

PEOPLE OF THE PHILIPPINES, PLAINTIFF-APPELLEE, V. BENIE MON Y ABARIDES @ "BALENTO"; ACCUSED-APPELLANT.*G.R. No. 235778. November 21, 2018*Read online (full-text search, related cases, audio case brief): <https://batas.org/library/g-r-no-235778/>**CAGUIOA, J:**

Before the Court is an appeal[1] filed under Section 13(c), Rule 124 of the Rules of Court from the Decision[2] dated July 28, 2017 (Decision) of the Court of Appeals, Fifth Division (CA), in CA-G.R. CR-HC No. 08813, which affirmed the Decision[3] dated October 26, 2016 of the Regional Trial Court, National Capital Judicial Region, Branch 211, Mandaluyong City (RTC), in Criminal Case No. MC10-13272, finding herein accused-appellant Benie Mon y Abarides @ "Balento" (Benie) guilty of the crime of murder under Article 248 of the Revised Penal Code.

The Facts

Benie was charged for the crime of murder under the following Amended Information:

That on or about the 2[nd] day of May 2010, in the City of Mandaluyong, Philippines, a place within the jurisdiction of this Honorable Court, the above-named accused, armed with a gun, with intent to kill and by means of qualifying aggravating circumstances of treachery and evident premeditation, did then and there willfully, unlawfully and feloniously shot one Uldarico Arroyo, thereby inflicting upon him gunshot wounds which directly caused his death."

Contrary to law.[4]

Upon arraignment, Benie pleaded not guilty.

Version of the Prosecution

On May 2, 2010, at around 3:00 a.m., Manolo Guevarra (Manolo) and victim Uldarico Arroyo (Uldarico), both members of the Bantay Bayan, were having coffee in a store near their outpost at Blk. 40, Paradise Court, Brgy. Addition Hills, Mandaluyong City when Benie arrived and proceeded to the back of Uldarico.[5]

Benie pointed and fired a gun at the right side of Uldarico's neck causing the latter to fall from his seat. While Uldarico was lying face down on the ground, Benie fired three more gunshots at him. Subsequently, Benie fled the place carrying said gun. Due to his gunshot wounds, Uldarico was rushed to the Mandaluyong City Medical Center by Randy Buera, another Bantay Bayan member.[6]

Meanwhile, Nida[7] Arroyo (Nida), wife of Uldarico, was inside their house in Ugnayan St., Blk. 40, Welfareville Compound, Brgy. Addition Hills, Mandaluyong City when she heard several gunshots.[8]

Thereafter, somebody shouted, "Si Kuya Ding, si Kuya Ding binaril." Nida went out of their house and learned from the people who witnessed the crime that Uldarico was brought to the hospital. Nida immediately proceeded to the Mandaluyong City Medical Center.[9]

Since Uldarico's condition became critical, he was transferred to Quirino Memorial Medical Center on the same

day, where Uldarico was confined for 11 days. On May 13, 2010, Uldarico died.[10]

Also on May 13, 2010, the Philippine National Police (PNP) Crime Laboratory, Eastern Police District, received a letter-request from Uldarico's family requesting for an autopsy examination of Uldarico's cadaver.[11]

Upon autopsy examination, Police Chief Inspector Maria Anna Lisa G. Dela Cruz, MD (PCI Dela Cruz), a medico-legal officer, noted that the cause of Uldarico's death was a gunshot wound. PCI Dela Cruz explained that the gunshot wound from the lumbar region was the fatal one as it caused laceration in Uldarico's big organs like the left kidney, large intestine, and part of the liver.[12]

Version of the Defense

Benie denied the allegations against him and testified that on May 2, 2010 at around 3:00 a.m., he was sleeping at his residence in San Fernando, Pilar, Capiz, which is located in the Visayas Region and very far from Metro Manila.[13]

When Benie was arrested on July 12, 2012, he did not think that his arrest was due to the crime of murder until he learned that he was being arrested for Uldarico's murder. Benie only knew Uldarico as a barangay tanod of Blk. 40, Welfareville Compound since he studied in Fabella High School, Mandaluyong City from second year until he graduated.[14]

Prior to his arrest, Benie had a drinking spree on March 14, 2010, when Uldarico arrested him for violation of curfew hour. Uldarico brought Benie to jail. After posting bail, Benie went to the province on March 27, 2010 and did not see Uldarico again. Benie thought that he was being charged for Uldarico's death due to the latter's belief that Benie would take revenge on Uldarico for sending him to jail.[15]

Benie also presented a certification issued by Renan Valois (Valois), Punong Barangay of Brgy. San Fernando, Pilar, Capiz certifying that Benie was a resident of the said barangay from 2008 until 2012 when he was arrested by the authorities at the Municipality of President Roxas, Capiz.[16]

Benie further presented Ricky Villa (Ricky), operator of the tricycle driven by him, who testified that Benie had been driving the tricycle since March 30, 2010 until the time Benie was apprehended by the PNP Crime Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG). Ricky stated that he did not know the reason for Benie's apprehension and confirmed that he did not receive any complaint regarding Benie. Ricky narrated that Benie never took a leave of absence from driving the tricycle.[17]

RTC Ruling

In its Assailed Decision[18] dated October 26, 2016, the RTC found Benie guilty of murder, to wit:

WHEREFORE, premises considered, the court finds accused BENIE MON y ABARIDES @ "BALENTO" GUILTY beyond reasonable doubt of the crime of Murder defined and penalized under Article 248 and absent any aggravating circumstances is hereby SENTENCED to suffer the penalty of RECLUSION PERPETUA. Accused shall not be eligible for parole under Act No. 4180, otherwise known as the Intermediate (sic) Sentence Law, as amended, pursuant to Section 3 of Republic Act No. 9346 "An Act Prohibiting the Imposition of Death Penalty in the Philippines".

Accused Mon is hereby ordered to pay the victim's heirs the following amounts: P50,000.00 as moral damages, P89,361.00 as actual damages, P30,000 as exemplary damages, P50,000.00 as civil indemnity and P342,000.00 as damages for loss of earning capacity.

SO ORDERED.[19]

The RTC found that the prosecution was able to establish that it was Benie who killed the victim. As to the aggravating circumstances, it ruled that the shooting was attended by treachery since Benie all of a sudden appeared and fired at the victim who was unarmed and unaware of the attack. However, it ruled that the prosecution failed to establish the requisites of evident premeditation. Lastly, it did not give weight to the defense of denial advanced by the Benie.[20]

Aggrieved, Benie appealed to the CA.

CA Ruling

On appeal, in its Decision[21] dated July 28, 2017, the CA affirmed in toto the conviction by the RTC:

WHEREFORE, the appeal is DENIED. The RTC Decision dated October 26, 2016 is AFFIRMED in toto.

SO ORDERED.[22] (Emphasis in the original)

The CA held that minor inconsistencies in the narration of facts by the witnesses do not detract from their essential credibility. Its perusal of the records showed that witness Manolo positively identified Benie as the perpetrator of the crime. It also stressed that alibi is an inherently weak defense, which cannot prevail over the positive identification of the accused.[23]

Hence, this appeal.

Issue

Whether the CA erred in affirming Benie's conviction for murder despite the fact that the prosecution failed to establish his guilt for murder beyond reasonable doubt.

The Court's Ruling

The appeal is meritorious.

In criminal prosecutions, a person who stands charged of a crime enjoys the presumption of innocence, as enshrined in the Bill of Rights.[24] He is designated as the accused precisely because the allegations against him have to be proven beyond reasonable doubt. Due process dictates that an accused is entitled to a fair trial where both the prosecution and defense can present their respective versions of the events, and submit proof thereon. Accusation does not amount to conviction. Only when the prosecution has established guilt beyond reasonable doubt shall the presumption of innocence be overturned. In this case, the prosecution did not overcome the burden of proof.

It is well settled that in the absence of facts or circumstances of weight and substance that would affect the result of the case, appellate courts will not overturn the factual findings of the trial court.[25] A factual question would necessitate the reevaluation of the evidence submitted before the trial court. However, this is allowed in the exceptional circumstance where the judgment is based on a misapprehension of the facts.[26] Such is the situation in this case.

Positive identification v. denial and alibi

While positive testimony is generally given more weight than the defenses of denial and alibi which are held to be inherently weak defenses because they can be easily fabricated,[27] this does not mean that the defense of denial and alibi should be easily dismissed by the Court as untrue.

In considering the defenses of denial and alibi, the Court held in *Lejano v. People*: [28]

But not all denials and alibis should be regarded as fabricated. Indeed, if the accused is truly innocent, he can have no other defense but denial and alibi. So how can such accused penetrate a mind that has been made cynical by the rule drilled into his head that a defense of alibi is a hangman's noose in the face of a witness positively swearing, "I saw him do it."? Most judges believe that such assertion automatically dooms an alibi which is so easy to fabricate. This quick stereotype thinking, however, is distressing. For how else can the truth that the accused is really innocent have any chance of prevailing over such a stone-cast tenet?

There is only one way. A judge must keep an open mind. He must guard against slipping into hasty conclusion, often arising from a desire to quickly finish the job of deciding a case. A positive declaration from a witness that he saw the accused commit the crime should not automatically cancel out the accused's claim that he did not do it. A lying witness can make as positive an identification as a truthful witness can. The lying witness can also say as forthrightly and unequivocally, "He did it!" without blinking an eye.[29] (Emphasis supplied)

Thus, if found credible, the defenses of denial and alibi may, and should, be considered complete and legitimate defenses. The burden of proof does not shift by the mere invocation of said defenses; the presumption of innocence remains in favor of the accused.

In alibi, the accused must prove not only that he was at some other place at the time the crime was committed, but that it was likewise physically impossible for him to be at the scene of the crime at the time thereof.[30] Physical impossibility refers to the distance between the place where the appellant was when the crime transpired and the place where it was committed, as well as the facility of access between the two places.[31]

In the instant case, the RTC and CA erred when it failed to appreciate that it was physically impossible for Benie to commit the crime due to the distance between his whereabouts and the place where the crime was committed. This was firmly established by the testimonies of the witnesses presented by the defense:

[Direct and cross-examination of Benie Mon y Abarides]

Q

Mr. witness, do you remember where you were on May 2, 2010 at around 3:00 o'clock in the morning?

A

Yes ma'am, I was at my residence, sleeping, ma'am.

Q

And where is your residence?

A

I was in the province then at Capiz, ma'am.

Q

What is your exact address in Capiz?

A

At San Fernando Pilar, Capiz, ma'am.

Q

And how far is San Fernando, Pilar Capiz from Metro Manila, Mr. Witness?

A

Very far, it is in the Visayan region, and it is needed to ride a ship, ma'am.

Q

And how long have you been staying in San Fernando, Pilar, Capiz?

A

I was born and grow up in Pilar[,] Capiz, ma'am.[32]

x x x x

Q

Mr. witness, is there a direct flight from Capiz to Manila?

A

Through ship, sir.

Q

What about airplane?

A

Yes, sir.

Q

By PAL, Philippine Airlines?

A

Yes, from Roxas City, sir.

Q

And Roxas City is also a province, correct?

A

Yes, sir.

Q

What about Cebu Pacific?

A

I do not know because I haven't try riding an airplane, sir.[33]

[Cross-examination of Ricky Villa]

Q

And how were you able to reach Mandaluyong City?

A

I rode a RORO and rode a bus, sir.

Q

From Roxas?

A

Yes, sir.

Q

How long did it take you to reach Manila?

A

One day and one night, sir.[34] (Emphasis supplied)

To establish alibi, the accused must prove (a) that he was present at another place at the time of the perpetration of the crime, and (b) that it was physically impossible for him to be at the scene of the crime. Physical impossibility "refers to the distance between the place where the accused was when the crime transpired and the place where it was committed, as well as the facility of access between the two places.[35]

In the instant case, it was physically impossible for Benie to be at the place where the crime was committed. To better gauge the distance between Capiz and Manila, Ricky testified that it would take one day and one night via ship to travel from Capiz to Metro Manila.[36] In addition, even if there is another available mode of transportation, which is via an airplane, Benie testified that he has never ridden one.[37] Even assuming that he had ridden an airplane on the said date, the travel time is still long, ranging from 45 minutes to one hour,[38] and this estimation still does not include the minutes or hours he would have had to spend going in and out of the airport and travelling via land to Mandaluyong. The sheer distance between these two places and the time it will take to traverse these two places makes it well nigh impossible for Benie to commit the crime he is accused of.

In this regard, the RTC and CA failed to appreciate and give weight to the testimony of Ricky, the operator of the tricycle driven by Benie. Ricky testified that the latter had been driving the tricycle since March 30, 2010 until the time Benie was apprehended by the CIDG:

[Direct examination of Ricky Villa]

Q

And since when Benie Mon has been driving your tricycle?

A

Since 2008, ma'am.

Q

As an operator of a tricycle, what are your functions and duties?

A

I take care of my unit, ma'am. They would get the key in the morning and they would return it in the afternoon at 5:00 p.m. together with the boundary.

Q

And do you remember, Mr. Witness, was there any instance that Benie Mon took a leave of absence or did not report for work?

A

No, ma'am.

Q

From 2008 up to July 12, 2012, you do not remember if there is no instance that Benie Mon took a leave of absence. Am I correct?

A

Yes, ma'am.[39] (Emphasis supplied)

Verily, Ricky would have known if Benie took a leave of absence on the day the crime was committed since one of his functions as a tricycle operator is to hand over the tricycle key to Benie in the morning and receive it in the afternoon together with the boundary. Had Benie not been in Capiz on the said day, Ricky would have noticed it immediately. Hence, it was impossible for Benie to be in Metro Manila at the time of the incident. He could not have been in two places at the same time.

Ricky's testimony was never refuted by the prosecution. Moreover, his testimony was corroborated by the testimony of Barangay Captain Valois that Benie is a resident of Pilar, Capiz from 2008 up to 2012.[40] He even mentioned that their barangay is very small with a population of only 1,300 and that he would often see Benie driving a tricycle around the area.[41] For alibi to prosper, it must be supported by credible corroboration from disinterested witnesses.[42] In the case at bar, Benie's testimony was corroborated by two disinterested and credible witnesses. The Court does not see any cogent reason why the two witnesses presented by Benie would falsely testify in his favor.

Inconsistencies in the testimony of the lone eyewitness to the crime

The Court has held that "[s]elf-contradictions and inconsistencies on a very material and substantial matter seriously erode the credibility of a witness." [43] As held in *People v. Amon*: [44]

For evidence to be believed "must not only proceed from the mouth of a credible witness, but must be credible in itself — such as the common experience and observation of mankind can approve as probable under the circumstances. There is no test of the truth of human testimony, except its conformity to our knowledge, observation and experience. Whatever is repugnant to these belongs to the miraculous and is outside of judicial cognizance." [45]

In the instant case, the testimony of Manolo, the lone eyewitness presented by the prosecution, contains contradictions on material points. The shooting incident happened at the early hours of the morning, at 3:00 a.m. to be exact, which means that it was still dark when the victim was shot. In this regard, Manolo was not even sure as to the lighting condition during the shooting incident:

Q What was the lighting condition of the place, Mr. Witness?

A

Its bright Sir, just like this (witness referring to the lighting condition of the courtroom) because there is light in the canteen Sir. [46]

x x x x

Q

Can you tell us again the lighting condition of the place?

A

A it's a little dim compare to this lights Ma'am (witness referring to the lighting condition inside the courtroom) but its really bright Ma'am inside the store Ma'am. [47]

Also, contrary to his statement in his *Pinagsamang Sinumpaang Salaysay*, Manolo's testimony in open court was that he did not actually witness the poking of the gun at the neck of Uldarico:

Q

Mr. Witness, may I direct your attention to paragraph 3 of this *Pinagsamang Sinumpaang Salaysay* wherein you stated that "na, ang mga oras ay ganap na alas 3:00 ng umaga, ika-2 ng Mayo 2010, habang kami kasama si Bantay Bayan Uldarico Arroyo ay nagkakape sa isang tindahan hindi sa kalayuan sa aming outpost na matatagpuan sa block 40, Paradise Court, Brgy. Addition Hills, Mandaluyong City, ay may isang taong sumulpot sa may gawing likuran naming at walang anu-ano ay binunot ang kanyang dala-dalang hindi pa mabatid na kalibre ng baril at pagkatapos itinutok ito sa kanang bahaging leeg ni bantay bayan Uldarico Arroyo alyas Ding at sabay kalabit nito kung kaya nahulog si Ding sa kanyang pagkakaupo ng siya ay tamaan ng bala ng baril sa leeg" now, do you confirm that?

A

Yes, sir. [48]

x x x x

Q

Can you tell us Mr. Witness, what was the position of the accused when he allegedly executed his first shot relative to your position?

A

when I was seated like this (witness gesturing to his sitting position) the suspect passed behind my back Ma'am and after that when he reach my left side and the victim seated in front of me facing the same direction and when the suspect came he point the gun to the victim's neck and shoot him, Ma'am.[49]

x x x x

Q

I'm asking about the poking of the gun to the neck? You were not able to see that?

A

Actually your Honor I did not see the poking of the gun to the neck of the victim your Honor.

Q

alright, you did not see it because you did not even saw the first shot. What you saw was the when you looked around and saw that the victim was already falling to the ground.

A

Yes, your Honor.[50] (Emphasis supplied)

The Court has previously held that minor inconsistent statements in a witness' affidavit and in his testimony in court do not necessarily affect his credibility.[51] However, in this case, the detail as to whether the witness had actually seen Benie poke the gun at the victim's neck is a material detail as it goes into the very execution of the crime. Indeed, based on the foregoing sworn testimony of Manolo, he did not see the shooting — all that he saw was Uldarico falling to the ground.

In addition, Manolo's testimony as to the position of the assailant is also inconsistent with the testimony of the expert witness, PCI Dela Cruz. Manolo testified that he and Uldarico were seated adjacently and they were facing the same direction. The distance between them was about one meter, with Uldarico being in front of Manolo, on the latter's left side. Manolo claimed that the assailant went behind him and Uldarico, in between them—with the assailant being on the right side of Uldarico and on the left side of Manolo. In fact, Manolo even made a sketch[52] of their relative position in court.[53] In contrast, PCI Dela Cruz testified that the entry wound was at the left occipital region, at the back portion of the head—which means that the gunman was on the left side of Uldarico, and not on his right as testified by Manolo. Even more revealing is the gunshot wound on the left arm of the victim, which means that the assailant was, contrary to Manolo's testimony, to the left of the victim; and therefore, to the far left of Manolo and not in between Manolo and the victim. The expert witness stated as

follows:

Q

Can you please describe to the honorable court the location of those gunshot wounds sustained by the victim?

A

Sir, there was a gunshot wound at the left occipital region and the point of entry is at the left occipital region; the other gunshot wound, the point of entry is the lumbar region; and the last gunshot wound, the point of entry is at the middle part of the left arm of the cadaver.

Q

Can you please point to this honorable court the specific location?

A

Sir, the gunshot wound to the head is at the left occipital region, at the back portion of the head.

x x x x

A

Your Honor, the gunshot wound to the head is just superficial, that when it entered the left occipital region, it just passes the skin level up to the muscle level and exited at the right side of the neck region. Also at the back of the right side of the neck.[54] (Emphasis supplied)

The inconsistency in the statements of the lone prosecution witness vis-a-vis the expert testimony given is an inconsistency on a very material point. This inconsistency, together with his admission, on cross-examination, that he really did not see the shooting of Uldarico, significantly shows that his identification of Benie as the perpetrator of the crime cannot be relied upon — especially in the face of Ricky's testimony that Benie was in Capiz at the time of the shooting of Uldarico.

With the probative value of the prosecution witness' testimony greatly diminished, the alibi of Benie is given credence. In the instant case, the prosecution failed to overcome the burden of proving Benie's guilt beyond reasonable doubt. Acquittal therefore, is in order.

In this jurisdiction, no less than proof beyond reasonable doubt is required to support a judgment of conviction. While the law does not require absolute certainty, the evidence presented by the prosecution must produce in the mind of the Court a moral certainty of the accused's guilt. When there is even a scintilla of doubt, the Court must acquit.[55]

As the Court succinctly held in *People v. Erguiza*:^[56]

It is the primordial duty of the prosecution to present its side with clarity and persuasion, so that conviction becomes the only logical and inevitable conclusion. What is required of it is to justify the conviction of the accused with moral certainty. Upon the prosecution's failure to meet this test, acquittal becomes the constitutional duty of the Court, lest its mind be tortured with the thought that it has imprisoned an innocent man for the rest of his life.[57]

WHEREFORE, the Decision dated July 28, 2017 of the Court of Appeals, Fifth Division, in CA-G.R. CR-HC No. 08813 is REVERSED and SET ASIDE. BENIE MON Y ABARIDES @ "BALENTO" is hereby ACQUITTED of the crime of murder in Criminal Case No. MC10-13272 as his guilt was not proven beyond reasonable doubt. He is ORDERED IMMEDIATELY RELEASED from detention unless he is being lawfully held for another cause. Let an entry of final judgment be issued immediately.

Let a copy of this Decision be furnished the Superintendent of the New Bilibid Prison, Muntinlupa City, for immediate implementation. The said Superintendent is ORDERED to REPORT to this Court within five (5) days from receipt of this Decision the action he has taken.

SO ORDERED.

Carpio (Chairperson), Perlas-Bernabe, A. Reyes, Jr., and J. Reyes, Jr.,[*] JJ., concur.

[*] Designated additional Member per Special Order No. 2587 dated August 28, 2018.

[1] See Notice of Appeal dated August 11, 2017.

[2] Rollo, pp. 2-14. Penned by Associate Justice Magdangal M. De Leon, with Associate Justices Franchito N. Diamante and Zenaida T. Galapate-Laguilles concurring.

[3] CA rollo, pp. 42-51. Penned by Presiding Judge Ofelia L. Calo.

[4] Rollo, p. 3.

[5] Id.

[6] Id.

[7] "Neda" in some parts of the records.

[8] Id. at 3-4.

[9] Id. at 4.

[10] Id.

[11] Id.

[12] Id.

[13] Id.

[14] Id. at 5.

[15] Id.

[16] Id.

[17] Id.

[18] Supra note 3.

[19] CA rollo, p. 51.

[20] Id. at 48-50.

[21] Supra note 2.

[22] Rollo, p. 13.

[23] Id. at 11-12.

[24] CONSTITUTION, Art. III, Sec. 14:

(1) No person shall be held to answer for a criminal offense without due process of law.

(2) In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall be presumed innocent until the contrary is proved, and shall enjoy the right to be heard by himself and counsel, to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation against him, to have a speedy, impartial, and public trial, to meet the witnesses face to face, and to have compulsory process to secure the attendance of witnesses and the production of evidence in his behalf. However, after arraignment, trial may proceed notwithstanding the absence of the accused provided that he has been duly notified and his failure to appear is unjustifiable.

[25] People v. Gerola, G.R. No. 217973, July 19, 2017, 831 SCRA 469, 478.

[26] Pascual v. Burgos, 776 Phil. 169, 182-183 (2016).

[27] Crisostomo v. People, 644 Phil. 53, 65 (2010).

[28] 652 Phil. 512 (2010).

[29] Id. at 581.

[30] People v. Agcanas, 674 Phil. 626, 632-633 (2011).

[31] People v. Anticamara, 666 Phil. 484, 507-508 (2011).

[32] TSN dated February 1, 2016, pp. 3-4.

[33] Id. at 10.

[34] TSN dated April 27, 2016, p. 19.

[35] People v. Mosquerra, 414 Phil. 740, 749 (2001).

[36] TSN dated April 27, 2016, p. 19.

[37] TSN dated February 1, 2016, p. 10.

[38] TSN dated April 27, 2016, p. 7.

[39] Id. at 16-17.

[40] Id. at 9.

[41] Id. at 11-12.

[42] People v. Lumaho, 744 Phil. 233, 245 (2014), citing People v. Amistoso, 701 Phil. 345 (2013).

[43] People v. Amon, 218 Phil. 355, 361 (1984).

[44] 218 Phil. 355 (1984).

[45] Id. at 361.

[46] TSN dated May 12, 2014, pp. 9-10.

[47] Id. at 24.

[48] Id. at 8-9.

[49] Id. at 20.

[50] Id. at 28-29.

[51] *Sarabia v. People*, 414 Phil. 189, 198 (2001).

[52] TSN dated May 12, 2014, pp. 21-22; records, p. 175.

[53] TSN dated May 12, 2014, pp. 16-20.

[54] TSN dated August 5, 2015, p. 10-12.

[55] *Caunan v. People and Sandiganbayan*, 614 Phil. 179, 194 (2009).

[56] 592 Phil. 363 (2008).

[57] Id. at 358.

ABOUT BATAS.ORG

Study smarter at BATAS.org

The Philippine bar review and law-school companion built around how your brain actually remembers.

The complete Philippine law library - free for everyone.

More than 100,000 Supreme Court decisions, Republic Acts, and executive issuances - full-text searchable, browsable by category and year, and always free. No paywall, no login. This PDF came from it.

Audio case-brief lectures.

Any decision becomes a podcast-style lecture - facts, issues, ruling, and doctrine - with read-along highlighting and a hands-free presentation mode. Study while commuting, working out, or resting your eyes.

Bar review built on the science of memory.

Complete, sequenced courses for all eight bar subjects, narrated like podcasts and reinforced with retrieval practice and spaced review - the study techniques with the strongest evidence behind them.

The full law-school curriculum.

One subscription unlocks the entire J.D. curriculum - every subject, every lesson, with your progress tracked down to the paragraph so you can pick up exactly where you left off, on any device.

Mock exams that tell you where you stand.

Timed multiple-choice exams graded instantly, with per-subject score breakdowns and focus suggestions that point you at your weakest topics first.

A study planner that keeps you on pace.

Set your schedule and BATAS tells you every day whether you are on track for bar day - and exactly which lesson to take next.

Start free at <https://batas.org>

The law library is free forever - and your first lesson is one click away.

The text of this document is an official public record and remains in the public domain. Formatting, presentation, and compilation © 2026 batas.org.

Downloaded free from the batas.org Law Library. Share it freely - the library is free for every law student, bar reviewee, and practitioner.