

AURORA BAQUERPO, ANTONIO BILLONES, RITA BORBON, EDGARDO CARIAN, BEN CORDERO, DOLLY DULA, BENEDICTA DOLEND, RICHARD ESCARLAN, MARIBEL GUILLERMO, CARMEN LEBANTO, FLORDELIZA NULOS...

Ponente: SADANG, J.

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SADANG, J.:

This is a petition for review under Rule 42 of the Rules of Court, with prayer for the issuance of temporary restraining order and/or writ of preliminary injunction, seeking the reversal of the Decision[1] dated July 15, 2011 of the Regional Trial Court (RTC) of Pasay City, Branch 108, affirming in toto the Decision[2] of the Metropolitan Trial Court (MTC) of Pasay City, Branch 45 dated January 12, 2011 ordering the ejectment of petitioners, and the Order³ dated November 14, 2011 denying petitioners' motion for reconsideration.

Antecedents of the Petition

Aurora Baquerpo[4], Antonio Billones, Rita Borbon, Edgardo Carian, Ben Cordero, Dolly Dula, Benedicta Dolendo, Richard Escarlan, Maribel Guillermo, Carmen Lebanto, Flordeliza Nulos, Helaria Pelegrin, Bonifacio Poco, Jack Salvacion, Purita Serato, Bienvenido Severino, Betty Abode, Abelardo Pilla, Renante Pineda, Catalina Abueva, Angelina Aquines, Melania Arciaga, Helen Betilia[5], Leonardo Bonus, Aurora Comanda, Carmen Bullicer, Aida Diamse[6], Jerimias Destrito[7], Sixto Dones, Fely Enriquez, C. Matibag, Alma Guillermo, Noli Morales, Linda Pantoja, Letty Pimentel, Marilyn/Merelos Pimentel, Elena Sicogal, Jose Soriano, Juanito Vergara, P. Villalobos, Eulalia Victoria, Enriqueta Zambales, Corazon Belarme[8] and Eduardo Wong (hereafter, petitioners) are tenants of a row of apartments constructed on a 3,422.67-square meter land located at Nos. 1916 to 1936 Leveriza St., Pasay City and covered by TCT No. 11903[9] issued on December 27, 1966 in the name of Charles Case.

On April 15, 2009, respondent Collen Colet Cosme[10] (hereafter, respondent), claiming to have bought the subject property under a Deed of Absolute Sale[11] dated February 13, 2006, filed a complaint for ejectment against the petitioners in the MTC-Pasay City, Branch 44, docketed as Civil Case No. M-PSY-09-09383. On September 9, 2009, the court issued an Order[12] granting the defendants' (petitioners) motion to dismiss on the ground of lack of jurisdiction over the subject matter because "the one (1) year period within which to bring the action has already prescribed." The case was dismissed without prejudice.

Thereafter, respondent sent letters to petitioners, dated October 29, 2009, demanding of them to pay outstanding rentals from May 2008 and to vacate the premises on or before November 25, 2009 because respondent and her family intended to use the property. Petitioners refused to vacate, thus, respondent filed another complaint[13] for ejectment before the MTC-Pasay, Branch 45, docketed as Civil Case No. M-PSY-10-11177. The case was referred for mediation but no settlement was reached by the parties.

In their Position Paper,[14] petitioners argued that: the court did not acquire jurisdiction over all defendants because out of the 43 named defendants sixteen (16) are already dead, four (4) are out of the country, and one (1)

no longer resides in the apartment; the property is covered by P.D. No. 1517 (Urban Land Reform Act) which protects the tenants from eviction and grants them the right of first refusal in case the owner intends to sell the property; the Deed of Absolute Sale dated February 13, 2006 under which Cosme claims a right of ownership of the land is invalid and illegal; an implied new lease was created by their continued occupation of the property more than 15 days after the expiration of the period to vacate given by Cosme; and the action is barred by prior judgment of the MTC-Pasay, Branch 44, dismissing Cosme's complaint for ejectment in 2009.

In her Position Paper, respondent contended that: she is justified in ejecting petitioners for failure to pay rentals from May 2008 in spite of demand and she intended to use the property; it was admitted at the pre-trial that the heirs of the deceased tenants are occupying the property and they received the summons personally; petitioners are not entitled to protection under P.D. 1517 because the property is not located inside an Area for Priority Development (APD, for short); Ethel Case Murphy was authorized to sell the property to Cosme under a Special Power of Attorney annotated on the dorsal side of TCT No. 11903.[15]

On January 12, 2011, the MTC rendered its Decision in favor of respondent, disposing thus:[16]

WHEREFORE, judgment is hereby rendered in favor of the plaintiff COLLEEN COLET COSME and against the defendants, ordering the latter and all persons claiming rights under them to turn-over and vacate the premises located at 1916-1936 Leveriza St., Pasay City and to pay their unpaid rentals in the following amounts, to wit:

Names

Rent/Mo.

Arrears as of October 2009

AURORA BAQUERFO
ANTONIO BILLONES
RITA BORBON
EDGARDO CARIAN
BEN CORDERO
BENEDICTA DOLEND
DOLLY DULA
RICHARD ESCARLAN
MARIBEL GUILLERMO
CARMEN LEBANTO
FLORDELIZA NULOS
HELARIA PELEGRIN
ABELARDO PILLA
RENANTE PINEDA
BONIFACIO POCO
JACK SALVACION
PURITA SERATO
BIENVENIDO SEVERINO +

P2,500.00
300.00
150.00
300.00
500.00
2,500.00

300.00
300.00
500.00
2,500.00
400.00
2,500.00
300.00
1,200.00
250.00
300.00
300.00
3,000.00

P47,500.00
5,700.00
2,850.00
5,700.00
5,700.00
47,500.00
5,700.00
5,700.00
9,500.00
47,500.00
7,600.00
47,500.00
5,700.00
22,800.00
4,750.00
5,700.00
5,700.00
57,000.00

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TOTAL

P340,100.00

BETTY ABODE
CATALINA ABUEVA +
ANGELINA AQUINES

HELEN BETILA
LEONARDO BONUS +
AURORA COMANDA
CARMEN BULLICER
AIDA DIAMLE
JEREMIAS DISTRITO
SIXTO DONES
FELY ENRIQUEZ
C. MATIBAG
ALMA GUILLERMO
NOLI MORALES
LINDA PANTOJA
LETTY PIMENTEL
MARILYN/MERELOS PIMENTEL
ELENA SICO GAL
JOSE SORIANO +
JUANITO VERGARA +
P. VILLALOBOS +
EULALIA VICTORIA +
ENRIQUETA ZAMBALES
EDUARDO WONG
CORAZON BELARMA

P600.00

600.00

550.00

600.00

300.00

600.00

550.00

550.00

650.00

600.00

600.00

400.00

400.00

450.00

500.00

400.00

300.00

450.00

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500.00

400.00

650.00

200.00

P11,400.00

11,400.00

10,450.00
11,400.00
5,700.00
10,450.00
10,450.00
10,450.00
12,350.00
11,400.00
11,400.00
7,600.00
7,600.00
8,550.00
9,500.00
7,600.00
5,700.00
8,550.00
7,600.00
10,450.00
10,450.00
9,500.00
7,600.00
12,350.00
3,800.00

=====

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P233,700.00

and to pay attorneys fees of P10,000.00. The counterclaim is dismissed. Without costs. Note however that should some of the defendants adjudged to pay are now dead, their obligations could not be enforced anymore, the same being personal in nature.

SO ORDERED.

Petitioners appealed to the RTC. Respondent filed a motion for the issuance of a writ of execution[17] of the MTC decision. In an Order dated June 1, 2011, the RTC deferred the issuance of a writ of execution until it has rendered its decision on the appeal.

In the meantime, the Sangguniang Panlungsod of Pasay City passed Ordinance No. 4553, Series of 2011[18] for the appropriation P15 Million for the expropriation of lands for socialized housing for poor families in Pasay City.

On July 15, 2011, the RTC rendered the assailed decision affirming the decision of the MTC in toto.

Petitioners filed a Motion for Reconsideration but it was denied in the Order dated November 14, 2011 which also

directed the issuance of a writ of execution on the arrearages.

Petitioners filed a Motion for Partial Reconsideration[19] of the November 14, 2011 Order averring that the issuance of the writ of execution with respect to the money judgment is contrary to law and jurisprudence. The motion was denied in an Order dated March 29, 2012.

Hence, this Petition raising the following assignment of errors:[20]

- THE COURT A QUO ERRED IN AFFIRMING IN TOTO THE DECISION OF THE LOWER COURT ON THE BASIS OF THE FINDING THAT "THE ASSIGNMENT OF ERRORS ALLEGEDLY COMMITTED BY THE LOWER COURT HAS BEEN FAIRLY AND SQUARELY RULED UPON AND AS SUCH THERE IS NO ROOM FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION".
- THE LOWER COURT ERRED IN AFFIRMING THE FINDING OF THE LOWER COURT THAT THE LEASEHOLD RELATION BETWEEN PRIVATE RESPONDENT AND PETITIONERS OVER THE SUBJECT PROPERTY HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED
- THE COURT A QUO ERRED IN RULING THAT "THE QUESTION OF OWNERSHIP IS UNESSENTIAL AND SHOULD BE RAISED IN AN APPROPRIATE ACTION" AND NOT ALLOWING RECEPTION OF EVIDENCE UPON THE QUESTION OF TITLE AND TO RESOLVE THE ISSUE OF OWNERSHIP, ONLY TO DETERMINE THE ISSUE OF POSSESSION.
- THE COURT A QUO ERRED IN FINDING THAT THE COURT HAS ACQUIRED JURISDICTION OVER THE PERSONS OF THE DEFENDANT WHO ARE ALREADY DEAD AND WHO ARE ABROAD.
- THE COURT A QUO ERRED IN NOT FINDING THAT THE SUBJECT PROPERTY IS COVERED BY THE URBAN LAND REFORM LAW AND PURSUANT TO THE PROVISION OF SECTION 4 OF P.D. NO. 2016, THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT OF PASAY CITY HAS PROCLAIMED THE SUBJECT PROPERTY AS AREA OF PRIORITY DEVELOPMENT AND SUBJECT OF THE SOCIALIZED HOUSING PROGRAM FOR THE POOR AND INDIGENT FAMILIES IN PASAY CITY.
- THE COURT A QUO ERRED SERIOUSLY IN ORDERING THE ISSUANCE OF THE WRIT OF EXECUTION IN FAVOR OF PRIVATE RESPONDENT AND AGAINST PETITIONERS WITH RESPECT TO THEIR RENTAL ARREARS FROM THE TIME OF FILING THE EJECTMENT SUIT FROM THE LOWER COURT UP TO THE PRESENT.

RULING

There is merit in the contention of petitioners that the RTC did not pass upon the assignment of errors that they raised in their appeal to said court but merely affirmed the MTC decision with a general statement that "it finds no reason to disturb the findings of the court." The RTC should have ruled on the issues because litigants are entitled to know the factual and legal bases of a court's decision.[21] This will also allow them to intelligently question the court's findings on appeal.

Nonetheless, the petition must fail.

Petitioners first raise a jurisdictional issue. They contend that the MTC did not acquire jurisdiction over the persons of sixteen (16) defendants who are already dead and four (4) defendants who are abroad. They argue that the persons who are claiming rights under the dead defendants were not impleaded and could not have been served with the demand letter.

The contention has no merit. It is true that an ejectment suit is an action in personam wherein judgment is binding only upon parties properly impleaded and given an opportunity to be heard.[22] However, there are exceptions to the rule. Thus, a non-party is bound by the judgment in an ejectment suit if he is either of the following: (a)

trespasser, squatter or agent of the defendant fraudulently occupying the property to frustrate the judgment; (b) guest or occupant of the premises with the permission of the defendant; (c) transferee pendente lite; (d) sublessee; (e) co-lessee; or (f) member of the family, relative or privy of the defendant.[23]

In this case, the MTC noted petitioners' stipulation that as to the deceased petitioners, their respective heirs are still residing in the subject property.[24] With respect to defendants Benedicta Dolendo, Abelardo Pilla, Betty Abode, and Angelina Aquines, the affidavits[25] executed by their kin show that Bernadette Broñosa (Benedicta's niece), Pedro Buenvenida (first cousin of Abelardo's wife), Marijean Abode (Betty Abode's daughter), and Avelina Aquines (Angelina's sister) are residing in the subject property and are in possession thereof under the names of said defendants. They are therefore bound by the judgment of the MTC even if they are not parties to the suit.

Petitioners' claim that the demand letters were not received by the petitioners or that the persons who received them are not of sufficient age and discretion or are not representatives of the concerned petitioners is unsubstantiated. On this point, respondent offered in evidence the demand letters (Exhibits D to D-43) which were noted by the MTC but copies of which petitioners did not attach to their petition. Considering that petitioners alleged that the letters were not received by persons of sufficient discretion, they should have presented evidence to prove their allegation; however, they failed to do so.

We shall now resolve the substantial issues raised in the petition.

Petitioners contend that the MTC and the RTC erred in ruling that the lease agreement was established and admitted. They averred that they disputed respondent's claim of ownership and suspended payment of rentals until respondent showed proof of her title which she did by presenting the deed of sale only when the first ejectment case was filed on April 14, 2009. They point out that all the receipts that they offered in evidence are in the name of Charles Case or his representative and none in respondent's name and the title over the land is still in the name of Charles Case.

Contrary to petitioners' contention that the existence of a lessor-lessee relationship between them and respondent was not admitted, the MTC categorically stated in its decision that at the pre-trial the "parties agreed to stipulate on xxx the lessor/lessee relationship between the plaintiff (respondent) and the defendants (petitioners)."[26] Having been made in the course of a judicial proceeding, the stipulation is in the nature of an admission which may be contradicted only upon a showing that it was made through palpable mistake or that no such admission was made.[27] Respondent correctly noted that petitioners did not object to the stipulation upon receipt of the pre-trial order. Petitioners are now precluded from denying the lessor-lessee relationship between them and respondent.

Petitioners assail the finding of the RTC that the issue of ownership is unessential. They contend that while it is true that in forcible entry and unlawful detainer cases the only issue is physical possession, nonetheless, the court may receive evidence on the question of title. They insist that they disputed the claim of ownership of respondent by questioning the validity of the deed of sale executed in her favor. They point out that the Special Power of Attorney given by Robert Case Minder, Allan Wilson Case and Charles C. Case to Ethel Case Murphy to sell the property was not presented in evidence and the price of P50,000.00 was grossly inadequate. The contention does not persuade.

The sole issue in an unlawful detainer case is physical or material possession of the property involved independent of any claim of ownership by any of the parties.[28] However, when the defendant raises the defense of ownership in his pleadings and the question of possession cannot be resolved without deciding the issue of ownership, the issue of ownership shall be resolved only to determine the issue of possession.[29] The defendant

may show that the landlord's title has been conveyed to another who need not be a party to the ejectment case.[30]

Petitioners were unable to substantiate their claim that the sale of the property to respondent is invalid and illegal. The evidence shows that the property was sold to respondent under a Deed of Sale dated February 13, 2006 executed by Ethel Case Murphy for her own behalf and as attorney-in-fact of Robert Case Minder, Alan Wilson Case, and Charles C. Case. The deed was notarized and acknowledged before the Office of the Consulate General of the Philippines in California, U.S.A. As a public document, a notarized document has in its favor the presumption of regularity and it carries the evidentiary weight conferred upon it with respect to its due execution; it is admissible in evidence without further proof of its authenticity and is entitled to full faith and credit upon its face.[31] While this presumption is merely a rebuttable one there must be evidence that is clear, convincing and more than merely preponderant to overcome it; otherwise, the document should be upheld.[32] Aside from their bare allegations and speculations, petitioners did not present clear, convincing and preponderant proof to overcome the presumption. It must be stated, however, that the finding of the MTC in an ejectment case with respect to ownership is provisional and may be the subject of a separate proceeding intended to settle the issue.[33]

Petitioners aver that the MTC's finding that the property is not within an APD is based on the Urban Land Reform Land Transaction Certification (ULRLTC) and the Locational Reference Handbook (LRH) for the 245 Proclaimed Areas for Priority Development, however, said documents are based only on Proclamation No. 1967. They argue that under Section 4 of P.D. 2016 the National Housing Authority, in coordination with the local government unit, may revalidate the list of APD and, pursuant to said law, the Sangguniang Panglungsod of Pasay has proclaimed the subject property an APD and passed Ordinance No. 4553, Series of 2011 appropriating P15 Million for its expropriation.

Petitioners' contention cannot be sustained. Petitioners cannot qualify under P.D. 1517 in the absence of proof that the subject property had been declared an APD and urban land reform zone.[34] Perusal of Proclamation No. 1967 which specifies 244 sites in Metropolitan Manila as APDs and urban land reform areas does not show that the subject property is included therein.[35] The MTC also noted that the ULRLTC issued on August 25, 2010 by Octavio DG Canta of the Housing and Land Use Regulatory Board states that the subject property appears to be "outside any Area for Priority Development per above cited Proclamation and on the same Locational Reference Handbook." [36] Ordinance No. 4553, Series of 2011 does not also declare the subject property as an APD.[37]

Even assuming that petitioners have a preferential right to purchase the subject property, that will not prevent the ejectment case filed by the respondent from taking its due course. A contract of sale entered into in violation of preemptive right is merely rescissible and the remedy of the aggrieved party whose right was violated is to file an appropriate action to rescind the sale and compel the owner to execute the necessary deed of sale in his favor.[38] An action for unlawful detainer cannot be abated or suspended by an action filed by the defendant-lessee to judicially enforce his right of preemption.[39]

Finally, there is no merit in petitioners' claim that the RTC committed reversible error in issuing a writ of execution on the rental arrears from the filing of the suit up to present. Section 21, Rule 70 of the Rules of Court clearly provides that "the judgment of the RTC against the defendant shall be immediately executory, without prejudice to a further appeal that may be taken therefrom." Unlike Section 19, Rule 70 of the Rules, Section 21 does not provide a means to prevent execution; hence, the court's duty to order such execution is practically ministerial.[40] Section 21 of Rule 70 presupposes that the defendant in a forcible entry or unlawful detainer case is unsatisfied with the judgment of the RTC and decides to appeal to a superior court. It authorizes the RTC to immediately issue a writ of execution without prejudice to the appeal taking its due course.[41] This is not to say that the losing defendant in an ejectment case is without recourse to avoid immediate execution of the RTC

decision. The defendant may, as in this case, appeal said judgment to the Court of Appeals and therein apply for a writ of preliminary injunction.[42]

Unfortunately, petitioners have not shown that they have a right in esse that needs to be protected by injunctive relief. Injunction is not a remedy to protect or enforce contingent, abstract, or future rights; it will not issue to protect a right not in esse and which may never arise, or to restrain an act which does not give rise to a cause of action.[43] And their claim that there is no other plain, speedy, or adequate remedy available is belied by their filing of a Motion for Partial Reconsideration of the Order dated November 14, 2011 which was still pending before the RTC when they filed this petition for review.

WHEREFORE, the petition for review is DISMISSED. The Decision dated July 15, 2011 and the Order dated November 14, 2011 of the Regional Trial Court of Pasay City, Branch 108 are AFFIRMED; the prayer for issuance of TRO and/or preliminary injunction is DENIED for lack of merit.

SO ORDERED.

Librea-Leagogo, (Chairperson), and Diamante, JJ., concur.

[1] Rollo, pp. 173-174.

[2] Id. at 122-136.

[3] Id. at 189-190.

[4] Should be "Baquerfo" per MTC-Pasay Decision, supra note 2 at 135-136.

[5] Should be "Betila" per MTC-Pasay Decision, Id.

[6] Should be "Diamle" per MTC-Pasay Decision, Id.

[7] Should be "Jeremias Distrito" per MTC-Pasay Decision, Id..

[8] Should be "Belarma" per MTC-Pasay Decision, Id.

[9] Id. at 35.

[10] Should be "Colleen" per MTC-Pasay Decision, Id..

[11] Id. at 68-69.

[12] Id. at 54-57.

[13] Id. at 64-66.

[14] Id. at 79-89.

[15] Id. at 108-113.

[16] MTC-Pasay Decision, supra note 2 at 135-136.

[17] Id. at 139-141.

[18] Id. at 170-172.

[19] Id. at 209-212.

[20] Id. at 13.

[21] Art. VIII, Sec14, 1987 Constitution.

[22] Nora Bueno Pasion v. Simplicio R. Melegrito, G.R. No. 166558, March 28, 2007, citing Biscocho v. Marero, 431 Phil. 147, 150 (2002), citing Republic v. Court of Appeals, 315 SCRA 600, 606 (1999).

[23] Id. citing Biscocho v. Marero, supra citing Oro Cam Enterprises, Inc. v. Court of Appeals, 319 SCRA 444, 454 (1999). See also Sunflower Neighborhood Association v. Court of Appeals, 457 Phil. 404, 409-410 (2003).

[24] MTC-Pasay Decision, supra note 2 at 128.

[25] Rollo, pp. 104-107.

[26] MTC Decision, supra note 2, at 127-128

[27] Rule 129, Section 4, Revised Rules on Evidence.

[28] Go v. Looyuko, supra, citing Sps. Esmaguel v. Coprada, G.R. No. 152423, December 15, 2010, 638 SCRA 428.

[29] Id., citing Section 16, Rule 70, Revised Rules of Court.

[30] Santos v. National Statistics Office, G.R. No. 171129, April 6, 2011.

[31] Spouses Palada v. Solidbank Corporation, G.R. No. 172227, June 29, 2011; Emilio v. Rapal, G.R. No. 181855, March 30, 2010, 617 SCRA 199, 202-203; Heirs of the Deceased Spouses Vicente S. Arcilla and Josefa Asuncion Arcilla v. Teodoro, G.R. No. 162886, August 11, 2008, 561 SCRA 545, 564.

[32] Heirs of the Deceased Spouses Vicente S. Arcilla and Josefa Asuncion Arcilla v. Teodoro, G.R. No. 162886, August 11, 2008, 561 SCRA 545, 564.

[33] See Enrico Santos v. National Statistics Office, supra, citing Dela Rosa v. Roldan, G.R. No. 133882, September 5, 2006, 501 SCRA 34, 53.

[34] See Mark Anthony Esteban v. Spouses Rodrigo C. Marcelo and Carmen T. Marcelo, G.R. No. 197725. July 31, 2013.

[35] Proclamation No. 1967 (May 14, 1980)

LIST OF AREAS FOR PRIORITY DEVELOPMENT (APD's)
(SOUTH SECTOR) PASAY CITY

x x x

24. Leveriza - A rectangular Block bounded on the northwest by San Juan Street and Leveriza on the southwest by Buendia Avenue on the northeast.

[36] MTC-Pasay Decision, supra note 2 at 131.

[37] Rollo, p. 170.

[38] Yuki, Jr. v. Wellington Co, G.R. No. 178527, November 27, 2009.

[39] Id., citing Wilmon Auto Supply Corp. v. Court of Appeals, G.R. No. 97637, April 10, 1992.

[40] City of Naga vs. Elvi John S. Asuncion, et al., G.R. No. 174042, July 9, 2008 citing Puncia v. Gerona, G.R.

No. 107640, January 29, 1996, 252 SCRA 425, 430.

[41] City of Naga v. Asuncion, supra.

[42] Id.

[43] Jimmy T. Go v. The Clerk Of Court and Ex-Officio Provincial Sheriff of Negros Occidental, G.R. No. 154623, March 13, 2009.

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