

RE: ALLEGED ILLEGAL ACQUISITION OF A CAREER SERVICE ELIGIBILITY BY MA. AURORA P. SANTOS, RECORDS OFFICER I, COURT OF APPEALS,

A.M. NO. 05-5-05-CA. January 27, 2006

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PER CURIAM:

Aurora P. Santos, Records Officer I of the Court of Appeals, joined the said office in 1984 as a temporary employee. In 1994, she became a permanent employee upon presentation of a certificate of civil service eligibility stating that she passed the October 17, 1993 Career Service Professional Examination in Quezon City. [1]

On January 20, 2005, Santos requested [2] for an authenticated copy of her civil service eligibility. Upon authentication by the Integrated Records Management Office of the Civil Service Commission (CSC), [3] it was noted that "Aurora P. Santos" referred to in the Picture Seat Plan (PSP) of the examinees was a "male." [4]

The CSC thus required Santos to show cause and explain why she should not be held administratively liable for employing fraud in the acquisition of her career service eligibility.

Santos admitted that she solicited the help of fixers after repeatedly failing the civil service examination. She insisted though that she was unaware of the scheme employed by the fixers of allowing another person to take the examination in her place. She begged for compassion and mercy so that she will not be charged administratively.

On May 11, 2005, Commissioner J. Waldemar V. Valmores of the CSC endorsed the case of Santos to this Court in view of our disciplinary authority over court personnel. [5] We referred the matter to Justice Romulo S. Quimbo, Consultant, Office of the Court Administrator, for investigation, report and recommendation. [6]

In his report, the Investigating Justice found that Santos employed dishonest means in procuring her civil service eligibility [7] and recommended her dismissal from the service with forfeiture of all retirement privileges, except accrued leaves, and perpetual disqualification from reemployment in any division or instrumentality of the government or in any government owned or controlled corporation. [8]

We adopt the findings and recommendation of the Investigating Justice. The evidence, coupled with Santos's admission, sufficiently established her dishonesty and grave misconduct. It is clear that she knew all along that her certificate of eligibility was spurious and was obtained through illegal means. Her claim of good faith deserves no credence.

Under Section 52, Rule IV of the Uniform Rules on Administrative Cases in the Civil Service, dishonesty and grave misconduct are grave offenses punishable by dismissal even if committed for the first time. In particular, we held in *Civil Service Commission, NCR v. Sta. Ana*, [9] that the use of a false certificate of eligibility constitutes an act of dishonesty under civil service rules warranting the penalty of dismissal.

The Code of Conduct for Court Personnel stresses that employees of the judiciary 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. Although every office in the government service is a public trust, no position exacts a greater demand for moral righteousness and uprightness from an individual than in the judiciary. [10]

Every employee of the judiciary should be an example of integrity, uprightness and honesty. Like any public servant, he must exhibit the highest sense of honesty and integrity not only in the performance of his official duties but in his personal and private dealings with other people, to preserve the court's good name and standing. It cannot be overstressed that the image of a court of justice is mirrored in the conduct, official or otherwise, of the personnel who work thereat, from the judge to the lowest of its personnel. Court employees have been enjoined to adhere to the exacting standards of morality and decency in their professional and private conduct in order to preserve the good name and integrity of courts of justice. [11]

WHEREFORE, Aurora P. Santos, Records Officer I of the Court of Appeals is ordered DISMISSED from the service with forfeiture of all retirement privileges, except accrued leaves, with prejudice from re-employment in any branch or instrumentality of the government, including government-owned or controlled corporations.

SO ORDERED.

Panganiban, C.J., Puno, Quisumbing, Ynares-Santiago, Sandoval-Gutierrez, Carpio, Austria-Martinez, Corona, Carpio-Morales, Callejo, Sr., Azcuna, Tinga, Chico-Nazario, and Garcia, JJ., concur.

[1] Rollo, p. 11.

[2] Id. at 9-10.

[3] Id. at 5.

[4] Id. at 7.

[5] Id. at 3-4.

[6] Id. at 31.

[7] Id. at 41.

[8] Id. at 42-43.

[9] 435 Phil. 1, 11 (2002).

[10] Rabe v. Flores, 338 Phil. 919, 925-926 (1997).

[11] Bucatcat v. Bucatcat, 380 Phil. 555, 567 (2000).

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