ROMEO G. ROXAS AND SANTIAGO N. PASTOR, PETITIONERS, VS. ANTONIO DE ZUZUARREGUI, JR., ENRIQUE DE ZUZUARREGUI, PACITA JAVIER, ELIZABETH R. GONZALES, JOSEFINA R. DAZA, ELIAS REYES,...

G.R. NO. 152072. July 12, 2007

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PER CURIAM:

Self-approbation, pride and self-esteem should not erode and dim the luster and dignity of this Court. Against overweening bluster and superciliousness, nay, lordly claim, this Court must stand steadfast, unmoved and uncompromising in upholding what is right and proper. In such posture, the mandate of affording every man the equal protection of the law cannot dwindle. Strict adherence to ethical conduct and righteousness without veering away from responsibility will foster an impregnable respect, deference and even reverence to this Court's decisions and pronouncements.

In a Resolution[1] dated 26 September 2006, the Court En Banc ordered Atty. Romeo G. Roxas to explain in writing why he should not be held in contempt of court and subjected to disciplinary action when he, in a letter[2] dated 13 September 2006 addressed to Associate Justice Minita V. Chico-Nazario with copies thereof furnished the Chief Justice and all the other Associate Justices, intimated that Justice Nazario decided G.R. No. 152072 and No. 152104 on considerations other than the pure merits of the case, and called the Supreme Court a "dispenser of injustice."

The letter of Atty. Roxas reads in part:

> As an officer of the court, I am shocked beyond my senses to realize that such a wrongful and unjust decision has been rendered with you no less as the ponente. This terrible decision will go down in the annals of jurisprudence as an egregious example of how the Supreme Court, supposedly the last vanguard and bulwark of justice is itself made, wittingly or unwittingly, as a party to the wrongdoing by giving official and judicial sanction and conformity to the unjust claims of the Zuzuarreguis. We cannot fathom how such a decision could have been arrived at except through considerations other than the pure merits of the case. Every law student reading through the case can see clearly how a brother lawyer in the profession had been so short-changed by, ironically, the most sacred and highest institution in the administration and dispensation of justice.
>
> x x x x
>
> This is an unjust and unfair decision, to say the least. x x x We cry out in disbelief that such an impossible decision could spring forth from the Supreme Court, the ultimate administrator and last bulwark of justice. As it stands, instead of being an administrator of justice, the Supreme Court is ironically a dispenser of injustice.
>
> Under the circumstances, we hope you will forgive us in expressing our sentiment in this manner as we are utterly frustrated and dismayed by the elementary injustice being foisted upon us by the Supreme Court, no less. Given the facts of the case, we will never understand what moved the Honorable Justice to decide as she did and what forces and influences caused her to reason out her decision in such an unfair and unjust manner as

> to compromise the reputation, integrity and dignity itself of the Supreme Court, as a venerable institution of justice.
>
> As lawyers, we are officers of the Court so that, while we are being underservedly pained by the seething injustice of the decision, we will submit to the authority of Highest Court of the Land, even as our reverence for it has been irreversibly eroded, thanks to your Honor's Judgment.
>
> x x x x
>
> As for Your Honor, sleep well if you still can. In the end, those we address as Honorable Justice in this earthly life will [be] judged by the Supreme Dispenser of Justice – where only the merits of Your Honor's life will be relevant and material and where technicalities can shield no one from his or her wrongdoings.
>
> Good day to you, Madame Justice!

The decision referred to in the letter is the Court's decision[3] in these consolidated cases where Attys. Roxas and Santiago N. Pastor were ordered to return, among others, to Antonio de Zuzuarregui, Jr., et al. the amount of P17,073,224.84.

Roxas and Pastor filed their Motion for Reconsideration[4] on 8 March 2006 which they followed with an Executive Summary[5] the day after. In a resolution dated 22 March 2006, the Court noted the Executive Summary and deferred action on the Motion for Reconsideration.[6]

On 27 March 2006, the Court denied with finality the Motion for Reconsideration as the basic issues have already been passed upon and there being no substantial argument to warrant the modification of the Court's decision.[7]

On 30 March 2006, Roxas and Pastor filed a Motion for Leave to File Supplemental Motion for Reconsideration, together with the Supplemental Motion for Reconsideration.[8]

The following day, they filed a Motion for Leave to File Motion to Set the Case for Oral Argument, together with the Motion to Set the Case for Oral Argument (on the Motion for Reconsideration and the Supplement thereto).[9] In a Manifestation dated 3 April 2006, Roxas and Pastor asked that a typographical error appearing in the affidavits of service attached to the motions be corrected and that the Motion to Set Case for Oral Argument be granted.[10]

On 7 April 2006, Antonio de Zuzuarregui, Jr., et al., filed a Motion for Leave to File Comment on/Opposition to Motion for Reconsideration.[11]

On 7 June 2006, Roxas and Pastor filed an Urgent and Compelling Motion for Reconsideration (with Motion to Refer the Case to the En Banc).[12]

On 7 June 2006, the Office of then Chief Justice Artemio V. Panganiban received from Roxas a letter (with enclosures)[13] dated 6 June 2006 which contained, inter alia, the following:

> This is an unjust and unfair decision, to say the least. x x x We cry out in disbelief that such an impossible decision could spring forth from the Supreme Court, the ultimate administrator and last bulwark of justice. As it stands, instead of being an administrative of justice, the Supreme Court will ironically be a dispenser of injustice.
>
> Under the circumstances, we cannot avoid to suspect the bias and partiality of the ponente of the case who we surmise must have been moved by considerations, other than noble.
>
> In this regard, Mr. Chief Justice, we implore Your Honor, as steward of the Highest Court of the land, to take appropriate steps to forthwith correct this anomalous decision by first, referring the case to the Supreme Court

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> En Banc, and then, after allowing us the opportunity to be heard orally En Banc and after judiciously considering our "Urgent and Compelling Motion for Reconsideration", thereafter reversing the decision of this Honorable Court's First Division.
>
> Finally, in order to cleanse the Supreme Court of the blot caused by this case, we most ardently implore upon Your Honor to immediately direct the conduct of an investigation of how such an impossible decision was rendered at all and to sanction the perpetrators thereon.
>
> As the Chief Justice, we have faith in you, Sir, to rectify a grievous wrong inflicted upon a member of the Bar and to restore the good image and reputation of the Court by causing the High Court to reverse such an inconceivable decision that is unfair, unjust and illegal, being an [impairment] of the obligation of contracts and against the principle of estoppel.

Said letter was indorsed to the Clerk of Court of the First Division for its inclusion in the agenda.[14]

On 12 July 2006, the Court resolved to (a) Note Without Action (1) the motion of petitioners Roxas and Pastor for leave to file supplemental motion for reconsideration of the decision dated January 31, 2006; (2) the aforesaid supplemental motion for reconsideration; and (3) respondents Zuzuarreguis' motion for leave of court to file comment/opposition to motion for reconsideration, said motion for reconsideration having been denied with finality in the resolution of 27 March 2006; (b) Deny for lack of merit said petitioners' (1) motion for leave to file motion to set case for oral argument; and (2) motion to set the case for oral argument [on the motion for reconsideration and the supplement thereto]; (c) Note petitioners' manifestation regarding the correction of typographical error in the affidavit of service of their motion for leave to file motion to set case for oral argument and said motion to set case for oral arguments; (d) Deny the urgent and compelling second motion for reconsideration of petitioners Romeo G. Roxas and Santiago N. Pastor of the decision dated 31 January 2006 [with motion to refer the case to the Court En Banc], considering that a second motion for reconsideration is a prohibited pleading under Sec. 2, Rule 52, in relation to Sec. 4, Rule 56 of the 1997 Rules of Civil Procedure, as amended; (e) Deny said petitioners' motion to refer the cases to the Court En Banc, the latter not being an appellate court to which decisions or resolutions of the Divisions may be appealed, pursuant to SC Circular 2-89 dated 7 February 1989, as amended by the resolution of 18 November 1993; and (f) Note the First Indorsement dated 9 June 2006 of the Hon. Chief Justice Artemio V. Panganiban referring for inclusion in the agenda the thereto attached letter [with enclosures] of Atty. Romeo G. Roxas, relative to these cases.[15]

On 13 September 2006, on motion by the Zuzuarreguis for the issuance of entry of judgment, the Court ordered that entry of judgment in these cases be made in due course.[16]

On 14 September 2006, Roxas and Pastor filed an Urgent Motion for Clarification of Judgment.[17] On even date, the letter subject of this contempt proceeding dated 13 September 2006 was received by Justice Nazario with copies thereof furnished the Chief Justice and all the other Associate Justices.[18]

On 18 September 2006, Roxas and Pastor filed a Motion to Withdraw said motion and instead prayed that their Urgent and Compelling Motion for Clarification of Judgment dated 15 September 2006 be admitted.[19]

On 20 September 2006, the Court, treating petitioners Roxas and Pastor's Urgent Motion for Clarification of Judgment as a second motion for reconsideration, denied the same for lack of merit. We also noted without action the motion to withdraw said motion for clarification with intention to re-file the same with the necessary corrections, and referred to the Court En Banc the letter dated 13 September 2006.[20]

In a resolution dated 26 September 2006, this Court ordered Atty. Roxas to explain in writing why he should not be held in contempt of court and subjected to disciplinary action on account of the letter he sent to Justice Nazario with copies thereof furnished the Chief Justice and all the other Associate Justices.

On 22 November 2006, the Court noted without action petitioner Roxas and Pastor's Urgent and Compelling Motion for Clarification of Judgment in light of the denial of their Urgent Motion for Clarification of Judgment on 20 September 2006 which the Court treated as a second motion for reconsideration.[21]

On 16 November 2006, by way of compliance with the 26 September 2006 resolution, Atty. Roxas submitted his written explanation. His letter stated:

> With all due respect to this Honorable Court, and beyond my personal grievances, I submit that the ruling in the subject consolidated cases may not have met the standards or adhered to the basic characteristics of fair and just decision, such as objectivity, neutrality and conformity to the laws and the constitution. x x x
>
> x x x x
>
> Aside from the fact that the aforesaid ruling appears to be seriously flawed, it also casts grave aspersions on my personal and professional integrity and honor as a lawyer, officer of the court and advocate of justice.
>
> x x x x
>
> These implications, Your Honors, which I find hard to accept, have caused me severe anxiety, distress and depredation and have impelled me to exercise my right to express a legitimate grievance or articulate a bona fide and fair criticism of this Honorable Court's ruling.
>
> While certain statements, averments and/or declarations in my 13 September 2006 letter may have been strongly-worded and construed by this Honorable Court as tending to ascribe aspersions on the person of the Honorable Associate Justice Minita V. Chico-Nazario, may I assure Your Honors that no such ascription was ever intended by the undersigned.
>
> Quite notably, despite my aggrieved sentiments and exasperated state, I chose to ventilate my criticisms of the assailed ruling in a very discreet and private manner. Accordingly, instead of resorting to public criticism through media exposure, I chose to write a personal letter confined to the hallowed halls of the highest tribunal of the land and within the bounds of decency and propriety. This was done in good faith with no intention whatsoever to offend any member, much less tarnish the image of this Honorable Court.
>
> Nonetheless, it is with humble heart and a repentant soul that I express my sincerest apologies not only to the individual members of this Honorable Court but also to the Supreme Court as a revered institution and ultimate dispenser of justice.
>
> As earlier explained, I was merely exercising my right to express a legitimate grievance or articulate a bona fide and fair criticism of this Honorable Court's ruling. If the nature of my criticism/comment or the manner in which it was carried out was perceived to have transgressed the permissible parameters of free speech and expression, I am willing to submit myself to the sound and judicious discretion of this Honorable Court. x x x

After reviewing the records of these cases, We firmly stand by our decision which Atty. Roxas described to be unjust, unfair and impossible, and arrived at through considerations other than the pure merits of the case. Atty. Roxas's insistence that said decision did not meet the standards or adhered to the basic characteristics of fair and just decision, such as objectivity, neutrality and conformity to the laws and the Constitution, is simply without basis. The fact that the decision was not in his favor does not mean that the same was contrary to our laws and was not rendered in a fair and impartial manner.

In one case,[22] we had this to say when a lawyer challenged the integrity not only of the Court of Appeals but also of this Court by claiming that the courts knowingly rendered an unjust judgment:

> We note with wonder and amazement the brazen effrontery of respondent in assuming that his personal knowledge of the law and his concept of justice are superior to that of both the Supreme Court and the Court of

> Appeals. His pretense cannot but tend to erode the people's faith in the integrity of the courts of justice and in the administration of justice. He repeatedly invoked his supposed quest for law and justice as justification for his contemptuous statements without realizing that, in seeking both abstract elusive terms, he is merely pursuing his own personal concept of law and justice. He seems not to comprehend that what to him may be lawful or just may not be so in the minds of others. He could not accept that what to him may appear to be right or correct may be wrong or erroneous from the viewpoint of another. x x x.

It is to be noted that prior to his letter dated 13 September 2006, Atty. Roxas wrote then Chief Justice Artemio V. Panganiban asking for an immediate investigation of "how such an impossible decision was rendered at all and to sanction the perpetrators thereon." It is to be stressed that then Chief Justice Panganiban was a member of the Division who concurred in the ponencia written by Justice Nazario. The former and the other three members[23] of the Division did not find anything illegal, unjust or unfair about the decision; otherwise, they would have registered their dissents. There was none. The decision was arrived at after a thorough deliberation of the members of the Court.

Atty. Roxas faulted the Supreme Court when "(o)ur two Motions for Reconsiderations were unceremoniously denied via Minute Resolutions without addressing at all the merits of our very solid arguments. We cannot help but observe the High Court's resort to technicalities (that a second motion for reconsideration is a prohibited pleading) if only for it to avoid meeting the merits and arguments directly."

It is settled that the Court is not duty-bound to render signed Decisions all the time. It has ample discretion to formulate Decisions and/or minute Resolutions, provided a legal basis is given, depending on its evaluation of a case.[24] In the case before us, after going over the motion for reconsideration filed by Roxas and Pastor, we did not find any substantial argument that would merit the modification of our decision and that would require an extended resolution since the basic issues had already been passed upon.

In his letter subject of this contempt proceeding, Atty. Roxas accused Justice Nazario of deciding the case through "considerations other than the pure merits of the case." He averred that "we will never understand what moved the Honorable Justice to decide as she did and what forces and influences caused her to reason out her decision in such an unfair and unjust manner as to compromise the reputation, integrity and dignity itself of the Supreme Court, as a venerable institution of justice." He then ended by mocking her when he said "sleep well if you still can" and that her "earthly life will [be] judged by the Supreme Dispenser of Justice where only the merits of Your Honor's life will be relevant and material and where technicalities can shield no one from his or her wrongdoings."

As to the Court, supposedly the last vanguard and bulwark of justice, he likewise accuses it of making itself, wittingly or unwittingly, a party to the wrongdoing by giving official and judicial sanction and conformity to the unjust claims of the adverse party. He added: "This is an unjust and unfair decision, to say the least. x x x We cry out in disbelief that such an impossible decision could spring forth from the Supreme Court, the ultimate administrator and last bulwark of justice. As it stands, instead of being an administrator of justice, the Supreme Court is ironically a dispenser of injustice."

In his letter of explanation, Atty. Roxas extended apologies to Justice Nazario, to the other members of the High Court and to the High Court itself as a revered institution and ultimate dispenser of justice. He said he was merely exercising his right to express a legitimate grievance or articulate a bona fide and fair criticism of the Honorable Court's ruling. He explained that his criticism of the assailed ruling was done in good faith with no intention whatsoever to offend any member, much less tarnish the image of the Court. Instead of resorting to public criticism through media exposure, he chose to ventilate his criticism in a very discreet and private manner by writing a personal letter confined to the hallowed halls of the Court and within bounds of decency and propriety.

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We find the explanations of Atty. Roxas unsatisfactory. The accusation against Justice Nazario is clearly without basis. The attack on the person of Justice Nazario has caused her pain and embarrassment. His letter is full of contemptuous remarks tending to degrade the dignity of the Court and erode public confidence that should be accorded it.

To prevent liability from attaching on account of his letter, he invokes his rights to free speech and privacy of communication. The invocation of these rights will not, however, free him from liability. As already stated, his letter contained defamatory statements that impaired public confidence in the integrity of the judiciary. The making of contemptuous statements directed against the Court is not an exercise of free speech; rather, it is an abuse of such right. Unwarranted attacks on the dignity of the courts cannot be disguised as free speech, for the exercise of said right cannot be used to impair the independence and efficiency of courts or public respect therefor and confidence therein.[25] Free expression must not be used as a vehicle to satisfy one's irrational obsession to demean, ridicule, degrade and even destroy this Court and its magistrates.[26]

This Court does not curtail the right of a lawyer, or any person for that matter, to be critical of courts and judges as long as they are made in properly respectful terms and through legitimate channels. This Court in In re: Almacen[27] said:

> Moreover, every citizen has the right to comment upon and criticize the actuations of public officers. This right is not diminished by the fact that the criticism is aimed at a judicial authority, or that is it articulated by a lawyer. Such right is especially recognized where the criticism concerns a concluded litigation, because then the court's actuation are thrown open to public consumption. x x x
>
> x x x x
>
> Courts and judges are not sacrosanct. They should and expect critical evaluation of their performance. For like the executive and the legislative branches, the judiciary is rooted in the soil of democratic society, nourished by the periodic appraisal of the citizen whom it is expected to serve.
>
> Well-recognized therefore is the right of a lawyer, both as an officer of the court and as a citizen, to criticize in properly respectful terms and through legitimate channels the acts of courts and judges. x x x
>
> x x x x
>
> Hence, as a citizen and as officer of the court, a lawyer is expected not only to exercise the right, but also to consider it his duty to avail of such right. No law may abridge this right. Nor is he professionally answerable for a scrutiny into the official conduct of the judges, which would not expose him to legal animadversion as a citizen.
>
> x x x x
>
> But it is the cardinal condition of all such criticism that it shall be bona fide and shall not spill over the walls of decency and propriety. A wide chasm exists between fair criticism, on the one hand, and abuse and slander of courts and the judges thereof, on the other. Intemperate and unfair criticism is a gross violation of the duty of respect to courts. It is such a misconduct that subjects a lawyer to disciplinary action.

In the case at bar, we find the statements made by Atty. Roxas to have been made mala fides and exceeded the boundaries of decency and propriety. By his unfair and unfounded accusation against Justice Nazario, and his mocking of the Court for allegedly being part of a wrongdoing and being a dispenser of injustice, he abused his liberty of speech.

In In re: Wenceslao Laureta,[28] cited in United BF Homeowners v. Sandoval-Gutierrez,[29] we ruled:

> To allow litigants to go beyond the Court's resolution and claim that the members acted "with deliberate bad faith" and rendered an "unjust resolution" in disregard or violation of the duty of their high office to act upon their own independent consideration and judgment of the matter at hand would be to destroy the authenticity, integrity and conclusiveness of such collegiate acts and resolutions and to disregard utterly the presumption of regular performance of official duty. To allow such collateral attack would destroy the separation of powers and undermine the role of the Supreme Court as the final arbiter of all justiciable disputes.x x x x
>
> In resume, we find that respondent Ilustre has transcended the permissible bounds of fair comment and criticism to the detriment of the orderly administration of justice in her letters addressed to the individual Justices quoted in the show-cause Resolution of this court en banc, particularly the under lined portions thereof; in the language of the charges she filed before the Tanodbayan quoted and underscored in the same Resolution; in her statements, conduct, acts and charges against the Supreme Court and/or the official actions of the justices concerned and her ascription of improper motives to them; and in her unjustified outburst that she can no longer expect justice from this Court. The fact that said letters are not technically considered pleadings, nor the fact that they were submitted after the main petition had been finally resolved does not detract from the gravity of the contempt committed. The constitutional right of freedom of speech or right to privacy cannot be used as a shield for contemptuous acts against the Court.

Atty. Roxas likewise cannot hide under the mantle of the right to privacy. It must be disclosed that prior to his letter addressed to Justice Nazario, Atty. Roxas first wrote then Chief Justice Panganiban asking for an investigation as to how the assailed decision was rendered and to sanction the perpetrators. The accusations contained therein are similar to those in his letter to Justice Nazario. The fact that his letters were merely addressed to the Justices of this Court and were not disseminated to the media is of no moment. Letters addressed to individual Justices, in connection with the performance of their judicial functions, become part of the judicial record and are a matter of concern for the entire court.[30] As can be gathered from the records, the letter to then Chief Justice Panganiban was merely noted and no show-cause order was issued in the hope that Atty. Roxas would stop his assault on the Court. However, since Atty. Roxas persisted in attacking the Court via his second letter, it behooved the Court to order him to explain why he should not be held in contempt of court and subjected to disciplinary action.

Under the circumstances, we find Atty. Romeo G. Roxas guilty of indirect contempt of court under Section 3, Rule 71 of the 1997 Rules of Civil Procedure, as amended. Said section reads:

> Section 3. Indirect contempt to be punished after charge and hearing. – After a charge in writing has been filed, and an opportunity given to the respondent to comment thereon within such period as may be fixed by the court and to be heard by himself or counsel, a person guilty of any of the following acts may be punished for indirect contempt:
>
> x x x x
>
> d. Any improper conduct tending, directly or indirectly, to impede, obstruct, or degrade the administration of justice; x x x.
>
> x x x x

Section 7, Rule 71 of the 1997 Rules of Civil Procedure, as amended, provides the penalty for indirect contempt as follows:

> Sec. 7. Punishment for indirect contempt. – If the respondent is adjudged guilty of indirect contempt committed against a Regional Trial Court or a court of equivalent or higher rank, he may be punished by a fine not exceeding thirty thousand pesos or imprisonment not exceeding six (6) months or both. x x x.

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The disrespect caused to the Court by Atty. Roxas merits a fine of P30,000.00 with a warning that a repetition of a similar act will warrant a more severe penalty.

With his contemptuous and defamatory statements, Atty. Roxas likewise violated Canon 11 of the Code of Professional Responsibility, particularly Canons 11.03 and 11.04. These provisions read:

> CANON 11 -- A LAWYER SHALL OBSERVE AND MAINTAIN THE RESPECT DUE TO THE COURTS AND TO JUDICIAL OFFICERS AND SHOULD INSIST ON SIMILAR CONDUCT BY OTHERS
>
> x x x x
>
> Rule 11.03. – A lawyer shall abstain from scandalous, offensive and menacing language or behavior before the Courts.
>
> Rule 11.04. – A lawyer shall not attribute to a Judge motives not supported by the record or have no materiality to the case.

It is the duty of a lawyer as an officer of the court to uphold the dignity and authority of the courts and to promote confidence in the fair administration of justice and in the Supreme Court as the last bulwark of justice and democracy.[31] Respect for the courts guarantees the stability of the judicial institution. Without such guarantee, the institution would be resting on a very shaky foundation.[32] When confronted with actions and statements, from lawyers and non-lawyers alike, that tend to promote distrust and undermine public confidence in the judiciary, this Court will not hesitate to wield its inherent power to cite any person in contempt. In so doing, it preserves its honor and dignity and safeguards the morals and ethics of the legal profession.[33]

WHEREFORE, premises considered, Atty. Romeo G. Roxas is found GUILTY of indirect contempt of court. He is hereby FINED the amount of P30,000.00 to be paid within ten (10) days from receipt of this Resolution and WARNED that a repetition of a similar act will warrant a more severe penalty.

Let a copy of this Resolution be attached to Atty. Roxas' personal record in the Office of the Bar Confidant and copies thereof be furnished the Integrated Bar of the Philippines.

SO ORDERED.

Puno, C.J., Quisumbing, Ynares-Santiago, Carpio, Austria-Martinez, Corona, Carpio-Morales, Azcuna, Chico-Nazario, Garcia, Velasco, Jr., and Nachura, JJ., concur.
Sandoval-Gutierrez, J., on leave.
Tinga, J., No part. Close relations and former counsel of a party.

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[1] Rollo, of G.R. No. 152072, pp. 813-814.

[2] Id. at 807-812.

[3] The antecedents are stated in the decision promulgated on 31 January 2006. Rollo, Vol. 2, pp. 417-438.

[4] Id. at 445-492.

[5] Id. at 439-444.

[6] Id. at 493.

[7] Id. at 495.

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[8] Id. at 496-524.

[9] Id. at 519-555.

[10] Id. at 556-566.

[11] Id. at 567-569.

[12] Id. at 571-689.

[13] Id. at 691-755.

[14] Id. at 690.

[15] Id. at 756-757.

[16] Id. at 762-C.

[17] Id. at 764-774.

[18] Id. at 807-812.

[19] Id. at 775-804.

[20] Id. at 805.

[21] Id. at 823.

[22] Montecillo v. Gica, G.R. No. 30380, 21 October 1974, 60 SCRA 234, 246.

[23] Associate Justices Consuelo Ynares-Santiago, Ma. Alicia Austria-Martinez and Romeo J. Callejo, Sr. (now retired).

[24] In Re: Wenceslao Laureta, 12 March 1987, 148 SCRA 382, 417.

[25] In re: Published Alleged Threats Against Members of the Court in the Plunder Case Hurled by Atty. Leonard de Vera, A.M. No. 01-12-03-SC, 29 July 2002, 385 SCRA 285, 291.

[26] Re: Letter Dated 21 February 2005 of Atty. Noel S. Sorreda, A.M. No. 05-3-04-SC, 22 July 2005, 464 SCRA 32, 45.

[27] G.R. No. 27654, 18 February 1970, 31 SCRA 562, 576-580.

[28] Supra note 24 at 420-421.

[29] A.M. No. CA-99-30, 29 September 1999, 315 SCRA 423, 435-436.

[30] Mercado v. Security Bank Corporation, G.R. No. 160445, 16 February 2006, 482 SCRA 501, 516.

[31] In re: Published Alleged Threats Against Members of the Court in the Plunder Case Hurled by Atty. Leonard de Vera, supra note 25 at 292.

[32] Mercado v. Security Bank Corporation, G.R. No. 160445, 16 February 2006, 482 SCRA 501, 519-519 citing Salcedo v. Hernandez, 61 Phil. 724.

[33] In re: Wenceslao Laureta, supra note 24 at 403.

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