

**## Title:**

Federico M. Chua Hiong v. The Deportation Board, G.R. No. L-5738, 96 Phil. 665 (1955)

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**### Facts:**

On February 26, 1952, deportation proceedings were initiated against Federico M. Chua Hiong by the Philippine Deportation Board. The Board alleged that Chua Hiong had fraudulently secured the cancellation of his alien certificate of registration on October 31, 1945, by falsely claiming to be the illegitimate child of a Filipino woman named Tita Umandap. Instead, the authorities claimed he was the legitimate child of a Chinese woman named Sy Mua. It was further alleged that Chua Hiong had illegally exercised the rights of a Filipino citizen, including voting, acquiring real estate, and holding lumber concessions, knowing he was a Chinese national.

Upon the commencement of proceedings, a warrant for Chua Hiong's arrest was issued on February 27, 1952. He secured release on a bond and subsequently moved for the dismissal of the proceedings before the Deportation Board. His grounds for dismissal included: (1) only aliens, and not citizens, could be deported; (2) he had credible evidence supporting his Filipino citizenship claim; and (3) his Filipino citizenship had been previously established by the Secretary of Labor acting in representation of the President.

The Deportation Board denied his motion to quash on July 7, 1952, stating it had the authority to examine and rule on the evidence about his citizenship claim. Chua Hiong then elevated the matter to the Supreme Court on September 3, 1952, petitioning for habeas corpus and a writ of prohibition against the Deportation Board. He argued that his arrest and the ongoing proceedings were illegal, grounded on his valid claim of Filipino citizenship, as previously recognized by various executive officials.

**### Issues:**

1. Whether the Deportation Board has jurisdiction to continue the deportation proceedings against Federico M. Chua Hiong, given his claim of Filipino citizenship.
2. Whether Chua Hiong is entitled to an immediate judicial review of his citizenship status before the deportation proceedings can continue.
3. Whether the evidence supporting Chua Hiong's claim of Filipino citizenship is substantial enough to warrant judicial determination ahead of administrative proceedings.

**### Court's Decision:**

The Supreme Court addressed the issues as follows:

1. **Jurisdiction of the Deportation Board:** The Court held that the Deportation Board indeed had the jurisdiction to determine the initial question of Federico M. Chua Hiong's alienage. The Board's jurisdiction is contingent upon whether the individual in question is an alien; hence, it can initially review the evidence provided by Chua Hiong to verify his citizenship claim. The mere claim of citizenship did not divest the Board of its authority to conduct this assessment.
2. **Entitlement to Judicial Review:** Citing U.S. jurisprudence, specifically *Ng Fung Ho v. White*, the Court acknowledged that a person claiming to be a citizen must have the right to a judicial determination of his claim, particularly given the deprivation of liberty that deportation entails. However, it noted that the deportation proceedings should not be halted summarily except when substantial evidence supporting the citizenship claim is presented.
3. **Substantial Evidence of Citizenship:** The Supreme Court found that the evidence presented by Chua Hiong was substantial but not conclusively convincing. The documentary proofs included letters from officials and a decision by the Court of First Instance, although there were contradictory findings by the Board of Special Investigation and the Secretary of Justice. Given this substantial nature of evidence, the Court determined it warranted judicial appraisal. Subsequently, the Court ruled that the Deportation Board should be enjoined from proceeding with the deportation pending the results of the judicial review in the parallel criminal proceedings for violation of the Alien Registration Act.

### ### Doctrine:

The case reinforced the principle that any person subject to deportation claims citizenship has the constitutional right to due process, which encompasses an impartial judicial determination of his citizenship status. Administrative proceedings may be stayed if the court finds substantial evidence supporting the citizenship claim.

### ### Class Notes:

1. **Jurisdiction of Deportation:** Deportation proceedings apply strictly to aliens; administrative boards can initially determine alienage.
2. **Right to Judicial Review:** There is a constitutional guarantee allowing judicial examination of citizenship when such a claim is made in deportation contexts.
3. **Substantial Evidence Requirement:** When substantial evidence supports a citizenship claim, judicial review can precede administrative actions.

- **Ng Fung Ho v. White:** Judicial determination required to protect due process rights in deportation cases involving citizenship claims.
- **Alien Registration Act:** Judicial review may take priority in ambiguous citizenship circumstances to prevent undue harassment through administrative proceedings.

**Historical Background:**

The case took place during a period when issues of citizenship and alien registration were heavily scrutinized in the Philippines. Post-World War II, the Philippines' laws regarding nationality were particularly pertinent due to a substantial number of mixed-parentage individuals and those whose status was complicated by wartime displacements and records. This case illustrates the tension between safeguarding national security and upholding individual rights amidst ambiguous national identity statuses.