

**ALICIA ARADANAS, COMPLAINANT, VS. CATHERINE V. DIMACLID,
REGGIE O. BRIGIDO, RIZA L. PELEGRINO, RESPONDENTS.**

A.M. NO. P-04-1927 (FORMERLY OCA IPI NO. 02-1319-P). April 15, 2005

Ponente: QUISUMBING, J.

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QUISUMBING, J.:

Before us is the administrative complaint of Alicia Aradanas against Catherine Dimaclid, Reggie Brigido and Riza Pelegrino, stenographic reporters of the 5[th] Municipal Circuit Trial Court of Culasi, Antique, for alleged misconduct, discourtesy in the course of official duties, and conduct prejudicial to the best interest of the service.

The facts are as follows:

Around 9:00 a.m. on October 11, 2000, complainant and her niece, Jocelyn Ilaya, went to the 5[th] MCTC of Culasi to inquire about the status of Criminal Case No. 2847-C where Aradanas was a witness for the prosecution. Aradanas saw the respondents picking small scrabble tiles that were strewn on the floor. She asked Dimaclid if the case had been set for hearing. Dimaclid informed Aradanas, whom she addressed as “Ma’am,” that a hearing was set on October 25, 2000, and that notices of the hearing had already been mailed. Since the prosecutor was not available on the date, Aradanas asked that the hearing be rescheduled to an earlier date. Dimaclid replied that only the court could schedule hearings, and that the staff only followed orders. At this point, Aradanas lost her temper, pointed her finger at Dimaclid, and shouted, “Sin-o gid kamo dya haw?” (Who are you in this court?) Dimaclid cautioned Aradanas not to shout, and added that she would inform the judge who would know what to do. Aradanas exclaimed, “Sugid to kay Judge hay!” (You tell that to the judge!) Then, she shouted at Dimaclid, “Gaga!” (You fool!) During their exchange, Dimaclid loudly told Aradanas, “Aram gid ti mo.” (You know what to do.)[1]

Because of the incident, the judge ordered Aradanas to show cause why she should not be punished for indirect contempt. However, she was exonerated on March 22, 2001.[2] She then filed the instant complaint on February 11, 2002.[3] She prayed that administrative sanctions be imposed on Dimaclid for insulting her, and that the three respondents be penalized for playing scrabble during office hours.

On August 13, 2004, Executive Judge Sylvia Jurao, Regional Trial Court of San Jose, Antique, to whom this Court referred the matter for investigation, report and recommendation, found Catherine Dimaclid had behaved improperly and discourteously, and recommended that a fine of P2,000 should be imposed on Dimaclid.[4]

After reviewing the records of this case, we are constrained to adopt Judge Jurao’s recommendation but with modification concerning the penalty.

In the performance of their duties and responsibilities, court personnel serve as sentinels of justice, and any act of impropriety on their part immeasurably affects the honor and dignity of the Judiciary and the people’s confidence in it. Belligerent behavior has no place in government service.[5] This rule has been upheld so much so that even when confronted with rudeness and insolence, court personnel are enjoined to act with self-restraint and

civility.[6]

Dimaclid's remark to Aradanas, "Aram gid ti mo" (You know what to do), in local dialect connotes disrespect and discourtesy. For this behavior, Dimaclid is liable for discourtesy in the course of official duties, a light offense punishable by reprimand for the first offense under Section 52(C)(1), Rule IV of the Revised Uniform Rules on Administrative Cases in the Civil Service.[7]

As to respondents Brigido and Pelegrino, since there is no showing that they were playing scrabble during office hours but were merely helping Dimaclid pick up scrabble tiles that a visitor from the Public Attorney's Office had accidentally strewn on the floor, Brigido and Pelegrino are hereby exonerated.

WHEREFORE, Catherine V. Dimaclid is hereby found liable for discourtesy in the course of performing official duties. She is REPRIMANDED and warned sternly that a repetition of the same or similar act will be dealt with more severely.

SO ORDERED.

Davide, Jr., C.J., (Chairman), Ynares-Santiago, Carpio, and Azcuna, JJ., concur.

[*] Sometimes "Pe Legrino" in some parts of the records.

[1] Rollo, pp. 1, 14-15, 41-42, 50, 53-54, 79-80; Sealed Report of Executive Judge Sylvia G. Jurao, pp. 400-417.

[2] Id. at 4.

[3] Id. at 1-3.

[4] Id. at 400-417.

[5] Court Personnel of the Office of the Clerk of Court of the Regional Trial Court-San Carlos City v. Llamas, A.M. No. P-04-1925 (Formerly A.M. OCA IPI No. 00-809-P), 16 December 2004, p. 13.

[6] Misajon v. Feranil, A.M. Nos. P-02-1565, MTJ-02-1408 & P-04-1900, 18 October 2004, p. 9.

[7] Pascual v. Alvarez, A.M. No. P-04-1882 (Formerly OCA IPI No. 03-1539-P), 30 September 2004, p. 9.

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