

THIRD DIVISION

[A.M. No. 00-11-526-RTC, September 16, 2002]

**IN RE: INCIDENT REPORT OF THE SECURITY DIVISION,
SUPREME COURT, ON THE ALLEGED UNLADY-LIKE MANNER OF
MS EDNA S. CESAR, RTC, BRANCH 171, VALENZUELA CITY**

DECISION

PANGANIBAN, J.:

Discourtesy and disrespect have no place in the judiciary. professionalism, respect for the rights of others, good manners and right conduct are expected of every judicial officer and employee.

The Case and the Facts

The administrative case stems from an Incident Report^[1] of the Security Division of the Supreme Court, charging Edna S. Cesar, Legal Researcher II of the Regional Trial Court (RTC), Branch 171, Valenzuela City, with discourtesy and conduct unbecoming a court employee.

In a Memorandum dated June 5, 1997,^[2] Harold T. Cumpio, Guard II of the Supreme Court Security Division, narrated a shouting incident at the Supreme Court lobby on June 4, 1997. According to him, respondent, together with a female companion, arrived at the Supreme Court around 12:45 p.m. Respondent wanted to go to the library, but since it was closed for lunch, he made them wait until one o'clock. This response from Cumpio reportedly prompted respondent to raise her voice. Afterwards, she demanded that she be allowed to go to the comfort room. He then asked them, as standard operating procedure (SOP) of the Security Office, to register in the visitor's logbook. However, respondent became irate and shouted, "*Bakla! Bakla! Pumapatol sa babae!*" She continued with her invectives despite his pleas for her to lower her voice. Thereafter, she and her companion proceeded to the comfort room. A few minutes later, they came out. But before proceeding to the library, respondent uttered the following words to him: "*An im roy nga yawa ka! Nagkamali ka ng babanggain dahil Visaya kami.*"

On June 10, 1997, a Joint Statement^[3] was submitted by the following members of the library staff, who had witnessed the June 4, 1997 incident: Lorena C. Reyes, Teresita de la Cruz, Cathrina Laygo, Dennis M. Canlas, Almario Medina, Carolina Deloria, Lorna Ricolcol, Amado Bobadilla, Amelia Loyola and Mercedes Sales.

In their Statement, the witnesses said that they had heard a woman, who later turned out to be respondent, shouting at Cumpio: "*Ano ba ang problema mo? Wala ka bang pera? Magkano ba ang kailangan mo?*" They noticed that he kept silence. Thereafter she went to the comfort room and stayed there for ten minutes before proceeding to the library, where she talked in a "loud shrilly voice" to their co-employee Amado Bobadilla. Thinking that she was quarrelling with Bobadilla, they

butted in the conversation and discovered that she was complaining about a certain security guard at the lobby. They then advised her to refer the matter to the Security Office.

The Incident Report was forwarded to the Office of the Court Administrator (OCA), which treated it as an administrative complaint. In its 1st Indorsement dated March 24, 1998,^[4] the OCA required respondent to file her Comment.

In her undated Comment,^[5] respondent narrated her version of the incident. She said that she and her mother arrived at the Supreme Court on June 4, 1997 at 12:45 p.m. Because they were not allowed to enter the library, she requested the guard on duty (Cumpio) to allow them to go to the comfort room. As they were approaching it, he asked for her identification (ID) card which, in her rush to go in, she was not able to produce. All of a sudden, she heard him shout, "*Buli ka han imo iroy.*" Understanding what it meant, she responded, "*Ano ba ang problema mo?*" After handing her ID, she proceeded to the comfort room.

At one o'clock that afternoon, she and her mother entered the library. She then spoke to a member of the library staff regarding the altercation. Upon being advised to bring the matter to the Security Office, she proceeded there, but was not attended to. Thus, she decided to report the matter to the Civil Service Commission.^[6]

Respondent likewise denied "shouting on top of her voice." No one could have witnessed the incident, she claimed, because the offices were closed for lunch. Allegedly, the witnesses were merely solicited by Cumpio and were biased against her. Further, she denied having spoken to Amado Bobadilla. She purportedly conversed with a woman employee, not Bobadilla, at the library information desk.

Report and Recommendation of the Court Administrator

In a Memorandum dated October 3, 2001,^[7] the OCA found respondent to have fallen short of the high standard of judicial service. It explained:

"After a careful examination of the records of the case, we find the conduct of respondent short of the high standard of judicial service. She showed arrogance and discourtesy in refusing to follow the office regulation for visitors to register first in the logbook before entering the court premises. At the very least, she uttered offensive words at Mr. Cumpio, the security guard who was merely performing his duty at the time. This high-strung and belligerent behavior has no place in the government service especially when done at the workplace and during working hours, as such conduct shows discourtesy and disrespect not only towards co-workers but to the court as well.

"It behooves all those who are involved in the administration of justice to all times conduct themselves with the highest degree of propriety and decorum and take great care in avoiding incidents that tend to degrade the judiciary and diminish the respect and regard for the courts."^[8]

The OCA therefore recommended that respondent be fined one thousand pesos with a warning that a repetition of the same or similar acts be dealt with more severely.

The Court's Ruling