines for its information and guidance; and (iii) the Office of the Court Administrator for circulation to all courts in the country.

SO ORDERED.

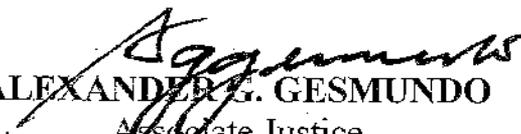


SAMUEL H. GAERLAN
Associate Justice

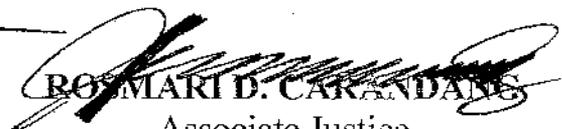
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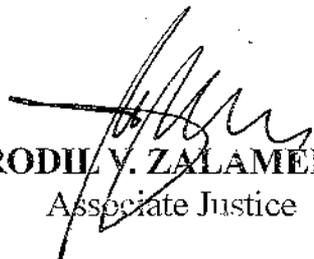
MARVIC M. V. LEONEN
Associate Justice
Chairperson



ALEXANDER G. GESMUNDO
Associate Justice



ROSMARI D. CARANDANG
Associate Justice



RODIL V. ZALAMEDA
Associate Justice

SECRETARY OF THE COURT

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 HESPERIO B. BAYAN
 Division Clerk of Court
 Third Division

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