

**\*\*Title:\*\***

People of the Philippines v. Mark Jason Chavez, G.R. No. 207950, October 1, 2014

**\*\*Facts:\*\***

On October 28, 2006, Angelo Peñamante arrived home around 2:45 a.m. and witnessed Mark Jason Chavez leaving a house on Tuazon Street, Sampaloc, Manila. Chavez, wearing a black shirt and pants, appeared to have difficulty closing the door of the house, later identified as belonging to Elmer Duque (nicknamed “Barbie”), who was then found dead inside with multiple stab wounds.

SPO3 Steve Casimiro and PCI Sonia Cayrel, along with a SOCO team, conducted an investigation and collected evidence, including the 155 hair strands clutched in Duque’s hand. Peñamante identified Chavez as the person leaving Barbie’s house. Chavez was 22 years old when he voluntarily surrendered, accompanied by his mother, to the Manila Police on November 5, 2006. His mother surrendered two cellular phones owned by Barbie to the police.

Chavez claimed he visited Barbie’s house to resolve a misunderstanding but went home shortly after. The Regional Trial Court (RTC) found him guilty of robbery with homicide, sentencing him to reclusion perpetua. The Court of Appeals affirmed this decision. Chavez appealed to the Supreme Court, questioning the adequacy of circumstantial evidence and the admissibility of his mother’s statement.

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

1. Whether circumstantial evidence was sufficient to convict Chavez of robbery with homicide.
2. Whether Chavez’s mother’s statement was admissible as evidence against Chavez.
3. Whether Chavez’s constitutional right to presumption of innocence was upheld.

**\*\*Court’s Decision:\*\***

1. **\*\*Circumstantial Evidence:\*\***

- The Supreme Court found the circumstantial evidence insufficient to establish beyond reasonable doubt that Chavez intended to rob Barbie before the killing. Essential in the charge of robbery with homicide is proof of intent to rob preceding the homicide which the prosecution failed to concretely prove in this case.

2. **\*\*Mother’s Statement:\*\***

- The Court deemed the mother’s statement hearsay, as she was not presented for cross-

examination during the trial, thus rendering her statement inadmissible.

3. **Presumption of Innocence:**

- The Court concluded that Chavez's right to be presumed innocent was compromised as the evidence presented was not enough to remove reasonable doubt regarding the intent to commit robbery.

The Supreme Court reversed the conviction for robbery with homicide but found Chavez guilty of homicide. The sentence was adjusted considering the mitigating and aggravating circumstances.

**Doctrine:**

For a conviction of robbery with homicide, the prosecution must clearly establish the intent to rob before the homicide. The doctrine reinforced that circumstantial evidence alone must create an inference of guilt beyond a reasonable doubt to uphold a conviction.

**Class Notes:**

- Elements of Robbery with Homicide under Revised Penal Code (Art. 294):

1. Robbery took place.
2. By reason or on occasion of the robbery, homicide was committed.

- Admissibility of Evidence:

- Statements not subjected to cross-examination are generally inadmissible as hearsay under the Rules of Evidence.

- Constitutional Rights:

- Presumption of Innocence: A conviction must be based on moral certainty derived from circumstantial or direct evidence.

- Preventive Detention:

- Preventive imprisonment should be credited pursuant to Article 29 of the Revised Penal Code.

**Historical Background:**

This case took place during a time when the Philippine justice system was increasingly emphasizing the proper handling and presentation of forensic evidence. The decision reflects an imperative to meticulously uphold constitutional protections and requirements for due process while also emphasizing the limitations of circumstantial evidence in

securing a conviction for complex crimes like robbery with homicide.