

## EN BANC

[ A.M. No. RTJ-00-1561, November 21, 2001 ]

**CARINA AGARAO, COMPLAINANT, VS. JUDGE JOSE J. PARENTELA, JR. AND CLERK OF COURT GLORIA LORENZO, RESPONDENTS.**

[A.M. NO. RTJ-01-1659. NOVEMBER 21, 2001]

**ANONYMOUS VS. JUDGE JOSE J. PARENTELA, JR., COURT STENOGRAPHER TERESITA MARAAN, AND CLERK OF COURT GLORIA LORENZO, RESPONDENTS.**

### D E C I S I O N

#### PER CURIAM:

Before the Court are two complaints against Judge Jose J. Parentela, Regional Trial Court, Branch 23, Trece Martires, Cavite, Clerk of Court Gloria Lorenzo, Municipal Trial Court, Sariaya, Quezon, and Court Stenographer Teresita Maraan.

On June 17, 1999, the Office of the Chief Justice received an anonymous letter charging respondent Judge with corruption, abuse of power and immorality. The letter alleged that respondent judge is known for accepting bribe from litigants in exchange for a favorable decision on their cases, especially when real properties amounting to millions of pesos are at stake. The litigants approach him through respondent Maraan who talks to respondent Lorenzo who, in turn, talks to respondent judge. The litigant, however, may directly deal with respondent judge if it involves a large sum of money or property of high value. Also, no petition for bail is granted by respondent judge without the prior approval of respondent Maraan who obtains and shares a commission with respondent Lorenzo for every bail granted. It is claimed that respondent judge was able to buy in cash a townhouse unit worth millions of pesos and acquired a brand new car which was allegedly a gift from an accused in a murder case. The complaint further alleged that respondent judge has the habit of shouting at lawyers appearing before his sala and berating his staff in open court. Complainants also rebuked the immoral and scandalous acts of respondent judge and respondent Lorenzo. They claimed that respondent judge and respondent Lorenzo openly carry an extra-marital affair and respondent Lorenzo meddles in the management of respondent judge's chambers despite the fact that she is assigned at the Municipal Trial Court in Sariaya, Quezon. The couple also allow their daughter to run around the office and shout at the top of her voice, disrupting the work of the staff. The complaint also charged respondent judge with serious mismanagement of his office. The process server allegedly acts as court interpreter; the stenographer acts as clerk of court and conducts *ex parte* hearing as commissioner; the legal

researcher takes charge of the issuance of warrants of arrest; and the stenographers, aside from taking down and transcribing stenographic notes, also perform various clerical jobs.

On September 1, 1999, the Office of the Court Administrator (OCA) referred the anonymous complaint to the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) for the conduct of a discreet investigation relative to the charges against respondents.

On December 16, 1999, the NBI furnished the OCA with a copy of the report regarding the alleged corruption, abuse of power and immorality of respondents. The report contained the following findings:

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2. The result of the discreet investigation were as follows:

**I. JOSE J. PARENTELA, JR.**

**a. Alleged CORRUPTION and ABUSE OF POWER**

We verified the allegation that Judge PARENTELA received a brand new Honda car as a gift from an accused in a Murder case. We talked to Atty. ONOFRE M. MARANAN, Asst. Provincial Prosecutor, Province of Cavite, about the case. According to him, his office filed an information for Murder against all the accused entitled Pp. vs. IGMIDIO STA. RITA, et al. docketed as TM-12844. However, he was surprised to know when the two (2) accused, who were arrested and allowed to post bail, were convicted only of slight physical injuries instead of the crime of Murder. The other two (2) accused are still at-large. He did not anymore take any remedial action on the case because he might be accused of taking personally the verdict. He advised the heirs and relatives of the victim of their right to go against Judge PARENTELA.

We were able to talk to the family of victim RONALDO COLOCADO and requested them to submit certified true copy of the decision and other important pleading of the case. (Annexes F, F-1 to F- ). According to the father of the victim, he believes that Judge PARENTELA received bribe money from the accused GUYAMIN brothers because they (GUYAMIN family) have sold their residence located just a stone-throw away from his house. He hinted that the proceeds was (*sic*) given to the Judge in exchange for the questionable verdict. When asked if he could substantiate his accusation, Mr. COLOCADO answered in the negative and added that he and his family already accepted the fate of his son RONALDO.

A careful perusal of the case record disclosed that on July 5, 1994, Atty. TITO S. CARPINA, Asst. Provincial Prosecutor, filed an information against IGMIDIO STA. RITA, CRISPULO GUYAMIN, AUGUSTO PALUMPON and NESTOR GUYAMIN for the crime of Murder docketed as TM- 1284. He recommended no bail for the principal accused IGMIDIO STA. RITA while the three (3) other accused NESTOR and CRISPULO both surnamed GUYAMIN and AUGUSTO PALOMPON were allowed to post bail in the amount of ₱20,000.00 each. With these recommendations, we can safely

surmise that the last three (3) accused were indicted only as accomplice in the crime of murder and the possibility of being convicted of a much lesser offense is not remote. Moreover, we have no evidence that could establish that Judge PARENTELA demanded or has received money, favor or benefits in exchange for the alleged questionable verdict.

We did not anymore push through with the investigation of the other accusations that Judge PARENTELA received bribe money in other cases being heard in his Sala because our informants could not also recount or give investigative lead on the other cases mentioned in the letter-complaint. In fact, except for the abovementioned case, Prosecutor MARANAN could no longer recall the details of the other alleged questionable verdict rendered by Judge PARENTELA.

To determine if indeed Judge PARENTELA amassed wealth while in office, we tried to develop other or concealed assets or properties of subject but the result is negative. In the 1998 statement of assets and liabilities (previously marked Annex C-12) of Judge PARENTELA, the house and lot located at Tierra Verde Subdivision, Bacoor, Cavite and the Honda car are among his declared properties. These properties/assets were allegedly acquired illegally using his position and power as Judge. Verification made with the Provincial Assessor disclosed that the house and lot is still registered in the name of Sta. Lucia Realty & Dev't. Inc. (Annexes G, G-1 to G-3). Efforts were exerted to obtain documents from Sta. Lucia Realty in order to establish the new owner or the mode of acquiring said property by the new owner but their representative called up through telephone on the scheduled hearing informing us that they are still looking for the documents. With regard to the Maroon Honda Accord with plate number 16\*D23, we could not confirm or deny the veracity of the ownership of the same because our letter dated November 11, 1999 sent to BENJAMIN CALIMA, Assistant Secretary, Land Transportation Office, remained unheeded until now. (Annex H)

Considering that we could not determine in the meantime the exact valuation or the mode or acquisition of the aforesaid properties/assets, it would be very difficult for us to prepare an accurate comparative statement of the net worth of Judge PARENTELA.

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

The accusations against Judge PARENTELA are very serious that should not be taken lightly. However, we do not have sufficient evidence to establish prima facie case against Judge PARENTELA for violation of Republic Act No. 3019 (Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act). Unless we receive information on his participation in a particular and verifiable transaction, all our efforts and resources will be put to naught. Hence, we recommend the temporary closure with respect to this accusation only.

#### **b. Alleged IMMORALITY and SCANDALOUS ACTS**

The pieces of evidence we gathered clearly establish that Judge PARENTELA who is validly and legally married to DELECIA MALUBAY on March 6, 1960, had been involved in an illicit relationship under scandalous circumstances with GLORIA LORENZO, his former Clerk of

Court in the Municipal Trial Court, Sariaya, Quezon. Their relationship flourished and continued up to present and in fact a child named EUNICE MAE L. PARENTELA was conceived and born on March 9, 1993. The birth of EUNICE MAE was registered only in 1997 in the Civil Registry of Trece Martires City. (Annex I) Their daughter EUNICE MAE is presently enrolled as Grade I pupil at Saint Jude School, Trece Martires City. (Annexes I-1 to I-4)

Verification was conducted to determine the information contained in the birth certificate of EUNICE MAE that Judge PARENTELA and GLORIA LORENZO were married last November 13, 1991 in Manila but the result is negative as certified by the City Civil Registrar of Manila. (Annex J)

In the middle or last week of October 1999, Judge PARENTELA allegedly suffered a stroke and was admitted in an undisclosed hospital in Metro Manila. Our informant who does not want to be identified further told us that Judge PARENTELA is very much ill and that GLORIA LORENZO is personally taking care of the ailing Judge. He also confirmed that two (2) years ago, Mrs. PARENTELA went to the office of Judge PARENTELA. When she saw GLORIA LORENZO inside the office of Judge PARENTELA, she hurled invective words against GLORIA LORENZO that caused scandal in the Capitol.

Moreover, our findings only confirm the Report (Annex K) in NBI Case No. 81-895-407 dated August 6, 1982 that Judge PARENTELA had an illicit relationship with his then clerk of court when he was assigned as Municipal Judge in Sariaya, Quezon. The service record of GLORIA LORENZO shows that she was the Clerk of Court of the Municipal Court, Sariaya Quezon, from August 1, 1977 up to the present. We tried to retrieve the folder of this case but the same is not yet available.

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

**IN VIEW OF THE FOREGOING**, we respectfully recommend the filing of appropriate criminal and administrative charges against Judge JOSE PARENTELA for falsely stating in the birth certificate of her (*sic*) daughter EUNICE MAE that he is legally married to GLORIA LORENZO on November 13, 1991 in Manila. Also, for having an illicit affair under scandalous circumstances with his former clerk of court GLORIA LORENZO. Moreover, to inform the Honorable Justice ALFREDO L. BENIPAYO, Supreme Court, of the result of our discreet investigation.

#### **II. GLORIA LORENZO Y GLORIOSO**

The pieces of evidence we gathered clearly show that subject LORENZO had knowingly and voluntarily indulged in an illicit relationship with her former superior officer Judge JOSE PARENTELA, JR., who is legally married to DELECIA MALUBAY. Their relationship flourished and begotten a child later named EUNICE MAE PARENTELA, as evidenced by the birth certificate of EUNICE MAE PARENTELA previously marked as Annex I hereof. Said birth certificate was verified and found duly registered with the Civil Registry of Trece Martires City.

We receive some information that she seldom reports to her office in Sariaya , Quezon, and could be seen always in the office of Judge Parentela. Also, despite her absence in the office, she receives nevertheless her complete salary. Considering the delicateness of this case and the fact that it could further delay the result of our investigation, undersigned decided to hold in the meantime any investigative action.

The certification issued by BELEN G. SAMAR, OIC Task Force Administrative Services, Supreme Court, disclosed that she failed to file her statement of assets and liabilities for the year 1998. (Previously marked Annex D-5)

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**IN VIEW OF THE FOREGOING**, we would like to recommend the filing of appropriate criminal and administrative charges against GLORIA LORENZO for knowingly and voluntarily having an illicit affair under scandalous circumstances with Judge PARENTELA and for failure to file her statement of assets and liabilities for the year 1998. Further, to inform the Supreme Court of the result of our investigation.

**II. TERESITA MARAAN Y ALEGRE**

After our discreet investigation, we received no derogatory remark against subject MARAAN except that she is close to Judge PARENTELA and GLORIA LORENZO.

The certification issued by BELEN G. SAMAR, OIC, Task Force Administrative Services, Supreme Court, shows that she failed to file her statement of assets and liabilities for the years 1996, 1997 & 1998. (Previously marked Annex E-3)

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**CONSIDERING THE FOREGOING**, we would like to recommend the temporary closure of this case unless and until we receive additional information of her participation in any illegal transaction that would warrant the opening of this case. However, appropriate criminal and administrative charges should be filed against her for failure to file her statement of assets and liabilities for the years 1996, 1997 & 1998, as required by law.”

On June 21, 2001, the Court required the respondents to file a comment on the anonymous complaint.

Meanwhile, on August 19, 1999, the Office of the Chief Justice received a similar letter from Carina Agarao, President, Crusade Against Violence, reporting that respondent Lorenzo is often seen in the sala of respondent judge in Cavite, although she continues to receive her salary from the Municipal Trial Court of Sariaya, Quezon. The letter also alleged that respondent Lorenzo is the live-in partner of respondent judge and openly negotiates with litigants regarding cases pending before the court.