

**\*\*Title:** People of the Philippines vs. Jose Batulan y Macajilos: A Conspiracy for Murder Case**\*\***

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

On June 21, 2003, around 7:30 p.m., Letecia Pacho accompanied her husband Ruben Pacho, a jeepney driver, along Abellanosa Street, Cagayan de Oro City. Ruben stopped to pick up passengers. Alvin Pagapulaan, a barker calling passengers, demanded P10.00 from Ruben's conductor. An altercation ensued after Ruben offered only P5.00. Displeased, Pagapulaan cursed at Ruben, kicked the jeepney, and as the passengers alighted, Ruben took a samurai to protect himself. As he stepped out, he was suddenly attacked by Jose Batulan, Renato Fuentes, and Junjun Fuentes.

Pagapulaan seized the samurai, slicing Ruben's face. Junjun stabbed Ruben with a knife, and Renato cracked his nape with a stone. Batulan hacked Ruben with the samurai, and all four conspired in stabbing Ruben, causing multiple fatal injuries. On identification, Letecia could not immediately identify Batulan due to his new haircut, but recognized Renato and Junjun. Ruben succumbed to his wounds at the hospital.

Police action followed immediately. SPO4 Ausejo responded to the report, apprehending Batulan with a blood-stained Batangas knife identified by Letecia. Pagapulaan, Batulan, and Renato were arrested and underwent trial.

**\*\*Procedural History:\*\***

1. **\*\*Trial Court\*\***: Information was filed on June 24, 2003, charging the four with murder. At arraignment, all pleaded not guilty. After trial, the court convicted Batulan, Renato, and Junjun of murder, sentencing them to reclusion perpetua.
2. **\*\*Court of Appeals\*\***: Batulan alone appealed, questioning the sufficiency of evidence due to identification issues. The OSG defended the verdict, maintaining sufficient evidence from other witnesses. The Court of Appeals affirmed the conviction, adjusting damages but diminishing treachery as a leaving abuse of superior strength as the qualifying circumstance.

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

1. **\*\*Sufficiency of Identification\*\***: Was Batulan's identification as a perpetrator sufficiently established despite Letecia's failure to positively identify him in court?
2. **\*\*Application of Res Inter Alios Acta\*\***: Did Renato and Junjun's testimonies against Batulan violate the principle of res inter alios acta?

3. **Conspiracy and Liability**: Did Batulan act in concert with his co-accused and share equal liability for Ruben's murder due to conspiracy?
4. **Qualifying Circumstances**: Was Batulan's act qualified as murder due to treachery or abuse of superior strength?

**Court's Decision:**

1. **Identification**: Despite Letecia's inability to identify Batulan, other testimonies (particularly Renato and Junjun's) established Batulan's participation. SPO4 Ausejo's eyewitness account and seizure of the murder weapon further validated Batulan's participation.
2. **Res Inter Alios Acta**: This principle was not applicable as Renato and Junjun's testimonies were given in court, subject to cross-examination.
3. **Conspiracy**: The coordinated and simultaneous attack demonstrated implied conspiracy, rendering Batulan equally liable as a principal perpetrator.
4. **Qualifying Circumstance**: The Court accepted the absence of treachery, but found abuse of superior strength, as the group used excessive force against Ruben, constituting murder.

**Doctrine:**

The case reiterated the principle that when conspiracy is established, all participants are equally liable for the crime's execution, and the act of one becomes the act of all. Additionally, the presence of abuse of superior strength as a qualifying circumstance without needing victim's defenselessness reinforced the application of such provisions under Article 248 of the Revised Penal Code.

**Class Notes:**

- **Conspiracy**: Joint criminal intent and action implicates all conspirators regardless of individual acts (Article 8, Revised Penal Code).
- **Abuse of Superior Strength**: The excessive disparity in force rendered the victim disadvantaged, qualifying the act to murder.
- **Res Inter Alios Acta**: Inapplicable to in-court testimony subjected to cross-examination.

**Historical Background:**

The case reflects ongoing tensions and criminal activities involving jeepney drivers and dispatchers/barkers in urban Philippine areas, highlighting vehicular regulation challenges and law enforcement's role in immediate criminal incidents occurring in less-regulated public transport environments. The judiciary's role in affirming substantial evidence

showcasing coordinated criminal actions provides insight into handling similar community-related criminal cases in the Philippines.