

CORAZON LEGAMIA Y RIVERA, PETITIONER, VS. INTERMEDIATE APPELLATE COURT AND PEOPLE OF THE PHILIPPINES, RESPONDENTS.

G.R. No. 63817. August 28, 1984

Ponente: ABAD SANTOS, J.

Read online (full-text search, related cases, audio case brief): <https://batas.org/library/g-r-no-63817/>

ABAD SANTOS, J.:

This is an appeal by certiorari to review and reverse a decision of the Intermediate Appellate Court.

In the defunct Court of First Instance of Manila, Corazon Legamia was accused of using an alias in violation of Commonwealth Act No. 142, as amended. The information against her reads:

"That on or about November 4th, 1974, and for sometime prior and subsequent thereto, in the City of Manila, Philippines, the said accused did then and there willfully and unlawfully use the substitute or alias name CORAZON L. REYES, which is different from Corazon Legamia y Rivera with which she was christened or by which she has been known since childhood, nor as a pseudonym for literary purpose and without having been previously authorized by a competent Court to do so; that it was discovered only on or about November 4th, 1974." (Rollo, pp. 11-12.)

She was convicted by the trial court which sentenced her to an indeterminate prison term of one (1) year, as minimum, to two (2) years, as maximum; to pay a fine of P5,000.00, with subsidiary imprisonment; and to pay the costs. The trial court recommended, however, that she be extended executive clemency. On appeal to the Intermediate Appellate Court, the sentence was affirmed in toto. Hence the instant petition.

The facts:

Corazon Legamia lived with Emilio N. Reyes for 19 years - from November 8, 1955 to September 26, 1974, when Emilio died. During their live-in arrangement they produced a boy who was named Michael Raphael Gabriel L. Reyes. He was born on October 18, 1971.

From the time Corazon and Emilio lived together until the latter's death, Corazon was known as Corazon L. Reyes; she styled herself as Mrs. Reyes; and Emilio introduced her to friends as Mrs. Reyes.

Emilio was Branch Claim Manager, Naga Branch, of the Agricultural Credit Administration when he died. On October 29, 1974, or shortly after Emilio's death, Corazon filed a letter claim in behalf of Michael with the Agricultural Credit Administration for death benefits. The letter was signed "Corazon L. Reyes." The voucher evidencing payment of Michael's claim in the amount of P2,648.76 was also signed "Corazon L. Reyes."

For using the name Reyes although she was not married to Emilio, Felicisima Reyes who was married to Emilio filed a complaint which led to Corazon's prosecution. Parenthetically, the amount paid to Michael is "equivalent to 2/5 of that which is due to each legitimate child in accordance with the provisions of the Civil Code" per advice given by Atty. Diomedes A. Bragado of the Agricultural Credit Administration to Felicisima. (Rollo, pp. 14-15.)

The law:

Commonwealth Act No. 142 provides in Section 1:

"Section 1. Except as a pseudonym solely for literary, cinema, television, radio or other entertainment purposes and in athletic events where the use of pseudonym is a normally accepted practice, no person shall use any name different from the one with which he was registered at birth in the office of the local civil registry, or with which he was baptized for the first time, or in case of an alien, with which he was registered in the Bureau of Immigration upon entry; or such substitute name as may have been authorized by a competent court: Provided, That persons, whose births have not been registered in any local civil registry and who have not been baptized, have one year from the approval of this act within which to register their names in the civil registry of their residence. The name shall comprise the patronymic name and one or two surnames." (As amended by R.A. No. 6085.)

The issue:

Did the petitioner violate the law in the light of the facts above-stated?

The resolution:

It is not uncommon in Philippine society for a woman to represent herself as the wife and use the name of the man she is living with despite the fact that the man is married to another woman. The practice, to be sure, is not encouraged but neither is it unduly frowned upon. A number of women can be identified who are living with men prominent in political, business and social circles. The woman publicly holds herself out as the man's wife and uses his family name blithely ignoring the fact that he is not her husband. And yet none of the women has been charged of violating C.A. No. 142 because ours is not a bigoted but a tolerant and understanding society. It is in the light of our cultural environment that the law must be construed.

In the case at bar, Corazon had been living with Emilio for almost 20 years. He introduced her to the public as his wife and she assumed that role and his name without any sinister purpose or personal material gain in mind. She applied for benefits upon his death not for herself but for Michael who as a boy of tender years was under her guardianship. Surely, the lawmakers could not have meant to criminalize what Corazon had done especially because some of them probably had their own Corazons.

WHEREFORE, the decision under review is hereby set aside; the petitioner is acquitted of the charge. No costs.

SO ORDERED.

Concepcion, Jr., Escolin, and Cuevas, JJ., concur.

Makasiar, (Chairman), and Guerrero, JJ., on official leave.

Aquino, J., concur especially for the sake of the son. But the practice should not be encouraged. If there is no impediment, common-law husbands must marry their wives.

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.