FRANCIS LUIGI G. SANTOS, PETITIONER, VS. REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES, THE OFFICE OF THE LOCAL CIVIL REGISTRAR OF QUEZON CITY, THE CIVIL REGISTRAR GENERAL, AND ALL INTERESTED PER...

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CAGUIOA, J:

This is a Petition for Review on Certiorari[1] (Petition) under Rule 45 of the Rules of Court assailing the August 28, 2019 Decision[2] (Assailed Decision) and the November 20, 2019 Resolution[3] (Assailed Resolution) of the Court of Appeals (CA), First Division, in CA-G.R. CV No. 111884. The CA affirmed the April 30, 2018 Decision[4] and July 20, 2018 Order[5] of the Regional Trial Court (RTC), Branch 225, Quezon City, in Spec. Proc. No. R- QZN-17-04454,[6] which denied petitioner's Rule 103 petition for change of name from "Francis Luigi G. Santos" to "Francis Luigi G. Revilla."

The Facts and Antecedent Proceedings

Petitioner Francis Luigi G. Santos (petitioner) filed a petition for change of name under Rule 103 of the Rules of Court seeking to change his surname from "Santos" to "Revilla" in his Certificate of Live Birth.[7] He alleged that sometime in 1991, his parents, Lovely Maria T. Guzman (Lovely Guzman) and Jose Marie Bautista, Jr. also known as Ramon Bong Revilla, Jr. (Bong Revilla), met and engaged in an intimate relationship.[9] He was later born in Quezon City on January 9, 1992 as "Francis Luigi Guzman."[10]

Lovely Guzman and Bong Revilla were never married as the latter was already married to Lani Mercado.[11] Thus, petitioner's Certificate of Live Birth did not bear the Revilla surname and his father was marked as unknown.[12] However, on April 24, 1996, Bong Revilla executed an Affidavit of Acknowledgment recognizing petitioner as his son.[13]

In 1999, Lovely Guzman married Patrick Joseph P. Santos (Patrick Santos), who, in turn, legally adopted petitioner. Thus, petitioner's name was changed from "Francis Luigi Guzman" to "Francis Luigi G. Santos."[14]

Although petitioner lived with his mother, he grew up close to Bong Revilla and the latter's wife and children and was treated by the family as a legitimate son.[15] He also claimed that he used the name "Luigi Revilla" when he entered show business.[16] Thus, he filed the instant petition in order to "avoid confusion," "to show [his] sincere and genuine desire to associate himself to [Bong Revilla] and to the Revillas,"[17] and to ensure that his records show his true identity as Bong Revilla's son.[18]

On June 19, 2017, the RTC issued an Order finding the petition to be sufficient in form and substance and directed that the Order be (1) published in a newspaper of general circulation for three consecutive weeks, (2) sent to the Office of the Solicitor General (OSG), the Office of the City Prosecutor of Quezon City, the Local Civil Registrar of Quezon City, and the Philippine Statistics Office,[19] and (3) posted in three public places where petitioner resides.[20]

The Republic of the Philippines, through the OSG, filed its opposition and sought the dismissal of the petition claiming that there was no compelling reason to justify the change sought.[21]

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The Ruling of the RTC

In its April 30, 2018 Decision,[22] the RTC denied the petition and held that a change of name was not a matter of right and could be granted only for compelling reasons.[23] In the instant case, the RTC held that petitioner failed to show that there was any valid or justifiable ground for change of name. In fact, the RTC held that allowing petitioner to use the surname "Revilla" rather than "Santos" would create further confusion, given that he had already been legally adopted by Patrick Santos in 2001.[24] As an adopted child, the RTC held that petitioner was bound to use the surname "Santos" as adoption legally severs the legal tie between the adoptee and his or her biological parents.[25]

The RTC further noted that there was no reason to grant the change sought, given that petitioner has never legally used the name "Revilla" despite having been acknowledged in 1996, he has used the name "Santos" for all documentary purposes since his adoption,[26] and he only began using the surname "Revilla" when he entered show business. There could thus be no confusion as to his real identity as the name "Luigi Revilla" was a mere screen name, which may be different from his legal name.[27]

The Ruling of the CA

In the Assailed Decision, the CA affirmed the decision of the RTC and held that allowing a change of name would create more confusion as to petitioner's status and filiation given that he had already been legally adopted by Patrick Santos. It was of no moment therefore that he is the biological son of Bong Revilla as the Family Code and Republic Act No. (R.A.) 8552[28] or the Domestic Adoption Act of 1998 provide that an adopted child shall bear the surname of the adopting parents.[29]

The CA further stated that the corrections sought involved substantial amendments to petitioner's birth certificate, as allowing a change in surname from "Santos" to "Revilla" would constitute a change in his status from "legitimate" to "illegitimate." As such, the CA held that petitioner should have availed himself of the adversarial proceeding under Rule 108 for cancellation and/or correction of entries rather than the summary proceeding under Rule 103 for change of name.[30] Further, as petitioner failed to implead both his biological father and his adoptive father, the CA held that the proceedings were void under Section 3, Rule 108 for failure to implead indispensable parties.[31]

Petitioner thus filed the instant Petition claiming, among others, that (1) the CA erred in ruling that Rule 108 of the Rules of Court applies and that the proceedings were void for failure to implead indispensable parties,[32] and (2) that a change of name from "Santos" to "Revilla" may be allowed under the law by way of exception to the mandatory provisions on the use of surnames.[33]

In its Comment,[34] the OSG alleged that the CA did not err (1) in denying the appeal for petitioner's failure to comply with the requirements under Rule 108 of the Rules of Court[35] and (2) in ruling that petitioner has not shown any proper or reasonable cause which may justify the change of his surname.[36]

Issues

Whether the CA erred (1) in holding that Rule 108 rather than Rule 103 applies and (2) in denying the petition to change petitioner's surname from "Santos" to "Revilla".

The Court's Ruling

The Petition has partial merit. Contrary to the position of the CA, petitioner correctly availed of a Rule 103 proceeding to effect the desired change. However, the Court agrees with the CA, as well as the RTC, that petitioner failed to prove that there was any compelling reason to justify the change sought.

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Petitioner correctly availed of a Rule 103 petition for change of name

Republic v. Hernandez[37] (Hernandez) discussed the nature of Rule 103 petitions for change of name in this wise:

> The official name of a person whose birth is registered in the civil register is the name appearing therein. If a change in one's name is desired, this can only be done by filing and strictly complying with the substantive and procedural requirements for a special proceeding for change of name under Rule 103 of the Rules of Court, wherein the sufficiency of the reasons or grounds therefor can be threshed out and accordingly determined.
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> Under Rule 103, a petition for change of name shall be filed in the regional trial court of the province where the person desiring to change his name resides. It shall be signed and verified by the person desiring the name to be changed or by some other person in his behalf and shall state that the petitioner has been a bona fide resident of the province where the petition is filed for at least three years prior to such filing, the cause for which the change of name is sought, and the name asked for. An order for the date and place of hearing shall be made and published, with the Solicitor General or the proper provincial or city prosecutor appearing for the Government at such hearing. It is only upon satisfactory proof of the veracity of the allegations in the petition and the reasonableness of the causes for the change of name that the court may adjudge that the name be changed as prayed for in the petition, and shall furnish a copy of said judgment to the civil registrar of the municipality concerned who shall forthwith enter the same in the civil register.
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> It is necessary to reiterate in this discussion that a person's name is a word or combination of words by which he is known and identified, and distinguished from others, for the convenience of the world at large in addressing him, or in speaking of or dealing with him. It is both of personal as well as public interest that every person must have a name. The name of an individual has two parts: the given or proper name and the surname or family name. The given or proper name is that which is given to the individual at birth or at baptism, to distinguish him from other individuals. The surname or family name is that which identifies the family to which he belongs and is continued from parent to child. The given name may be freely selected by the parents for the child, but the surname to which the child is entitled is fixed by law.
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> By Article 408 of the Civil Code, a person's birth must be entered in the civil register. The official name of a person is that given him in the civil register. That is his name in the eyes of the law. And once the name of a person is officially entered in the civil register, Article 376 of the same Code seals that identity with its precise mandate: no person can change his name or surname without judicial authority. This statutory restriction is premised on the interest of the State in names borne by individuals and entities for purpose of identification.
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> By reason thereof, the only way that the name of person can be changed legally is through a petition for change of name under Rule 103 of the Rules of Court. For purposes of an application for change of name under Article 376 of the Civil Code and correlatively implemented by Rule 103, the only name that may be changed is the true or official name recorded in the civil register. As earlier mentioned, a petition for change of name being a proceeding in rem, impressed as it is with public interest, strict compliance with all the requisites therefor in order to vest the court with jurisdiction is essential, and failure therein renders the proceedings a nullity.
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> It must likewise be stressed once again that a change of name is a privilege not a matter of right, addressed to the sound discretion of the court which has the duty to consider carefully the consequences of a change of name and to deny the same unless weighty reasons are shown. Before a person can be authorized to change his name, that is, his true or official name or that which appears in his birth certificate or is entered in the civil register, he must show proper and reasonable cause or any convincing reason which may justify such change.
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> Jurisprudence has recognized, inter alia, the following grounds as being sufficient to warrant a change of name:

> (a) when the name is ridiculous, dishonorable or extremely difficult to write or pronounce; (b) when the change results as a legal consequence of legitimation or adoption; (c) when the change will avoid confusion; (d) when one has continuously used and been known since childhood by a Filipino name and was unaware of alien parentage; (e) when the change is based on a sincere desire to adopt a Filipino name to erase signs of former alienage, all in good faith and without prejudice to anybody; and (f) when the surname causes embarrassment and there is no showing that the desired change of name was for a fraudulent purpose or that the change of name would prejudice public interest.[38] (Underscoring supplied)

Rule 103 petitions for change of name based on the foregoing jurisprudential grounds is a separate and distinct remedy from that provided under Rule 108, which involves cancellations and corrections of entries in the civil registry.[39] The Court explained the difference between Rule 103 and Rule 108 in Republic v. Mercadera,[40] as follows:

> Rule 103 procedurally governs judicial petitions for change of given name or surname, or both, pursuant to Article 376 of the Civil Code. This rule provides the procedure for an independent special proceeding in court to establish the status of a person involving his relations with others, that is, his legal position in, or with regard to, the rest of the community. In petitions for change of name, a person avails of a remedy to alter the "designation by which he is known and called in the community in which he lives and is best known." When granted, a person's identity and interactions are affected as he bears a new "label or appellation for the convenience of the world at large in addressing him, or in speaking of, or dealing with him." Judicial permission for a change of name aims to prevent fraud and to ensure a record of the change by virtue of a court decree.
>
> The proceeding under Rule 103 is also an action in rem which requires publication of the order issued by the court to afford the State and all other interested parties to oppose the petition. When complied with, the decision binds not only the parties impleaded but the whole world. As notice to all, publication serves to indefinitely bar all who might make an objection. "It is the publication of such notice that brings in the whole world as a party in the case and vests the court with jurisdiction to hear and decide it."
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> Essentially, a change of name does not define or effect a change of one's existing family relations or in the rights and duties flowing therefrom. It does not alter one's legal capacity or civil status. However, "there could be instances where the change applied for may be open to objection by parties who already bear the surname desired by the applicant, not because he would thereby acquire certain family ties with them but because the existence of such ties might be erroneously impressed on the public mind." Hence, in requests for a change of name, "what is involved is not a mere matter of allowance or disallowance of the request, but a judicious evaluation of the sufficiency and propriety of the justifications advanced x x x mindful of the consequent results in the event of its grant x x x."
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> Rule 108, on the other hand, implements judicial proceedings for the correction or cancellation of entries in the civil registry pursuant to Article 412 of the Civil Code. Entries in the civil register refer to "acts, events and judicial decrees concerning the civil status of persons," also as enumerated in Article 408 of the same law. Before, only mistakes or errors of a harmless and innocuous nature in the entries in the civil registry may be corrected under Rule 108 and substantial errors affecting the civil status, citizenship or nationality of a party are beyond the ambit of the rule. x x x
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> x x x x
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> Finally in Republic v. Valencia, the above stated views were adopted by this Court insofar as even substantial errors or matters in a civil registry may be corrected and the true facts established, provided the parties aggrieved avail themselves of the appropriate adversary proceeding. "If the purpose of the petition is merely to correct the clerical errors which are visible to the eye or obvious to the understanding, the court may, under a summary procedure, issue an order for the correction of a mistake. However, as repeatedly construed, changes

> which may affect the civil status from legitimate to illegitimate, as well as sex, are substantial and controversial alterations which can only be allowed after appropriate adversary proceedings depending upon the nature of the issues involved. Changes which affect the civil status or citizenship of a party are substantial in character and should be threshed out in a proper action depending upon the nature of the issues in controversy, and wherein all the parties who may be affected by the entries are notified or represented and evidence is submitted to prove the allegations of the complaint, and proof to the contrary admitted x x x." "Where such a change is ordered, the Court will not be establishing a substantive right but only correcting or rectifying an erroneous entry in the civil registry as authorized by law. In short, Rule 108 of the Rules of Court provides only the procedure or mechanism for the proper enforcement of the substantive law embodied in Article 412 of the Civil Code and so does not violate the Constitution.
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> It appears from these arguments that there is, to some extent, confusion over the scope and application of [Rule] 103 and Rule 108. Where a "change of name" will necessarily be reflected by the corresponding correction in an entry, as in this case, the functions of both rules are often muddled. While there is no clear-cut rule to categorize petitions under either rule, this Court is of the opinion that a resort to the basic distinctions between the two rules with respect to alterations in a person's registered name can effectively clear the seeming perplexity of the issue. Further, a careful evaluation of circumstances alleged in the petition itself will serve as a constructive guide to determine the propriety of the relief prayed for.
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> The "change of name" contemplated under Article 376 and Rule 103 must not be confused with Article 412 and Rule 108. A change of one's name under Rule 103 can be granted only on grounds provided by law. In order to justify a request for change of name, there must be a proper and compelling reason for the change and proof that the person requesting will be prejudiced by the use of his official name. To assess the sufficiency of the grounds invoked therefor, there must be adversarial proceedings.
>
> In petitions for correction, only clerical, spelling, typographical and other innocuous errors in the civil registry may be raised. Considering that the enumeration in Section 2, Rule 108 also includes "changes of name," the correction of a patently misspelled name is covered by Rule 108. Suffice it to say, not all alterations allowed in one's name are confined under Rule 103. Corrections for clerical errors may be set right under Rule 108.
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> This rule in "names," however, does not operate to entirely limit Rule 108 to the correction of clerical errors in civil registry entries by way of a summary proceeding. As explained above, Republic v. Valencia is the authority for allowing substantial errors in other entries like citizenship, civil status, and paternity, to be corrected using Rule 108 provided there is an adversary proceeding. "After all, the role of the Court under Rule 108 is to ascertain the truths about the facts recorded therein."[41] (Italics in the original; underscoring supplied)

Notably, the foregoing rules were modified by the enactment of R.A. 9048,[42] which amended Articles 376 and 412 of the Civil Code and vested primary jurisdiction over the correction of certain clerical or typographical errors and changes of first name with the civil registrar.[43] In 2012, R.A. 10172[44] expanded the coverage of the summary administrative procedure provided under R.A. 9048 to include clerical corrections in the day and/or month in the date of birth, or in the sex of the person, where it is patently clear that there was a clerical or typographical error or mistake in the entry.[45] Presently therefore, when an entry falls within the coverage of R.A. 9048 as amended by R.A. 10172, a person may only avail of the appropriate judicial remedies under Rule 103 or Rule 108 after the petition in the administrative proceedings is first filed and later denied.[46] Failure to comply with the administrative procedure generally renders the petition dismissible for failure to exhaust administrative remedies and for failure to comply with the doctrine of primary jurisdiction.[47]

The Court, in Bartolome v. Republic,[48] summarized the rules as follows:

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> 1. A person seeking 1) to change his or her first name, 2) to correct clerical or typographical errors in the civil register, 3) to change/correct the day and/or month of his or her date of birth, and/or 4) to change/correct his or her sex, where it is patently clear that there was a clerical or typographical error or mistake, must first file a verified petition with the local civil registry office of the city or municipality where the record being sought to be corrected or changed is kept, in accordance with the administrative proceeding provided under R.A. 9048 in relation to R.A. 10172. A person may only avail of the appropriate judicial remedies under Rule 103 or Rule 108 in the aforementioned entries after the petition in the administrative proceedings is filed and later denied.
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> 2. A person seeking 1) to change his or her surname or 2) to change both his or her first name and surname may file a petition for change of name under Rule 103, provided that the jurisprudential grounds discussed in Republic v. Hernandez are present.
>
> 3. A person seeking substantial cancellations or corrections of entries in the civil registry may file a petition for cancellation or correction of entries under Rule 108. As discussed in Lee v. Court of Appeals and more recently, in Republic v. Cagandahan, R.A. 9048 "removed from the ambit of Rule 108 of the Rules of Court the correction of such errors. Rule 108 now applies only to substantial changes and corrections in entries in the civil register."[49] (Underscoring in the original; emphasis supplied)

Based on the foregoing, the Court holds that petitioner correctly availed himself of the remedy under Rule 103 in order to change his surname from "Santos" to "Revilla." Contrary to the findings of the CA, Rule 108 is inapplicable as petitioner does not allege or identify any erroneous entry that requires substantial rectification or cancellation.

It is a threshold principle that the nature of a proceeding is determined by the allegations in the petition and the ultimate reliefs sought. In the instant case, it is apparent that petitioner does not seek to correct any clerical or substantial error in his birth certificate or to effect any changes in his status as an adopted child of Patrick Santos.[50] As such, neither Rule 108 nor R.A. 9048 as amended applies. Rather, the petition is unequivocal that petitioner merely desires to change and replace his surname "Santos" with the surname "Revilla" in accordance with Hernandez in order to "avoid confusion,"[51] "to show [his] sincere and genuine desire to associate himself to [Bong] Revilla[,] Jr. and to the Revillas, and to show that he accepts and embraces his true identity."[52] He alleges that while he grew up close to his biological father and his family and was purportedly publicly known as "Bong Revilla's son,"[53] "there is nothing in his name that would associate him and identify him as one of the Revillas."[54] These allegations show that petitioner ultimately seeks to "alter the 'designation by which he is known and called in the community in which he lives and is best known'"[55] and not to effect any clerical or substantial corrections. Thus, he properly availed himself of the procedure prescribed under Rule 103.

In this regard, the CA gravely erred in holding that petitioner should have availed himself of the adversarial proceeding under Rule l 08 instead of the "summary proceeding" under Rule 103[56] as allowing petitioner to change his surname from "Santos" to "Revilla" would constitute a change in his status from "legitimate" to "illegitimate."[57]

First. While a change in status may legally result in a change of name, such as in marriages, annulments, legitimations, or adoptions, et al., the reverse is not equally true. In Yu v. Republic,[58] the Court already held that a change of surname under Rule 103 does not necessarily result in a change of petitioner's status, i.e., from legitimate to illegitimate, viz.:

> x x x [A] change of name as authorized under Rule 103 does not by itself define, or effect a change in, one's existing family relations, or in the rights and duties flowing therefrom; nor does it create new family rights and duties where none before were existing. It does not alter one's legal capacity, civil status[,] or citizenship. What is altered is only the name, which is that word or combination of words by which a person is distinguished from others and which he bears as the label of appellation for the convenience of the world at large in

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> addressing him, or in speaking of or dealing with him (38 Am. Jur. 596). x x x
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> To be sure, there could be instances where the change applied for may be open to objection by parties who already bear the surname desired by the applicant, not because he would thereby acquire certain family ties with them but because the existence of such ties might be erroneously impressed on the public mind. But this is precisely the purpose of the judicial application to determine whether there is proper and reasonable cause for the change of name. As held by this Court in several cases, in which pertinently enough the petitioners were aliens, the change is not a matter of right but of judicial discretion, to be exercised in the light of the reasons adduced and the consequences that will likely follow x x x.[59]

Indeed, petitioner cannot change his status as an adopted child of Patrick Santos to an "illegitimate" child of Bong Revilla by the mere expedient of changing his name as an adoption may only be rescinded in accordance with law.[60] In any event, petitioner was unequivocal that he does not seek to change his status or to rescind his adoption:

> x x x [H]e is an adoptee of Patrick Santos and an illegitimate son of Bong Revilla. He seeks to alter his last name from "Santos" to "Revilla", the designation by which he is known and called in the community in which he lives and is best known to avoid confusion. Changing Luigi's last name from "Santos" to "Revilla" will not affect his civil status, as the decision in the matter of his adoption is included and registered in the official record file of OLC-QC. He does not seek to change his status from legitimate to illegitimate. Patrick Santos remains to be the named father in his birth certificate, being his adoptive father.[61] (Underscoring in the original omitted; underscoring supplied)

Second. Contrary to the statement of the CA, both Rule 108 and Rule 103 involve substantial matters and require adversarial proceedings. As explained, "[a] change of one's name under Rule 103 can be granted, only on grounds provided by law. In order to justify a request for change of name, there must be a proper and compelling reason for the change and proof that the person requesting will be prejudiced by the use of his official name. To assess the sufficiency of the grounds invoked therefor, there must be adversarial proceedings."[62] It is an action in rem which requires publication of the order issued by the court to afford the State, through the OSG, and all other interested parties to oppose the petition.[63]

In relation thereto, the Court finds that the CA erred in holding that the instant proceedings were void under Section 3,[64] Rule 108 as petitioner failed to implead both his adoptive father and his biological father as indispensable parties. Notably, while Rule 108 expressly requires that the petitioner implead all persons who have or claim any interest which would be affected, no such requirement appears in Rule 103. The relevant sections provide:

> RULE 108
> CANCELLATION OR CORRECTION OF ENTRIES IN THE CIVIL REGISTRY
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> x x x x
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> SEC. 3. Parties. - When cancellation or correction of an entry in the civil register is sought, the civil registrar and all persons who have or claim any interest which would be affected thereby shall be made parties to the proceeding.
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> SEC. 4. Notice and publication. - Upon the filing of the petition, the court shall, by an order, fix the time and place for the hearing of the same, and cause reasonable notice thereof to be given to the persons named in the petition. The court shall also cause the order to be published once a week for three (3) consecutive weeks in a newspaper of general circulation in the province.
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> SEC. 5. Opposition. - The civil registrar and any person having or claiming any interest under the entry whose

> cancellation or correction is sought may, within fifteen (15) days from notice of the petition, or from the last date of publication of such notice, file his opposition thereto.
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> RULE 103
> CHANGE OF NAME
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> x x x x
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> SEC. 3. Order for hearing. - If the petition filed is sufficient in form and substance, the court, by an order reciting the purpose of the petition, shall fix a date and place for the hearing thereof, and shall direct that a copy of the order be published before the hearing at least once a week for three (3) successive weeks in some newspaper of general circulation published in the province, as the court shall deem best. The date set for the hearing shall not he within thirty (30) days prior to an election nor within four (4) months after the last publication of the notice.
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> SEC. 4. Hearing. - Any interested person may appear at the hearing and oppose the petition. The Solicitor General or the proper provincial or city fiscal shall appear on behalf of the Government of the Republic.
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> SEC. 5. Judgment. - Upon satisfactory proof in open court on the date fixed in the order that such order has been published as directed and that the allegations of the petition are true, the court shall, if proper and reasonable cause appears for changing the name of the petitioner, adjudge that such name be changed in accordance with the prayer of the petition. (Underscoring supplied)

Notably, unlike Rule 108, Rule 103 only requires that the order reciting the purpose of the petition and the date and place of the hearing be published and that any interested person be allowed to appear and oppose the petition.[65] By virtue of the publication, "all interested parties were deemed notified and the whole world considered bound by the judgment therein."[66]

In sum, the Court holds that petitioner correctly availed himself of a Rule 103 petition. Further, the failure to implead petitioner's biological father and adoptive father did not render the proceedings void as said requirement does not apply to Rule 103.

However, the Court agrees with the CA and the RTC that petitioner failed to prove that there is any compelling reason to justify a change of surname from "Santos" to "Revilla".

There is no compelling reason to grant the change of surname

It has long been settled that "the State has an interest in the names borne by individuals and entities for purposes of identification and that a change of name is a privilege and not a matter of right x x x."[67] In In Re: Petition for Change of Name and/or Correction of Entry in the Civil Registry of Julian Lin Carulasan Wang[68] (Wang), the Court held:

> In granting or denying petitions for change of name, the question of proper and reasonable cause is left to the sound discretion of the court. The evidence presented need only be satisfactory to the court and not all the best evidence available. What is involved is not a mere matter of allowance or disallowance of the request, but a judicious evaluation of the sufficiency and propriety of the justifications advanced in support thereof, mindful of the consequent results in the event of its grant and with the sole prerogative for making such determination being lodged in the courts.
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> x x x x
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> A discussion on the legal significance of a person's name is relevant at this point. We quote, thus:

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> "x x x For all practical and legal purposes, a man's name is the designation by which he is known and called in the community in which he lives and is best known. It is defined as the word or combination of words by which a person is distinguished from other individuals and, also, as the label or appellation which he bears for the convenience of the world at large addressing him, or in speaking of or dealing with him. Names are used merely as one method of indicating the identity of persons; they are descriptive of persons for identification, since, the identity is the essential thing and it has frequently been held that, when identity is certain, a variance in, or misspelling of, the name is immaterial.
>
> The names of individuals usually have two parts: the given name or proper name, and the surname or family name. The given or proper name is that which is given to the individual at birth or baptism, to distinguish him from other individuals. The name or family name is that which identifies the family to which he belongs and is continued from parent to child. The given name may be freely selected by the parents for the child; but the surname to which the child is entitled is fixed by law.
>
> A name is said to have the following characteristics: (1) It is absolute, intended to protect the individual from being confused with others. (2) It is obligatory in certain respects, for nobody can be without a name. (3) It is fixed, unchangeable, or immutable, at least at the start, and may be changed only for good cause and by judicial proceedings. (4) It is outside the commerce of man, and, therefore, inalienable and intransmissible by act inter vivos or mortis causa. (5) It is imprescriptible."[69] (Underscoring supplied)

To emphasize, the surname identifies the family to which a person belongs. While the first name may be freely selected by the parents for the child, the surname to which the child is entitled is fixed by law.[70]

This rule, however, is not absolute. Precisely, Article 376 of the Civil Code as implemented by Rule 103 is a remedy allowed by way of exception to the mandatory provisions of the Civil Code on the use of surnames.[71] To justify a change of name however, a person "must show not only some proper or compelling reason x x x but also that he will be prejudiced by the use of his true and official name."[72] The following have been considered as valid grounds for change of name: "(a) when the name is ridiculous, dishonorable or extremely difficult to write or pronounce; (b) when the change results as a legal consequence, as in legitimation; (c) when the change will avoid confusion; (d) when one has continuously used and been known since childhood by a Filipino name, and was unaware of alien parentage; (e) a sincere desire to adopt a Filipino name to erase signs of former alienage, all in good faith and without prejudicing anybody; and (f) when the surname causes embarrassment and there is no showing that the desired change of name was for a fraudulent purpose or that the change of name would prejudice public interest."[73]

Applying the foregoing principles to the instant case, there can be no question that petitioner, as the legally adopted child of Patrick Santos, properly bears the surname "Santos". Notably, the Civil Code provides:

> TITLE XIII
> Use of Surnames (n)
>
> ARTICLE 364. Legitimate and legitimated children shall principally use the surname of the father.
>
> ARTICLE 365. An adopted child shall bear the surname of the adopter. (Underscoring supplied)

Consistent therewith, Article 189 of the Family Code states that "the adopted shall be deemed to be a legitimate child of the adopters and both shall acquire the reciprocal rights and obligations arising from the relationship of parent and child, including the right of the adopted to use the surname of the adopter."[74] The Family Code provisions on Adoption were superseded by R.A. 8552,[75] which now provides:

> ARTICLE V
> EFFECTS OF ADOPTION

> SEC. 16. Parental Authority. - Except in cases where the biological parent is the spouse .of the adopter, all legal ties between the biological parent(s) and the adoptee shall be severed and the same shall then be vested on the adopter(s).
>
> SEC. 17. Legitimacy. - The adoptee shall be considered the legitimate son/daughter of the adopter(s) for all intents and purposes and as such is entitled to all the rights and obligations provided by law to legitimate sons/daughters born to them without discrimination of any kind. To this end, the adoptee is entitled to love, guidance, and support in keeping with the means of the family. (Underscoring supplied)

R.A. 8552 likewise states that upon adoption, "[a]n amended certificate of birth shall be issued by the Civil Registry, as required by the Rules of Court, attesting to the fact that the adoptee is the child of the adopter(s) by being registered with his/her surname."[76] As held therefore in Republic v. Court of Appeals,[77] it may be inferred from the very wording of the law "that the use of the surname of the adopter by the adopted child is both an obligation and a right."[78] Upon issuance of the decree of adoption, the change of the adoptee's surname shall follow that of the adopter as a natural and necessary consequence of a grant of adoption, even if not specifically prayed for.[79]

Although properly surnamed "Santos", petitioner prays that he be allowed to change his surname from "Santos" to "Revilla" to "avoid confusion, x x x to show [his] sincere and genuine desire to associate himself to [Bong] Revilla[,] Jr. and to the Revillas, x x x to show that he accepts and embraces his true identity,"[80] and "to show his true and genuine love to his biological father."[81] Unfortunately, none of these reasons justify, in law, the desired change.

First. The Court agrees with the RTC that the use of the surname "Revilla" would create further confusion rather than avoid it, given that: (1) petitioner has never legally used the name "Revilla" despite having been acknowledged in 1996; (2) he was legally adopted by Patrick Santos in 2001; (3) he has used the name "Santos" for all documentary purposes since his adoption; (4) although he is publicly known to be the son of Bong Revilla, he is known by his peers as "Luigi Santos"; (5) even after a change of surname, Patrick Santos shall continue to be the father named in his birth certificate; and (5) he only began using the surname "Revilla" when he entered show business.[82] The following factual findings of the RTC, as affirmed by the CA, are binding on the Court:

> "In the case at bar, the only reason advanced for the dropping of his surname Santos to Revilla is to show his lineage and identity as Revilla. However, the compelling reason how such change of name is necessary to show his lineage as a Revilla is not clearly established. As petitioner himself and his witnesses testified, he has been a (sic) known as the son of Bong Revilla all his life and yet never used the surname despite being acknowledged by his biological father in 1996. As testified on by his mother, it was never a secret that he was (sic) the son of Bong Revilla, everybody knew he was (sic) a Revilla. All of his mother's family, friends, co-parent in school know him as Luigi Santos, son of Bong Revilla. He has been using Santos since his adoption until college, then he started doing teleserye in GMA that was when he started using Revilla. The other witness, Bryan Revilla, even testified that petitioner has always been using Santos for documentary purposes up to the present and it was only when he entered show business that petitioner started using Revilla. He also testified that petitioner is loved by both his parents, Bong Revilla and Lani Mercado and that they always treat petitioner as their brother. Hence, it is clear that the perceived confusion came about when petitioner entered show business and started using the surname Revilla as his screen name. From then on, he would introduce himself as Luigi Revilla. And as testified on by petitioner, not being able to use the surname Revilla makes him incomplete, he however admitted that even if he use[s] the surname Santos, there would be no confusion.
>
> x x x x
>
> "There is no question that petitioner may file the instant petition, but change of name is a privilege and not a

> right. And as such, he must show proper or reasonable cause, or any compelling reason which may justify such change. In the case at hand, although petitioner did not deny his legitimacy, he failed to show proper and reasonable cause to justify the change sought or any compelling reason which may justify the change. A petitioner's convenience can never be a ground for a change of name x x x. Convenience cannot be considered as one of, or a recognized ground for change of name."[83]

Indeed, these factual circumstances starkly differ from meritorious petitions for change of name where it was alleged and proved that petitioners publicly used their requested names in legal documents and/or school records since childhood and that a change would indeed avoid confusion, among other reasons.[84]

Second. While petitioner may factually identify and associate with his biological father and his family, he remains to be the legitimate son of Patrick Santos by virtue of the adoption. The latter and not the former is thus his true legal identity. It bears reiterating that adoption:

> x x x (1) sever[s] all legal ties between the biological parent(s) and the adoptee, except when the biological parent is the spouse of the adopter; (2) deem[s] the adoptee as a legitimate child of the adopter; and (3) give[s] adopter and adoptee reciprocal rights and obligations arising from the relationship of parent and child, including but not limited to: (i) the right of the adopter to choose the name the child is to be known; and (ii) the right of the adopter and adoptee to be legal and compulsory heirs of each other. Therefore, even if emancipation terminates parental authority, the adoptee is still considered a legitimate child of the adopter with all the rights of a legitimate child such as: (1) to bear the surname of the father and the mother; (2) to receive support from their parents; and (3) to be entitled to the legitime and other successional rights. Conversely, the adoptive parents shall, with respect to the adopted child, enjoy all the benefits to which biological parents are entitled such as support and successional rights.[85] (Underscoring supplied)

As adoption severs all legal ties between the adoptee and his or her biological parents, there is no basis to allow petitioner to change his name to "Revilla" simply because he is, biologically, the son of Bong Revilla and wants to associate himself with the Revilla family.

Finally, it bears emphasis that a change of name is a privilege and not a matter of right. It is addressed to the sound discretion of the court. In Wang, the Court denied a petition to drop a minor's middle name, even though the middle name would purportedly cause the minor undue embarrassment and become an obstacle to his social acceptance and integration in the Singaporean community.[86] The Court noted that the only reason advanced by petitioner therein for the dropping of his middle name was convenience and found this justification to be amorphous and unmeritorious.[87] Similarly, in Yu Chi Han v. Republic[88] (Yu Chi Han), petitioner sought to change his name from "Yu Chi Han" to "Alejandro Go Yu," because he wanted to avoid confusion and to embrace the Catholic faith after he was baptized in accordance with Catholic rites. The Court denied the petition and held that the confusion was mainly due to petitioner's unauthorized use of a name other than his true name, which could be easily remedied by simply asking his friends and business associates to call him by his true name.[89]

In the instant case, the Court finds that the reasons proffered do not fall under any of the jurisprudential grounds for change of name. They cannot even be considered as "akin to" any of the aforementioned grounds. The mere fact that petitioner began using a different name, i.e., "Luigi Revilla", when he joined show business does not constitute a proper and reasonable cause to legally authorize a change of name.[90] As in Yu Chi Han, any confusion created by the use of said name is mainly due to the unauthorized use of a name other than petitioner's true legal name. As in Wang, convenience is not a recognized ground for change of name, which may be allowed only for compelling reasons that must be alleged and proved.[91]

The Court is aware that it has previously allowed an adopted child named "Maximo Wong" to revert to "Maximo

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Alcala, Jr.," his name prior to his adoption, even though the adoption was never rescinded. In Republic v. Court of Appeals and Maximo Wong[92] (Wong), the Court held:

> While it is true that the statutory fiat under Article 365 of the Civil Code is to the effect that an adopted child shall bear the surname of the adopter, it must nevertheless be borne in mind that the change of the surname of the adopted child is more an incident rather than the object of adoption proceedings. The act of adoption fixes a status, viz., that of parent and child. More technically, it is an act by which relations of paternity and affiliation are recognized as legally existing between persons not so related by nature. It has been defined as the taking into one's family of the child of another as son or daughter and heir and conferring on it a title to the rights and privileges of such. The purpose of an adoption proceeding is to effect this new status of relationship between the child and its adoptive parents, the change of name which frequently accompanies adoption being more an incident than the object of the proceeding. The welfare of the child is the primary consideration in the determination of an application for adoption. On this part, there is unanimous agreement.
>
> It is the usual effect of a decree of adoption to transfer from the natural parents to the adoptive parents the custody of the child's person, the duty of obedience owing by the child, and all other legal consequences and incidents of the natural relation, in the same manner as if the child had been born of such adoptive parents in lawful wedlock, subject, however, to such limitations and restrictions as may be by statute imposed. More specifically under the present state of our law, the Family Code, superseding the pertinent provisions of the Civil Code and of the Child and Youth Welfare Code on the matter, relevantly provides in this wise with regard to the issue involved in this case:
>
> "Art. 189. Adoption shall have the following effects:
>
> (1) For civil purposes, the adopted shall be deemed to be the legitimate child of the adopters and both shall acquire the reciprocal rights and obligations arising from the relationship of parent and child, including the right of the adopted to use the surname of the adopters;" (Emphasis supplied.)

x x x x

The Solicitor General maintains the position that to sustain the change of name would run counter to the behest of Article 365 of the Civil Code and the ruling in Manuel vs. Republic that "one should not be allowed to use a surname which otherwise he is not permitted to employ under the law," and would set a bad example to other persons who might also seek a change of their surnames on lame excuses.

While we appreciate the Solicitor General's apprehensions and concern, we find the same to be unfounded. We do not believe that by reverting to his old name, private respondent would then be using a name which he is prohibited by law from using. True, the law prescribes the surname that a person may employ; but the law does not go so far as to unqualifiedly prohibit the use of any other surname, and only subjects such recourse to the obtention of the requisite judicial sanction. What the law does not prohibit, it permits.

If we were to follow the argument of the Solicitor General to its conclusion, then there will never be any possibility or occasion for any person, regardless of status, to change his name, in view of the supposed subsequent violation of the legal imperative on the use of surnames in the event that the petition is granted. Rule 103 of the Rules of Court would then be rendered inutile. This could hardly have been the intendment of the law.

A petition for change of name is a remedy allowed under our law only by way of exception to the mandatory provisions of the Civil Code on the use of surnames. The law fixes the surnames that may be used by a person, at least inceptively, and it may be changed only upon judicial permission granted in the exercise of sound discretion. Section 1 of Rule 103, in specifying the parties who may avail of said remedy, uses the generic term "persons" to signify all natural persons regardless of status. If a legitimate person may, under certain judicially accepted exceptional circumstances, petition the court for a change of name, we do not see any legal basis or logic in

discriminating against the availment of such a remedy by an adopted child. In other words, Article 365 is not an exception, much less can it bar resort, to Rule 103.[93] (Italics in the original; underscoring supplied)

While the Court agrees that any person, whether legitimate, illegitimate, or adopted, may petition the court for change of name for compelling reasons,[94] the factual circumstances in Wong wholly differ from the case at bar.

In Wong, petitioner alleged and proved that he was severely prejudiced by the use of the surname "Wong," which embarrassed and isolated him from friends and relatives in view of a suggested Chinese ancestry when in reality he is a Muslim Filipino residing in a Muslim community. He alleged and proved that the continued use of said surname hampered his business and social life,[95] viz.:

> "The purpose of the law in allowing a change of name as contemplated by the provisions of Rule 103 of the Rules of Court is to give a person an opportunity to improve his personality and to provide his best interest. (Calderon vs. Republic, 19 SCRA 721). In granting or denying the petition for change of name, the question of proper and reasonable cause is left to the discretion of the court. The evidence presented need only be satisfactory to the court and not all the best evidence available is required. (Uy vs. Republic, L-22712, Nov. 25, 1965; Nacionales vs. Republic, L-18067, April 29, 1966; both cases cited in 1 SCRA 843). In the present case, We believe that the court a quo had exercised its discretion judiciously when it granted the petition.
>
> "From the testimony of petitioner-appellee and of his adopter mother Concepcion Ty-Wong, We discern that said appellee was prompted to file the petition for change of name because of the embarrassment and ridicule his family name 'Wong' brings in his dealings with his relatives and friends, he being a Muslim Filipino and living in a Muslim community. Another cause is his desire to improve his social and business life. It has been held that in the absence of prejudice to the state or any individual, a sincere desire to adopt a Filipino name to erase signs of a former alien nationality which only hamper(s) social and business life, is a proper and reasonable cause for change of name (Uy vs. Republic, L-22712, Nov. 25, 1965, Que Liong Sian vs. Republic, L-23167, Aug. 17, 1967, 20 SCRA 1074). Justice dictates that a person should be allowed to improve his social standing as long as in doing so, he does not cause prejudice or injury to the interest of the State or of other persons (Calderon vs. Republic, supra). Nothing whatsoever is shown in the record of this case that such prejudice or injury to the interest of the state or of other persons would result in the change of petitioner's name.[96] (Underscoring supplied)

No similar compelling reason was alleged nor proved in this case. A sincere desire to associate oneself to a certain person or family, without more, does not justify a change of surname. In view of the foregoing, the Petition must be denied.

WHEREFORE, premises considered, the Petition is DENIED. The petition for change of name in Spec. Proc. No. R-QZN-17-04454 is DISMISSED.

SO ORDERED.

Gesmundo, C. J., (Chairperson), Carandang, Zalameda, and Rosario,[*] JJ., concur.

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[*] Designated additional Member per Raffle dated December 14, 2020 vice Associate Justice Samuel H. Gaerlan.

[1] Rollo, pp. 16-55.

[2] Id. at 59-69. Penned by Associate Justice Remedios A. Salazar-Fernando, with Associate Justices Samuel H. Gaerlan (now a Member of the Court) and Germano Francisco D. Legaspi concurring.

[3] Id. at 70-73.

[4] Id. at 75-81. Penned by Presiding Judge Maria Luisa Lesle G. Gonzales-Betic.

[5] Id. at 83-87.

[6] Also Sp. Proc. No. R-QZN-17-04454-SP and Spl. Proc. No. R-QZN-17-04454 in some parts of the rollo.

[7] Id. at 60.

[8] Jose Mari Bautista, Jr. in some parts of the rollo.

[9] Rollo, p. 89.

[10] Id. at 89, 96.

[11] Id. at 75.

[12] Id. at 89, 96.

[13] Id.

[14] Id. at 75-76, 89-90.

[15] Id. at 90.

[16] Id. at 76-77.

[17] Id. at 91.

[18] Id. at 90.

[19] Now Philippine Statistics Authority.

[20] Rollo, pp. 60-61.

[21] Id. at 61.

[22] Supra note 4.

[23] See id. at 78.

[24] Id. at 80.

[25] See id. at 80-81, citing R.A. 8552, Secs. 16 and 17; see also id. at 83-84.

[26] Id. at 86.

[27] Id. at 80.

[28] AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE RULES AND POLICIES ON THE DOMESTIC ADOPTION OF FILIPINO CHILDREN AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES, approved on February 25, 1998.

[29] Rollo, p. 67.

[30] Id. at 64-65.

[31] Id. at 65-67.

[32] See id. at 32-33.

[33] Id. at 33.

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[34] Id. at 317-333.

[35] Id. at 321.

[36] Id. at 327.

[37] G.R. No. 117209, February 9, 1996, 253 SCRA 509.

[38] Id. at 523-535. Citations omitted.

[39] See Republic v. Capote, G.R. No. 157043, February 2, 2007, 514 SCRA 76, 81.

[40] G.R. No. 186027, December 8, 2010, 637 SCRA 654.

[41] Id. at 663-668. Citations omitted.

[42] AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE CITY OR MUNICIPAL CIVIL REGISTRAR OR THE CONSUL GENERAL TO CORRECT A CLERICAL OR TYPOGRAPHICAL ERROR IN AN ENTRY AND/OR CHANGE OF FIRST NAME OR NICKNAME IN THE CIVIL REGISTER WITHOUT NEED OF A JUDICIAL ORDER AMENDING FOR THIS PURPOSE ARTICLES 376 AND 412 OF THE CIVIL CODE OF THE PHILIPPINES, approved on March 22, 2001.

[43] See Republic v. Gallo, G.R. No. 207074, January 17, 2018, 851 SCRA 570, 593.

[44] AN ACT FURTHER AUTHORIZING THE CITY OR MUNICIPAL CIVIL REGISTRAR OR THE CONSUL GENERAL TO CORRECT CLERICAL OR TYPOGRAPHICAL ERRORS IN THE DAY AND MONTH IN THE DATE OF BIRTH OR SEX OF A PERSON APPEARING IN THE CIVIL REGISTER WITHOUT NEED OF A JUDICIAL ORDER, AMENDING FOR THIS PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NUMBER NINETY FORTY-EIGHT, approved on August 15, 2012.

[45] R.A. 10172, Sec. 1.

[46] Bartolome v. Republic, G.R. No. 243288, August 28, 2019, p. 8; see also Republic v. Gallo, supra note 43, at 595 and Republic v. Sali, 808 Phil. 343, 349-350 (2017).

[47] See Republic v. Gallo, id. at 606-607.

[48] Supra note 46.

[49] Id. at 8. Citations omitted.

[50] See Petition for Change of Name, rollo, pp. 88-93.

[51] Id. at 91.

[52] Id. at 91.

[53] Id. at 19.

[54] Id. at 90.

[55] Republic v. Mercadera, supra note 40, at 663.

[56] Rollo, pp. 64-65.

[57] Id. at 65-67.

[58] No. L-20874, May 25, 1966, 17 SCRA 253.

[59] Id. at 256. Citations omitted. See also Republic v. Gallo, supra note 43; Republic v. Mercadera, supra note 40 and Calderon v. Republic, No. L-18127, April 5, 1967, 19 SCRA 721.

[60] R.A. 8552, Article VI provides:

> SEC. 19. Grounds for Rescission of Adoption. - Upon petition of the adoptee, with the assistance of the Department if a minor or if over eighteen (18) years of age but is incapacitated, as guardian/counsel, the adoption may be rescinded on any of the following grounds committed by the adopter(s): (a) repeated physical and verbal maltreatment by the adopter(s) despite having undergone counseling; (b) attempt on the life of the adoptee; (c) sexual assault or violence; or (d) abandonment and failure to comply with parental obligations.
>
> Adoption, being in the best interest of the child, shall not be subject to rescission by the adopter(s). However, the adopter(s) may disinherit the adoptee for causes provided in Article 919 of the Civil Code.
>
> SEC. 20. Effects of Rescission. - If the petition is granted, the parental authority of the adoptee's biological parent(s), if known, or the legal custody of the Department shall be restored if the adoptee is still a minor or incapacitated. The reciprocal rights and obligations of the adopter(s) and the adoptee to each other shall be extinguished.
>
> The court shall order the Civil Registrar to cancel the amended certificate of birth of the adoptee and restore his/her original birth certificate.
>
> Succession rights shall revert to its status prior to adoption, but only as of the date of judgment of judicial rescission. Vested rights acquired prior to judicial rescission shall be respected.
>
> All the foregoing effects of rescission of adoption shall be without prejudice to the penalties imposable under the Penal Code if the criminal acts are properly proven.

[61] Rollo, p. 43.

[62] Republic v. Gallo, supra note 43, at 592, citing Republic v. Mercadera, supra note 40, at 667.

[63] Id. at 588, citing Republic v. Mercadera, id. at 663. See also RULES OF COURT, Rule 103, Sec. 4.

[64] SEC. 3. Parties.- When cancellation or correction of an entry in the civil register is sought, the civil registrar and all persons who have or claim any interest which would be affected thereby shall be made parties to the proceeding.

[65] See also Republic v. Capote, supra note 39, at 84-85.

[66] Id. at 85.

[67] Yu Chi Han v. Republic, No. L-22040, November 29, 1965, 15 SCRA 454, 456.

[68] G.R. No. 159966, March 30, 2005, 454 SCRA 155.

[69] Id. at 161-162. Citations omitted.

[70] Id. at 162.

[71] Republic v. Court of Appeals, G.R. No. 97906, May 21, 1992, 209 SCRA 189, 202.

[72] In Re: Petition for Change of Name and/or Correction of Entry in the Civil Registry of Julian Lin Carulasan Wang, supra note 68, at 160.

[73] Id. at 160-161.

[74] FAMILY CODE, Art. 189. Underscoring supplied.

[75] Melencio S. Sta. Maria, Jr., PERSONS AND FAMILY RELATIONS LAW (5[th] ed., 2010), p. 664 explains that "[t]he provisions on adoption contained from Articles 183 to 193 of the Family Code have been repealed and replaced by Republic Act Numbered 8552 approved by President Fidel V. Ramos on February 25, 1998."

[76] R.A. 8552, Sec. 14.

[77] Republic v. Court of Appeals, supra note 71.

[78] Id. at 195. See also Republic v. Hernandez, supra note 37, at 522.

[79] Republic v. Hernandez, id.

[80] Rollo, p. 91.

[81] Id. at 20.

[82] Id. at 80-81, 86.

[83] Id. at 67-68.

[84] See for instance, Alanis III v. Court of Appeals, G.R. 216425, November 11, 2020; Chua v. Republic, G.R. No. 231998, November 20, 2017, 845 SCRA 407 and Alfon v. Republic, No. L-51201 May 29, 1980, 97 SCRA 35.

[85] In Re: Petition for Adoption of Michelle P. Lim, Monina P. Lim, G.R. Nos. l68992-93, May 21, 2009, 588 SCRA 98, 108-109.

[86] In Re: Petition for Change of Name and/or Correction of Entry in the Civil Registry of Julian Lin Carulasan Wang, supra note 68, at l59.

[87] See id. at 165.

[88] Supra note 67.

[89] Id. at 457.

[90] See Republic v. Hernandez, supra note 37, at 535.

[91] See Republic v. Court of Appeals, supra note 71, at 196.

[92] G.R. No. 97906, May 21, 1992, 209 SCRA 189.

[93] Id. at 200-202. Citations omitted. See also Calderon v. Republic, supra note 59.

[94] See Calderon v. Republic, id. at 725, where the Court held:

> x x x "While it is true that the Code provides that a natural child by legal fiction as the petitioner herein shall principally enjoy the surname of the father, yet, this does not mean that such child is prohibited by law from taking another surname with the latter's consent and for justifiable reasons." If under the law a legitimate child may secure a change of his name through judicial proceedings, upon a showing of a "proper and reasonable cause". We do not see any reason why a natural child cannot do the same. The purpose of the law in allowing a change of name, as contemplated by the provisions of Rule 103 of the Rules of Court is to give a person an opportunity to improve his personality and to promote his best interests. We are satisfied that the facts and circumstances as borne out by the record amply justify the change of the surname of the petitioner as ordered by the lower court. x x x

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[95] See Republic v. Hernandez, supra note 37 at 537, citing Republic v. Court of Appeals, supra note 71, at 192-193.

[96] Republic v. Court of Appeals, id. at 198-199.

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