

PEOPLE OF THE PHILIPPINES, PLAINTIFF-APPELLEE, VS. CARLOS PASTORES, EDMUND MAGAT, AND EUGENIO VILLAR, DEFENDANTS-APPELLANTS.

G.R. No. L-29800. August 31, 1971

Ponente: REYES, J.B.L., J.

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REYES, J.B.L., J.:

Appeal from the decision of the Court of First Instance of Nueva Vizcaya, finding the accused in Criminal Case No. 1477 guilty of the crime of rape and sentencing each of them to life imprisonment, to indemnify the offended party and to pay the costs.

The records show that based on a complaint duly executed by Minda V. Reyes before the Municipal Judge of Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya, the Provincial Fiscal filed an information in the Court of First Instance of Nueva Vizcaya accusing Carlos Pastores, Edmund Magat and Eugenio Villar, alias Boy, of the crime of rape, allegedly committed as follows:

"That on or about the 6th day of August 1966, in the municipality of Bayombong, pro-vince of Nueva Vizcaya, Philippines, and within the jurisdiction of this Honorable Court, the above-named accused Carlos Pastores, Edmund Magat, and Eugenio Villar, alias Boy, conspiring, confederating and mutually helping one another thru force, threat and intimidation, did then and there, wilfully, unlawfully and feloniously and with deliberate intent and lewd designs, attack and have carnal knowledge with one Minda Reyes, against her will and without the consent of the latter.

"That in the commission of the crime the aggravating circumstances of superior strength and in an uninhabited place and nighttime are present."

On arraignment, the three accused entered pleas of not guilty.

To establish its case, the prosecution presented the following witnesses:

DR. BENIGNO RIVERA, Jr., resident physician in the Bayombong Hospital, who conducted the physical examination on the person of the complainant a few hours after the alleged rape was committed, affirmed on the witness stand the findings contained in the medical certificate (Exh. B). He declared that the contusions found in the vulva and fresh laceration at the posterior fourchette of the complainant's genital organ could have been caused by some force inflicted on the said parts of the body by a hard object.[1]

Complainant MINDA V. REYES testified that in the evening of August 5, 1966, she attended the coronation ceremony held at the St. Mary's College in Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya where she was then a 4th year BSE student. The affair ended at about 11:30 in the evening, and she left the school with her boy friend, Augusto Brillantes, at past 12 midnight. As there were no more jeepneys that would take her to her hometown, Solano, she and Augusto agreed to just stroll along the streets of Bayombong in the moonlit night.

They walked from the school up to the capitol ground. There, they sat on one of the benches and conversed for

about 2 hours.[2] Then, they decided to walk around, because they did not want people to see them still together at that late hour. They walked through the streets until they came to the Perez grandstand in the Clisoc Field.[3] They were seated in the grandstand and had been conversing for about 30 minutes when the three accused appeared and approached them. Edmund Magat and Boy Villar took her by the hands, while the third one, Carlos Pastores, held Augusto at bay with a bolo. Then, Magat and Villar started embracing and kissing her, and touched her breast and private parts. She struggled and cried for help. Augusto tried to come to her aid twice, and twice Pastores boxed him, and Augusto was weakened. Then, accused Magat dragged her up the grandstand, and forced her to lie down. But she struggled and was able to get up. Magat dragged her down from the grandstand.[4] Carlos Pastores then held her by the hand and ordered Magat and Villar and Augusto to follow them to the dike. They walked, Pastores still holding her hand and threatening her with a knife, followed by Magat and Villar who had Augusto between them.

When they reached the dike, which was about 200 meters away from the grandstand, Pastores ordered Magat and Villar to take Augusto away, which the two did.[5] The witness and Pastores had walked a little farther when the latter started kissing and embracing her. She resisted him, but Pastores covered her mouth, and laid her on the ground; he slapped her face and boxed her sternum. And when she kept on shouting, Pastores strangled her; he removed her blouse, forcibly took away her bra, her skirt and her panties. She was nervous and frightened, and Pastores was able to have sexual intercourse with her.[6] She kept on struggling and moving and Pastores' organ was removed. He tried to insert it again, but desisted. Then, she felt a sticky substance between her legs. Although feeling weak, she grabbed her clothes and put them on. Pastores threatened to kill her if she would report to the authorities. He also threatened to call his two companions and she pleaded him not to. As Pastores would not let her go home, she decided to go along with him and pretended that she liked him. Pastores brought her to the house of one Mrs. Bongcad to whom she was introduced as Pastores' sweetheart. She kept her peace because she was afraid. Later, when she reiterated to Pastores her desire to go home to change her clothes, he consented.[7] She took a tricycle and dropped first at the residence of Augusto and informed his mother about the incident. Then, she proceeded to the municipal building and reported what happened to the police. Later in the day, she was brought to the provincial hospital where she submitted to a physical examination. Complainant further declared that on account of the incident, she had to drop her studies. At the time of the hearing, she was no longer the girl friend of Augusto Brillantes.

AUGUSTO BRILLANTES took the witness stand and corroborated the testimony of the complainant. He declared that in the evening of August 5, 1966, he attended the festivities at St. Mary's College with his girl friend, Minda Reyes; that the coronation ceremony ended at about 11:30 p.m.; that he and Minda left the school about an hour later; that as there were no more jeepney that would take Minda home to Solano, they decided to take a walk. They walked to the capitol building ground and sat on a bench for about one and a half hours; then, they strolled away and went to the Perez grandstand at the Clisoc Field beside the Nueva Vizcaya high school.[8] They were seated in the grandstand conversing for about an hour when they saw three men approaching. He and Minda went down to avoid them, but the men overtook them, and accused Magat and Villar held Minda and took her away. He was left with accused Pastores who pointed a bolo at his stomach. He tried to help Minda who was crying for help, but Pastores hit him in the solar plexus. And when he ran up towards the grandstand to where Minda was, he was met by Magat and Villar who pointed a bolo at him and poked a gun at his side. When he tried to free himself from their hold, Villar boxed him, and he became unconscious. When he regained consciousness, Pastores ordered them to walk towards the dike. Pastores and Minda were ahead of them, the former holding a knife against Minda's side; he was made to walk between Magat and Villar who had their weapons pointed at his sides.[9]

On reaching the edge of the dike, Pastores ordered Magat and Villar to take him away, so the two forced him to

go to the other side of the dike some 50 meters away.[10] There, he was held at bay until it was about 5:30 or 6:00 in the morning. When he inquired from his two guards where Minda and Pastores could be, Villar left to look for them. Villar returned informing them that the two could not be located. The witness then was taken by Magat and Villar to the junction where he took a tricycle ride. He returned, however, to the dike to look for Minda and when he failed to find her, he thought of going to the municipal building to report the incident to the police. On the way to the town hall, he passed by their house and heard his mother in hysterics. He learned that Minda had already passed that way and had informed his mother that he was missing. He stayed by his mother's side until about 9 o'clock when she finally calmed down.[11]

This witness admitted that when he was taken away by Magat and Villar, he was not able to see Pastores and Minda anymore;[12] and during all the time that they were at the other side of the dike, these accused never left his side. He also declared that he severed his relationship with Minda Reyes because of the incident.

The defense presented accused EDMUND MAGAT, who declared in court that after attending the coronation ceremony at St. Mary's College in the evening of August 5, 1966, he conducted his girl friend to her residence. He was walking home with a friend and neighbor, Eugenio Villar, when they were called by Carlos Pastores in front of the billiard hall, and they were invited to watch the games. They joined Pastores and stayed in the billiard hall for about one or two hours. Then, they decided to go home. When they were almost at the corner of the road leading to the house of Pastores, the latter asked his two companions to accompany him to the grandstand where he intended to pass the night, reasoning that his father would get angry at his late arrival. Magat and Villar obliged and went with him. Near the grandstand, they heard a woman crying. She turned out to be Minda Reyes who was then being embraced by Augusto Brillantes. Pastores approached them, and he was met by Augusto who took him aside about 9 meters away, and told him something. When Pastores returned to his companions, he told them they were going home. Minda thereupon ran after them, and wanted to go with them because Augusto allegedly was drunk and was making a fool of her. Minda walked with Pastores ahead of the witness and Villar. At the crossing near the Girl Scouts building, Pastores turned to them and ordered him and Villar to go home, which they did. In their house, it was his father who opened the door for him. And, as his father was scolding him for his late arrival, the witness had to narrate what he and his companions saw at the grandstand. He had already gone to sleep when he was awakened by their neighbor, Patrolman Bulaya, who was called by his father, and he had to repeat to the policeman the incident that they witnessed at the grandstand.

Magat denied that he was armed when he and his companions went to the grandstand; that they had threatened Augusto with harm, and that he tried to abuse Minda.

In his testimony, accused EUGENIO VILLAR corroborated Magat's declarations. He, too, denied the charges that they were armed when they went to the grand stand; that they tried to abuse Minda, and that he boxed Augusto.

Patrolman FERNANDO BULAYA of the Bayombong Police Force testified that between 2 and 3 o'clock in the morning of August 7, 1966, Juan Magat woke him up in his house and related to him the information given by his (Magat's) on about the finding by the latter and his companions of a crying woman in the grandstand. He then went to the Magat residence to get from Edmund the whole story, and the latter repeated to him the information previously given to the father, and that Brillantes and Pastores raped the woman. With Juan Magat, whom he requested to accompany him, we went to the grandstand to verify Edmund's story. Finding no one in the place, they dropped at the house of Villar and they were told that Villar was sleeping. They passed by the dyke and still meeting no one, they dropped by the house of Pastores, which they found to be silent. The witness then went to the municipal building intending to make a report on the matter, but he already found Minda Reyes giving her statement to the officer on duty. He did not make a report anymore.

JUAN MAGAT testified along the same line as the policeman's. He declared having learned from his son about their finding of a woman crying in the grandstand; that he went out and got Patrolman Bulaya to interrogate Edmund, because he was interested to find the involvement of his said son in the incident.

For his part, accused CARLOS PASTORES declared that at about midnight of August 5, 1966, he was at the Hawaiian Recreational Hall when he chanced upon Edmund Magat and Eugenio Villar, passing by. He invited the two to watch the games and they came in. Later, as Magat wanted to go home, they walked out of the hall together. But he was afraid that his father would get angry with him for coming in late, so he asked his companions to accompany him to the grandstand where he intended to sleep. At a distance of about 30 meters from the grandstand, they heard the voice of a crying woman. They found out she was Minda Reyes, who was with Augusto Brillantes. When he went near the couple, Augusto got up, pulled him aside, and told him that he had sexual intercourse with the girl who did not like it and he had to force her. Augusto then requested him to leave him and Minda alone. He returned to his companions and in-formed them they were leaving. But Minda ran after them, held on to his hand and expressed desire to go with them because Augusto was drunk and he might fool with her again.

They left the grandstand; Magat, Villar and Augusto walking behind him and Minda. As Magat was determined to go home, he allowed Magat and Villar to leave. Then, he and Minda continued walking until they reached the dike. There, they met Mrs. Pacita Bicera, to whom he introduced Minda as his sweetheart. They also met Mr. Bicera and Mrs. Bicera's brother who were both working as "bangkero" (boatmen) in the river, and when they were teased about their forthcoming marriage, Minda smiled and pinched him at his side.[13] Minda asked him for transportation money, and since he had none, they proceeded to the house of Mrs. Bongcad. There, they took coffee; he was sleepy, so he went inside the room and slept. Minda later came into the room, took off his shoes which were muddy and washed them. Minda came in again to remind him of the money she was asking for, so he asked Mrs. Bongcad to give Minda some. Mrs. Bongcad had only fifty centavos which she gave to Minda. Upon receipt of the money, Minda went inside the room and bade him goodbye with the promise to return at noon. She even kissed him and said, "goodbye, dear".[14] He went back to sleep until about 11 o'clock, and returned to their own house when he could no longer wait for Minda.

He denied that he threatened Minda or boxed Augusto, and declared that he knew Minda, who was a classmate of his in one subject at the St. Mary's College, and Augusto, because they were from the same barrio. This testimony of accused Pastores was corroborated by Pacita Bicera, Inocencio Ascado, and Concepcion Bongcad who all declared that Minda was, introduced to them by Pastores as his girl friend, to which introduction Minda merely smiled.

Considering the evidence thus presented, the court in its decision of May 31, 1968 found the charges against the accused to have been duly proved, and declared Carlos Pastores liable for the rape of Minda Reyes as principal by, direct participation, and accused Edmund Magat and Eugenio Villar as principals by indispensable coopera-tion, for their role in separating Augusto Brillantes from the victim and standing guard over him, which acts enabled accused Carlos Pastores to commit the rape with-out interference or intervention. Consequently, the three accused were sentenced to life imprisonment, and ordered to indemnify the victim, jointly and severally, in the amount of P5,000.00 and to pay the costs. From this decision, the accused interposed the present appeal.

In this instance, appellants raise the question of jurisdiction of the trial court. It is pointed out that whereas the sworn complaint signed by Minda V. Reyes on August 15, 1966 charged the accused of having sexual know-ledge of the complainant by "taking advantage of the fact that said Minda Reyes was then in a state of coma or unconsciousness", the information filed by the Provincial Fiscal, which does not contain the signature of the offen-ded party, alleged that the offense was committed through force, threat and intimidation. Appellants,

therefore, contend that as the allegation of the information charges a rape committed in a manner different from that charged in the complaint signed by the offended party, then such complaint can not properly be made the basis of the information as require by Section 4, Rule 110 of the Revised Rules of Court.[15] In other words, the issue being presented here is whether or not a complaint signed by the offended party charging rape committed in a particular way can be the basis of an information charging rape committed in another way, for purposes of conferring jurisdiction on the court.

This issue is not really new; it has already been answered in the affirmative. In the case of *People vs. Bangalao*,[16] involving exactly the same set of facts, this Court ruled that an information charging rape committed on a minor and demented girl, based upon the complaint signed by the girl's mother alleging rape committed by means of force and intimidation, lawfully confers jurisdiction on the court to try the case. The reason for the ruling was given, thus:

"x x x In the case at bar, however, the complaint was for rape, and this gave the court jurisdiction to try the case. The power or jurisdiction of the court is not over the crime of rape when committed on a minor and demented girl, but over rape, irrespective of the manner in which the same may have been committed.

"It must be borne in mind that complaints are prepared in municipalities, in most cases without the advice or help of competent counsel. When the case reaches the court of first instance, the Fiscal usually conducts another investigation, and thereafter files the information which the results thereof justify. The right and power of the court to try the accused for the crime of rape attaches upon the filing of the complaint, and a change in the allegations thereof as (to) the manner of committing the crime should not operate to divest the court of the jurisdiction it has already acquired. The right or power to try the case should be distinguished from the right of the accused to demand an acquittal unless it is shown that he has committed the offense charged in the information even if he be found guilty of another offense; in the latter case, however, even if the court has no right to find the accused guilty because the crime alleged is different from that proved, it cannot be stated that the court has no jurisdiction over the case." (on p. 336)

Appellant Pastores likewise questions the decision finding him guilty of rape, making capital of the fact that the physician who conducted the physical examination of the complainant after the incident found her hymen to be intact, and that Minda's behavior when she was seen by witnesses Bicara, Bongcad, and Ascado did not indicate that she had just been ravished.

The ruling of the court below as regard Pastores must be affirmed. It must be remembered that the fact that a woman's hymen has no sign of laceration does not preclude a finding of rape. For, the rupture of the hymen or laceration of any part of the woman's genitalia is not indispensable to a conviction for rape;[17] it is enough that there is proof of entrance of the male organ within the labia of the pudendum.[18] In the present case, in addition to the positive declaration of the complainant about the consummation of rape on her person, we have the testimony of the examining physician that when he examined complainant at about 11 o'clock in the morning of August 6, 1966, he found contusions in the vulva, congested condition and discoloration of hymen, and fresh laceration at the posterior fourchette -- injuries which indicated that the object that inflicted them had penetrated past the labia majora of the pudendum. Furthermore, the condition of complainant's unruptured hymen was explained by the same physician during the trial. He declared that there is a type of hymen, the elastic kind, that returns back to its original virginal appearance even after sexual intercourse, and complainant's belongs to this type.[19]

It may be true that, as testified to by witnesses Bicara, Bongcad and Ascado, when complainant Minda Reyes was introduced to them by accused Pastores as his girl friend, she acknowledged the introduction with smiles. But that is understandable, considering that according to complainant, she pretended that she liked the accused in the hope

that by so doing, he would allow her to go home. Indeed, it must really be this display of docility that reassured Pastores that Minda was under his control, so that when she again asked for permission to go home, he finally consented. Besides, if Minda went voluntarily with appellant, as the defense would want the court to believe, because she wanted to avoid the company of Augusto, then why would she continue walking with appellant and accom-pany him in paying visits to his friends even after Augusto had dropped out of sight? Certainly, it is rather strange that a girl who, a few hours before, did not even want to be seen conversing with her boy friend in a public place such as the capitol grounds for fear of what people would say, would willingly go with a man whom she hardly knew^[20] and walk with him in a more or less isolated place at early morning hours, and allow herself to be introduced to his acquaintances as his girl friend. It also runs counter to the normal course of human behavior that a girl who likes a boy would kiss and bid him goodbye (as defense witnesses testified Minda did), and the moment she was out of his sight, would proceed directly to the municipal building to file a complaint for rape against him. Complainant's behavior after the assault actually supports her assertion that she was threatened by Pastores that he would allow his two companions to do to her what he (Pastores) had already done, thus making her decide to go along with the latter's idea in order that she may have the chance to get away from him. Truly, a young woman and a college student at that, like this complainant, would not have charged a man of having raped her and come out and give all the sordid details of her debasement in open court, if she were not really subjected to such outrageous act. We sustain, therefore, the trial court's ruling giving more credence to the testimony of the complainant. In fact, it may be said that her not offering resistance to appellant's imposi-tion, that she should go with him after her violation, was a ruse resorted to in order to escape from further harm and enabled her later to go directly to the police authorities to report and charge the proper author of the criminal act. Complainant's conduct indicates an ad-mirable presence of mind that bespeaks well of her character and intelligence.

With regard to the accused appellants Edmund Magat and Eugenio Villar, their attacks on the credibility of the offended party and other witnesses of the prosecution are not substantially different from those of appellant Pastores, which were properly disregarded by the trial court as earlier discussed (pages 9-10). The same thing can be said of their contention that no rape could have taken place, in view of the complainant's unruptured hymen. That this stand is untenable has been previously shown in this opinion (pages 8-9).

The trial court considered that all the accused appellants acted in conspiracy and are equally responsible as co-principals. We agree with defense counsel that the details of commission of the offense do not satisfactorily support the finding of conspiracy, particularly in view of the uncontradicted fact that the herein appellants met the complainant Minda Reyes and her companion and friend, Brillantes, purely by chance. Whatever the responsibility of Magat and Villar, it must be predicated on their action in separating Brillantes from the complainant when all five had reached the river dike, and thereafter preventing Brillantes from rendering aid to Minda. While this act was undoubtedly one of help and cooperation, We do not view it as indispensable, so that the rape could not have been committed without the sequestration of Brillantes. It must be recalled that at the grandstand, the latter proved no match for Pastores, who boxed and effectively weakened Brillantes; and further, Pastores was then armed with a knife while Brillantes had no weapon.

That Villar and Magat were aware of Pastores' criminal design to rape Minda Reyes is apparent under the circumstances. Upon returning home Magat advised his father of what transpired at the river dyke, and thereafter the father informed patrolman Bulaya that Minda had been raped.^[21] Considering that appellant Edmund Magat had not seen either Pastores or Minda Reyes at the river dyke after he and Villar had taken Brillantes away, Magat's informing his father that Minda had been raped demonstrates these two appellants' awareness of what Pastores intended to do with Minda when he asked his two companions to guard Brillantes while he (Pastores) compelled Minda to go with him.

Villar and Magat's cooperation not being indispensable for the commission of the crime, they are only liable as accomplices, as admitted by Villar's counsel in his brief (page 10).

In *People vs. Balili* (G. R. L-14044, August 5, 1966, 17 SCRA 892-898), the accused who stayed outside the house while the others robbed and killed the victims yet had knowledge of the criminal intention of the other accused and only went along with them was only convicted as an accomplice. And in the case of *People vs. Crisostomo* (46 Phil. 775), three of the accused who held the victim's companions to prevent the latter from rendering any help to the victim who was being kidnapped were only convicted as accomplices, even if circumstances indicated conspiracy among them, for their acts were not indispensable to the realization of the crime. Well known is the rule that in case of doubt as to the participation of an accused the lesser liability should prevail.

In *People vs. Tamayo*, 44 Phil. 38, this Court made the observation that -

"..... as against an accomplice, a court will sometimes draw the inference of guilty participation in the criminal design from acts of concert in the consummation of the criminal act and from the form and manner in which assistance is rendered, where it would not draw the same inference for the purpose of holding the same accused in the character of principal. This is because, in case of doubt, the courts naturally lean to the milder form of responsibility."

The preceding doctrine was followed in many subsequent cases, collated in the decision penned by Mr. Justice Fernando in *People vs. Tolentino*, G. R. No. L-29419, August 30, 1971.

The penalty for an accomplice is one degree lower than that prescribed for a principal (Rev. Penal Code, Article 52); so that Pastores having been meted out reclusion perpetua, the penalty for his accomplices should be reclusion temporal, ranging from 12 years and one (1) day to 20 years. Applying the indeterminate sentence law (Acts 4103 and 4225), Magat and Villar should be sentenced to a minimum penalty within the range of prision mayor and to a maximum within the range of reclusion temporal (*People vs. Mallari*, 60 Phil. 400).

WHEREFORE, the decision appealed from is affirmed in so far as it finds appellant Carlos Pastores guilty as principal in the rape of complainant Minda Reyes; but the decision is modified as to Edmund Magat and Eugenio Villar, who are found guilty as accomplices merely, instead of co-principals, and each one of the two is sentenced to undergo a minimum of eight (8) years of prision mayor and a maximum of sixteen (16) years of reclusion temporal. All three are jointly and severally condemned to indemnify the complainant in the sum of 5,000.00 and to pay the costs.

Concepcion, C.J., Dizon, Makalintal, Zaldivar, Castro, Fernando, Teehankee, Barredo, Villamor, and Makasiar, JJ., concur.

[1] p. 25, t.s.n., hearing of September 26, 1967.

[2] p. 20, t.s.n., hearing of October 4, 1967.

[3] p. 102, t.s.n., hearing of October 3, 1967.

[4] p. 62, t.s.n., October 3, 1967.

[5] p. 64, *ibid.*

[6] p. 66, *ibid.*

[7] pp. 82-83, *ibid.*

[8] p. 119, t.s.n., October 25, 1967.

[9] pp. 122-125, hearing of October 25, 1967.

[10] p. 125, *ibid.*

[11] p. 127, *ibid.*

[12] pp. 156-157 *ibid.*

[13] p. 210, t.s.n., hearing of December 7, 1967.

[14] p. 215, *ibid.*

[15] "SEC. 4. Who must prosecute criminal actions. -

xxx xxx xxx

"The offenses of seduction, abduction, rape or acts of lasciviousness, shall not be prosecuted except upon a complaint filed by the offended party or her parents, grandparents, or guardian, nor, in any case, if the offender has been expressly pardoned by the above named persons, as the case may be. x x x."

[16] 94 Phil. 354.

[17] *People vs. Canastre*, 82 Phil. 480.

[18] *People vs. Hernandez*, 49 Phil. 980.

[19] p. 27, t.s.n., hearing of September 27, 1967.

[20] Pastores claimed that he and the complainant were once classmates in one subject at St. Mary's college; Minda, on the other hand, denied having known the accused prior to the incident.

[21] T.s.n., Martinez, page 140 (7 December 1967).

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