

**\*\*Title:\*\*** \*Presiding Judge Aida Estrella Macapagal vs. Atty. Walter T. Young\*<sup>Brief / Digest</sup>

**\*\*Facts:\*\*** The dispute initiated with a letter dated November 10, 2011, from Atty. Walter T. Young to Judge Aida Estrella Macapagal of the Regional Trial Court (RTC) Branch 195 in Parañaque City. In this letter, Atty. Young threatened to file administrative and criminal complaints against Judge Macapagal related to the implementation of a writ of possession/demolition in an expropriation case (Civil Case No. CV-04-0245) which the City of Parañaque filed against Magdiwang Realty Corporation and Fil-Homes Realty Development Corporation. This case had been transferred to Judge Macapagal in 2008, though the writ had been issued in 2006 by her predecessor.

Judge Macapagal reported this correspondence to the Deputy Clerk of Court and Bar Confidant, Atty. Layusa, asserting that Atty. Young's actions breached the Code of Professional Responsibility (CPR). In response to a January 18, 2012 Resolution requiring a comment from Atty. Young, he submitted a letter and later a comment, largely mirroring his initial assertions and arguments, pleading for the dismissal of the complaint against him.

The Supreme Court referred the matter to the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP) for investigation. The IBP's Commission on Bar Discipline recommended a warning to Atty. Young, but this was later overturned by the IBP Board of Governors, proposing his suspension for six months.

Atty. Young sought reconsideration, emphasizing his intention of a 'cautionary notice' to Judge Macapagal and contrasting his actions with precedents that dictated different circumstances and outcomes. Judge Macapagal dismissed Young's assertion of apology as untruthful.

**\*\*Issues:\*\***

1. Whether Atty. Young's letter to Judge Macapagal constituted a breach of professional conduct under the Code of Professional Responsibility.
2. Appropriateness of the penalty imposed on Atty. Young.

**\*\*Court's Decision:\*\***

The Supreme Court found Atty. Young guilty of violating Canon 11 of the CPR, critiquing his "threatening" letter and misunderstanding of proper judicial processes as actions unbecoming of a lawyer. However, considering it his first offense and his advanced age, the Court modified the IBP Board of Governors' recommendation from suspension to a reprimand with a stern warning against repetition of such conduct.

**\*\*Doctrine:\*\***

This case reinforces the doctrine emphasizing the respect lawyers must accord to courts and judicial officers, as outlined in Canon 11 and Rule 11.04 of the CPR. It showcases the disciplinary mechanisms in place for attorneys who threaten or disrespect the judiciary.

**\*\*Class Notes:\*\***

- Canon 11 of the CPR mandates lawyers to uphold respect toward courts and judicial officers.
- Rule 11.04 of the CPR prohibits lawyers from attributing unfounded motives to judges.
- The case illustrates the disciplinary process for lawyers who engage in conduct unbecoming of the profession, highlighting the distinction between advocacy and disrespect.
- Key legal statutes: Code of Professional Responsibility (Canon 11, Rule 11.04).

**\*\*Historical Background:\*\***

This case highlights the judiciary's steadfast commitment to upholding the integrity and respect due to the legal process. It underscores the balance between a lawyer's duty to zealously represent their clients and the imperative to maintain decorum and respect towards the judiciary. This case, set against the broader context of legal and professional ethics, serves as a reminder of the safeguards in place to maintain the legal profession's dignity and the ethical standards expected of those within it.