

Title: People of the Philippines vs. Cesar Atento, 273 Phil. 599

Facts:

- Date and Location:** The case involves Glenda Aringo, a 16-year-old neighbor of Cesar Atento in Barangay 18, Minoro, Cabagñan, Legazpi City. The alleged first incident took place in April 1986.
- Initial Incident:** Glenda visited Atento's store to buy bread. Atento, who was alone with his 3-year-old daughter, allegedly lured Glenda inside, took her downstairs, and raped her, causing bleeding and pain. He then gave her P5.00.
- Subsequent Incidents:** Glenda claimed Atento raped her four more times. She described the latter incidents as "masarap" due to healed injuries from the first assault.
- Concealment and Pregnancy:** Fear of Atento's threats led Glenda to silence until her visible pregnancy prompted her to confess her ordeal. The baby, christened Hubert Buendia Aringo, was born on December 27, 1987.
- Accusation and Arrest:** Atento denied the rape, suggested motives of harassment from Glenda's relative wanting his land, and defamed Glenda's character, claiming her promiscuity and previous immoral conduct.
- Mental Condition:** Clinical psychologist Ascendo Belmonte highlighted Glenda's mental retardation, noting her intellectual capacity of a 9-12 year old.
- Judicial Findings:** Both Glenda's mother and another relative testified about her child-like behavior and mental impairment. The court noted the resemblance between Atento and Glenda's baby and various factors pointing to Glenda's clear truthful and simplistic testimony.

Procedural Posture:

- Trial Court:** Atento was found guilty of rape under Paragraph 3 of Article 335 of the Revised Penal Code, with the court citing similarities to People v. Asturias and People v. Atutubo.
- Appeal:** Atento appealed the decision, challenging the alleged mental state of the victim and the credibility of the accusations.

Issues:

- Rape Definition and Application:**
 - How Article 335, Paragraphs 2 and 3, of the Revised Penal Code apply concerning the victim's mental state and inability to consent.
- Credibility of Testimony:**
 - Whether Glenda's testimony about the incidents and her mental condition were truthful

and consistent enough to support a conviction.

3. **Multiplicity of Offenses:**

- Whether multiple rapes were conclusively proven or just the initial assault can be considered.

Court's Decision:

1. **Mental State and Rape Definition:**

- The Supreme Court affirmed the application of Article 335(2), considering Glenda's mental retardation. Despite lacking direct evidence of force, her incapable mental state suffices to satisfy the requirement for rape under Paragraph 2.

2. **Credibility of Testimony:**

- The detailed psychological and relative testimonials established Glenda's limited mental capacity. Her child-like description of the assault and subsequent acquiescence was attributed more to her mental retardation than consent.

3. **Multiplicity of Offenses:**

- The Supreme Court did not find sufficient evidence to convict Atento for multiple counts. They only upheld the conviction for the first proven instance of rape.

4. **Sentence Affirmation:**

- The court upheld reclusion perpetua, an increase in civil indemnity from P20,000 to P30,000, and imposed support obligations for the child.

Doctrine:

- **Mental Capacity and Consent:** Rape constitutes carnal knowledge of a woman deprived of reason or understanding, equating such incapacity to that of a child below twelve years as per Article 335(2) and cases like *People v. Atutubo* and *People v. Palma*.

- **Credibility Under Mental Deficiency:** Even mentally deficient individuals can present credible testimonies if corroborated by independent psychological and factual evidence.

Class Notes:

- **Key Elements of Rape (Article 335):**

1. Use of force or intimidation.
2. Victim is deprived of reason or unconscious.
3. Victim is under twelve years of age.

- **Legal Statutes:** Revised Penal Code, Article 335.

- **Interpretation:** Deprivation of reason includes mental deficiencies. Consent cannot be legally obtained from individuals with the mental faculties of a child.

- **Mental Condition Evidence:**

- Relevant tests (e.g., Wechsler adult intelligence scale) and credible psychological assessments determine mental capacity.

Historical Background:

- **Context of Legal Standards on Rape:** The decision in *People vs. Atento* showcases the judiciary's emphasis on considering the mental state when interpreting consent. The case highlights evolving protections under Philippine law for victims with mental deficiencies, strengthening their legal safeguards against sexual abuses.