

Title: People of the Philippines vs. Willy Marquez (G.R. Nos. 135288-93)

Facts:

- **October 1997:** Willy Marquez allegedly raped five-year-old Maria Cristina Agustin multiple times at a banana plantation near her house in Bacayao, Guimba, Nueva Ecija.
- **January 8, 1998:** The victim confided to her mother about the rapes, and they subsequently reported the incidents to the police and sought medical examination at Cabanatuan Provincial Hospital.
- **February 17, 1998:** Three similarly worded information charging Willy Marquez with rape were filed, alleging that the crimes took place “on or about the month of October 1997.”
- **Pretrial and Arraignment:** Marquez pleaded “not guilty” to all charges.
- **Trial Court Proceedings:** The trial court found Marquez guilty beyond reasonable doubt, sentencing him to death for each rape count and ordering him to pay P150,000.00 as moral damages.

Issues:

1. **Constitutional and Procedural Infirmities:** Whether the failure to specify precise dates in the informations violated Marquez’s rights, rendering the charges indefensible.
2. **Validity of the Alibi:** Whether Marquez’s alibi that he was at work during the times of the alleged rapes was credible.
3. **Application of Death Penalty:** Whether the imposition of the death penalty was appropriate given the specific circumstances laid out in Republic Act No. 7659.

Court’s Decision:

1. **Specification of Dates:**

- The Supreme Court ruled that the lack of precise dates in the informations did not constitute a constitutional or procedural infirmity that justified dismissal. It stated that an exact date is not an essential element of rape and Marquez had failed to move for a bill of particulars to clarify the dates.
- The Court cited Rule 110, Section 11, indicating that it is sufficient that the offense is alleged to have been committed at any time close to the actual date.

2. **Credibility of Alibi and Positive Identification:**

- Marquez’s alibi was deemed weak because he could not prove that it was physically impossible for him to be at the scene. The victim’s house was only 250 meters from Marquez’s workplace, and this distance could not solidly support his alibi.

- The Court emphasized that plain denial and uncorroborated alibi could not prevail over the clear, positive identification by the victim.

3. **Penalty:**

- The death penalty could not be imposed because the prosecution failed to present independent evidence of the victim's age at the time of the rape (below seven years old). The court reduced the penalty to reclusion perpetua for each count of rape.

- The Court ordered Marquez to pay civil indemnity (P50,000.00 per count), moral damages (P50,000.00 per count), and exemplary damages (P25,000.00 per count).

Doctrine:

- **Time of Commission of Crime:** The exact date of the commission of the crime is not necessary as long as it is near the actual date.

- **Alibi:** For an alibi to be credible, it must demonstrate that it was impossible for the accused to be at the crime scene.

- **Penalty and Proof of Qualifying Circumstances:** Independent evidence, such as a birth certificate, must be presented for age-related qualifying circumstances to impose severe penalties like the death penalty.

Class Notes:

- **Rape (Article 335, RPC):** Essential elements include carnal knowledge using force, intimidation, or involving a victim under certain conditions (e.g., unconscious, under 12 years old).

- **Alibi Defense:** Requires physical impossibility for the accused to be at the crime scene.

- **Republic Act No. 7659 (Death Penalty Law):** Death penalty applies for certain qualified circumstances like the victim being below seven years old.

- **Rule 110, Sections 6 & 11, Rules of Court:** Relate to the requirements for stating the time in informations and complaints.

Historical Background:

- **El Niño Phenomenon:** The defense's claim regarding muddy roads in October 1997 was debunked by the climate condition during the period due to the El Niño phenomenon. This showed the defendant's ulterior motives to mislead.

- **Penal System Philosophy:** This decision reflects the judiciary's emphasis on meticulous evidence review, especially in capital cases, to ensure just application of the law.