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Republic of the Philippines
Supreme Court
Manila

EN BANC

**AURORA R. LADIM, ANGELITO A.
ARDIENTE and DANILO S. DELA
CRUZ,**

Complainants,

— *versus* —

ATTY. PERLA D. RAMIREZ,
Respondent.

A.C. No. 10372

Present:

GESMUNDO, C.J.,
LEONEN,
CAGUIOA,
HERNANDO,
LAZARO-JAVIER,
INTING,
ZALAMEDA,
LOPEZ, M.,
GAERLAN,
ROSARIO,
LOPEZ, J.,
DIMAAMPAO,
MARQUEZ,
KHO, JR., and
SINGH, JJ.

Promulgated:

February 21, 2023

[Signature]

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DECISION

PER CURIAM:

“The practice of law is not a vested right but a privilege, a privilege clothed with public interest. To enjoy the privilege of practicing law as officers of the Court, lawyers must adhere to the rigid standards of mental

fitness x x x”¹ and above all, they should always uphold the dignity of each and every person by observing the basic principles of decency and respect for others.

Antecedents

Complainants Aurora R. Ladim, Angelito A. Ardiente and Danilo S. Dela Cruz (*Ladim, et al.*) are employees of Lirio Apartments Condominium in Makati City where respondent Atty. Perla D. Ramirez (*Atty. Ramirez*) resides.² In 2007, Ladim et al. filed a complaint for disbarment against Atty. Ramirez for her unruly and offensive behavior towards residents and employees of the condominium, which stemmed from various incidents from 1990 to 2007.³ These events can be summarized in this manner:

Atty. Ramirez kept asking “impertinent personal questions,” knocking on their doors, and using offensive language. Another tenant complained that [Atty.] Ramirez kept entering units undergoing repairs because of her fear that people were damaging the building. The keys hanging on the door of one unit were lost the day she entered the unit.

The latest incident involved Atty. Ramirez shouting at the condominium employees and using offensive language. She accused the maintenance personnel of destroying the building and the security guards of trying to destroy her car. She also started shouting that the condominium residents were prostitutes. The condominium employees tried to pacify her, even calling her brother, Dr. Nicholas Ramirez, to intervene. x x x

Since 2004, Atty. Ramirez has refused to pay any of her association dues.⁴

Atty. Ramirez submitted a position paper before the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (*IBP*) where she neither admitted nor denied the allegations. Nonetheless, she sought refuge in her long years of service as a State Prosecutor.⁵ She also expressed that:

I do not believe that the three complainants are my equal, therefore, for reasons above stated, x x x I move for the outright dismissal of the complaints charge x x x against me.⁶

The IBP Commissioner concluded that respondent may have mental issues, thus he simply recommended that Atty. Ramirez be reprimanded for

¹ *Lapitan v. Salgado*, A.C. No. 12452, February 18, 2020.

² *Rollo*, p. 290.

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Id.* at 291.

⁶ *Id.*

her conduct.⁷ The IBP Board of Governors adopted and approved the report and recommendation of the Bar Commissioner.⁸

Be that as it may, this Court believed that a mere reprimand was not enough to punish respondent for her misbehavior.⁹ Thus, in a Resolution¹⁰ dated July 30, 2014, this Court found Atty. Ramirez liable for violation of Canon 7.03¹¹ of the Code of Professional Responsibility (*Code*). For this reason, she was suspended from the practice of law for six months, with a stern warning that a repetition of the same or similar acts shall be dealt with more severely.¹² Atty. Ramirez received a copy of the Resolution dated July 30, 2014 on September 5, 2014.¹³

On April 21, 2016, Atty. Ramirez personally appeared before this Court with a handwritten letter¹⁴ and a copy of her service record¹⁵ and requested for the lifting of her suspension order.¹⁶

On even date, the Office of the Bar Confidant (*OBC*), through Atty. Cristina B. Layusa (*Atty. Layusa*), advised Atty. Ramirez to file the necessary motion and submit a sworn statement that she did not practice law during the period of her suspension.¹⁷ Atty. Layusa presented copies of this Court's Resolutions on various disbarment cases as guide, but Atty. Ramirez questioned her authority and asserted that such requirements did not apply to her.¹⁸

In addition, Atty. Ramirez stated in her handwritten letter addressed to Atty. Layusa that she had served in government for a long time before her retirement.¹⁹ She also claimed that she studied law under Former Associate Justice Irene Cortes and that she worked briefly with the godchild of the United States Supreme Court Justice Cardozo.²⁰ In particular:

In sum[,] whether you agree with me regarding what I mention here about SOCIAL JUSTICE or you don't, I do not apologize to you at all for my conduct,

⁷ Id.

⁸ Id. at 292.

⁹ Id.

¹⁰ Id. at 290–294.

¹¹ Rule 7.03 - A lawyer shall not engage in conduct that adversely reflects on his fitness to practice law, nor shall he whether in public or private life, behave in a scandalous manner to the discredit of the legal profession.

¹² Id. at 294.

¹³ Id. at 221.

¹⁴ Id. at 223–225.

¹⁵ Id. at 226.

¹⁶ Id. at 226-A.

¹⁷ Id. at 227.

¹⁸ Id.

¹⁹ Id.

²⁰ Id. at 224–224-A.

for who is to negate that you equaled my behavior if not worse. Maybe you have not been taught & sure you have not known JUSTICE IRENE CORTEZ. So, do read about social justice!²¹

The OBC recommended that Atty. Ramirez's request for the lifting of her suspension be denied because she refused to file a sworn statement to prove that she did not practice law during her suspension.²²

In a Resolution²³ dated August 1, 2016, this Court denied Atty. Ramirez's prayer to lift her suspension until she has complied with the submission of the required sworn statement and the necessary certifications from the IBP and the trial courts.²⁴

On March 15, 2017, at about 3:00 o'clock in the afternoon, Atty. Ramirez went to the OBC to follow-up on the status of her request on the lifting of her suspension order.²⁵ Atty. Layusa approached Atty. Ramirez and politely asked what she can do for her. Atty. Ramirez asked for the action of this Court on her letter regarding the lifting of her order of suspension. Atty. Layusa asked one of the staff to retrieve the records of the case at the *Rollo Room* and when the same arrived, Atty. Layusa explained to Atty. Ramirez the dispositive portion of the Resolution of this Court dated August 1, 2016, which denied her prayer to lift her suspension.²⁶

Atty. Ramirez, in a disrespectful and arrogant tone, directed Atty. Layusa to read the entire records of the case from page one to end.²⁷ Atty. Layusa was caught by surprise of Atty. Ramirez's demeanor, and she told her not to insult her. Lamentably, Atty. Ramirez continued to speak in an offensive tone and uttered: "*BRUHA KA; OO, BRUHA KA; PUTANG INA MO; YOU ARE A DISGRACE TO THE LEGAL PROFESSION; KONTING BRAINS NAMAN; CLERK KA LANG; YOU DON['T] KNOW YOUR WORK; YOU DON[']T KNOW YOUR JOB; ARE THOSE JUSTICES PASSERS UNDER R.A. 1080 [?]*"²⁸

The said incident was witnessed by the OBC personnel and Security Guard Letecio T. Guindanao.²⁹ The next day, the OBC submitted an Incident Report³⁰ dated March 16, 2017, signed by Atty. Layusa and staff of the OBC who were present during the said incident.

²¹ Id.

²² Id. at 228.

²³ Id. at 226-A-230.

²⁴ Id. at 229.

²⁵ Id. at 266.

²⁶ Id.

²⁷ Id.

²⁸ Id.

²⁹ Id.

³⁰ Id. at 266-267.

In a Resolution³¹ dated April 19, 2017, this Court required Atty. Ramirez to comment on the Incident Report dated March 16, 2017, within 10 days from notice. She, however, did not file a comment. In a Resolution³² dated January 29, 2018, this Court reiterated the order for Atty. Ramirez to file her comment on the Incident Report dated March 16, 2017.

On February 28, 2018, Atty. Ramirez submitted a letter requesting for the lifting of her suspension.³³ In a Resolution³⁴ dated March 14, 2018, this Court referred the case to the OBC for report and recommendation.

The OBC, in a Report and Recommendation³⁵ dated July 16, 2019, recommended the following actions: 1) the respondent's request for lifting of the order of suspension should be denied; and 2) the respondent be disbarred from the practice of law and her name be stricken from the roll of Attorney. The pertinent portions of the OBC's Report and Recommendation are quoted hereunder:

We reiterate the Court's Resolution dated 1 August 2016, stating the lifting of a lawyer's suspension is not automatic upon the expiration of the suspension period. The suspended lawyer must still file the necessary motion to lift suspension and other pertinent documents before the Court x x x

Furthermore, we note that respondent was previously sanctioned for unprofessional conduct. However, it seems that respondent was unfazed with the subsisting penalty of suspension. The record shows that respondent; on various occasions continue to express offensive behavior against complainants and court employees.

In multiple occasions where respondent had inquired before the OBC, the former was only received with courteous accommodation while respondent had only reciprocated with expletives and insults. Though a lawyer's language may be forceful and emphatic, it should always be dignified and respectful, befitting the dignity of the legal profession. The use of intemperate language and unkind ascriptions has no place in the dignity of the judicial forum.

Even after being penalized by the Court, respondent continued to act harshly and continued to offend not only to the complainants but also to the employees of the Court. Respondent had not earned the humility required of her as an officer of the court in her interaction with the Bar Confidant. We cannot allow such proclivity, thus, we recommend that respondent deserves a stiffer penalty of disbarment.

The moral standards of the legal profession expected the respondent to act

³¹ Id. at 268.

³² Id. at 295-295-A.

³³ Id. at 298.

³⁴ Id. at 296.

³⁵ Id. at 297-299.

with the highest degree of professionalism, decency and nobility in the course of their practice of law. Not only is a lawyer expected to act appropriately while practicing the legal profession but also in their interaction with other persons in their private life. Although the power to disbar is always exercised with great caution and only for the most imperative reasons, the Court will not hesitate when the misconduct is so gross tantamount to grossly immoral, like in respondent's case.³⁶

Issue

Whether respondent should be disbarred from the practice of law

This Court's Ruling

This Court adopts the July 16, 2019 Report and Recommendation and imposes the penalty of disbarment upon Atty. Perla Ramirez.

*The lifting of a lawyer's suspension is not automatic upon the expiration of the period of suspension*³⁷

Time and again, this Court has held that "the lifting of a lawyer's suspension is not automatic upon the end of the period stated in the Court's decision, and an order from the Court lifting the suspension at the end of the period is necessary in order to enable him [or her] to resume the practice of his [or her] profession."³⁸

Jurisprudence³⁹ requires that a lawyer who has been suspended from the practice of law should first request for the lifting of the order of suspension, conformably with the following guidelines:

- 1) After a finding that respondent lawyer must be suspended from the practice of law, the Court shall render a decision imposing the penalty;
- 2) Unless the Court explicitly states that the decision is immediately executory upon receipt thereof, respondent has 15 days within which to file a motion for reconsideration thereof. The denial of said motion shall render the decision final and executory;

³⁶ Id. at 298.

³⁷ *Miranda v. Carpio*, A.C. No. 6281 January 15, 2020 (Resolution).

³⁸ Id. This pinpoint citation refers to the copy of this Resolution uploaded to the Supreme Court website.

³⁹ *Cheng-Sedurifa v. Unay*, A.C. No. 11336, June 20, 2018 (Notice).

- 3) Upon the expiration of the period of suspension, respondent shall file a Sworn Statement with the Court, through the Office of the Bar Confidant, stating therein that he or she has desisted from the practice of law and has not appeared in any court during the period of his or her suspension;
- 4) Copies of the Sworn Statement shall be furnished to the Local Chapter of the [Integrated Bar of the Philippines] and to the Executive Judge of the courts where respondent has pending cases handled by him or her, and/or where he or she has appeared as counsel;
- 5) The Sworn Statement shall be considered as proof of respondent's compliance with the order of suspension; and
- 6) Any finding or report contrary to the statements made by the lawyer under oath shall be a ground for the imposition of a more severe punishment, or disbarment, as may be warranted.⁴⁰

Verily, Atty. Ramirez's six-month period of suspension had lapsed. Nevertheless, the lifting of a lawyer's suspension is not automatic because the suspended lawyer should first prove that he or she desisted from the practice of law during the period of suspension by filing a sworn statement with the court, with copies furnished to his or her local IBP chapter and the executive judge where he or she has pending cases or has appeared as counsel. Indeed, it is such sworn statement which shall be considered as proof of the lawyer's compliance with the order of suspension.⁴¹

Lamentably, Atty. Ramirez did not comply with the guidelines aforesaid. She only submitted a handwritten letter and attached her service record thereto.⁴² Simply put, she has yet to submit her sworn statement to prove that she complied with the suspension order before the court may lift the same.

On this point, this Court underscores that a lawyer, as an officer of the Court, should uphold the dignity and authority of the Court.⁴³ "The highest form of respect for judicial authority is shown by a lawyer's obedience to court orders and processes."⁴⁴ For failing to observe the requirements aforesaid, respondent's prayer to lift her suspension is denied.

Atty. Ramirez's actions warrant the ultimate penalty of disbarment

⁴⁰ Id. This pinpoint citation refers to the copy of this Resolution uploaded to the Supreme Court website.

⁴¹ *Tan, Jr. v. Gumba*, 823 Phil. 116, 129 (2018).

⁴² *Rollo*, pp. 270–280.

⁴³ *Supra* note 37.

⁴⁴ Id. This pinpoint citation refers to the copy of this Resolution uploaded to the Supreme Court website.

At this juncture, it bears to stress that when Atty. Ramirez took her oath as a lawyer, she vowed to conduct herself according to the best of her knowledge and discretion, with all good fidelity as well to the courts as to her clients,⁴⁵ thus:

I, do solemnly swear that I will maintain allegiance to the Republic of the Philippines; I will support its Constitution and obey the laws as well as the legal orders of the duly constituted authorities therein; I will do no falsehood, nor consent to the doing of any in court; I will not wittingly nor willingly promote or sue any groundless, false or unlawful suit, or give aid nor consent to the same; I will delay no man for money or malice, and **will conduct myself as a lawyer according to the best of my knowledge and discretion, with all good fidelity** as well to the courts as to my clients; and I impose upon myself these voluntary obligations without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion. So help me God.⁴⁶ (Emphasis supplied)

This Court has always reminded members of the Bar that the practice of law is not a right, but a mere privilege which is subject to the inherent regulatory power of this Court.⁴⁷ It is imperative for lawyers “to observe the highest degree of morality and integrity not only upon admission to the Bar, but also throughout their career in order to safeguard the reputation of the legal profession.”⁴⁸ Thus, lawyers are duty-bound to adhere to the rigid standards of mental fitness and faithful compliance with the rules of the legal profession to continue enjoying the privilege to practice law.⁴⁹

One of the rules which lawyers vowed to uphold are the canons governing their conduct towards the legal profession and the courts which are embodied in the Code. On this matter, the Code pertinently states:

CANON 7 – A LAWYER SHALL AT ALL TIMES UPHOLD THE INTEGRITY AND THE DIGNITY OF THE LEGAL PROFESSION AND SUPPORT THE ACTIVITIES OF THE INTEGRATED BAR.

Rule 7.03 – A lawyer shall not engage in the conduct that adversely reflects on his fitness to practice law, nor shall he whether in public or private life, behave in a scandalous manner to the discredit of the legal profession.

CANON 8 – A LAWYER SHALL CONDUCT HIMSELF WITH COURTESY, FAIRNESS AND CANDOR TOWARDS HIS PROFESSIONAL COLLEAGUES, AND SHALL AVOID HARASSING TACTICS AGAINST OPPOSING COUNSEL.

⁴⁵ *Gonzaga v. Atty. Abad*, A.C. No. 13163, March 15, 2022.

⁴⁶ *Id.*

⁴⁷ *Ignacio v. Ignacio*, A.C. Nos. 9426 & 11988, August 25, 2020.

⁴⁸ *Id.* This pinpoint citation refers to the copy of this Decision uploaded to the Supreme Court website.

⁴⁹ *Id.*

Rule 8.01 – A lawyer shall not, in his professional dealings, use language which is abusive, offensive or otherwise improper.

CANON 11 - A LAWYER SHALL OBSERVE AND MAINTAIN THE RESPECT DUE TO THE COURTS AND TO JUDICIAL OFFICERS AND SHOULD INSIST ON SIMILAR CONDUCT BY OTHERS.

Rule 11.03 – A lawyer shall abstain from scandalous, offensive or menacing language or behavior before the Courts.

To maintain public confidence in the law, Canon 7 of the Code requires lawyers to conduct themselves in a manner that upholds the integrity and dignity of the profession and to shun actions that would adversely reflect on their fitness to practice law.⁵⁰ Likewise, Canon 8 of the same code mandates lawyers to act with courteousness, fairness and candor in their dealings with colleagues.⁵¹ Moreover, Canon 11 of the Code enjoins lawyers to observe and maintain the respect due to the courts and judicial officers by abstaining from scandalous, offensive or menacing language or behavior before the courts.

In *Fortune Medicare, Inc. v. Lee*,⁵² this Court underscored that lawyers should be beyond reproach in all aspects of their lives, especially in dealing with their colleagues. This high moral standard impose on lawyers necessarily emanates from them being officers of this Court, “after all, any thoughtless or ill-conceived actions can irreparably tarnish public confidence in the law, and consequently, those who practice it.”⁵³

Consequently, disciplinary proceedings for disbarment may be instituted by this Court *motu proprio*, upon the verified complaint of any person⁵⁴ to purge the profession of those who are no longer worthy to be given the special privilege to practice law. Public interest is the primary objective in any disciplinary proceedings against lawyers⁵⁵ and this Court investigates the conduct of lawyers to determine whether they are still fit to continue in the practice of law.⁵⁶

“Corollarily, any errant behavior of a lawyer, be it in his [or her] public or private activities, which tends to show a deficiency in moral character, honesty, probity or good demeanor, is sufficient to warrant suspension or disbarment.”⁵⁷ In this regard, Section 27 Rule 138 of the Rules of Court states:

⁵⁰ *Fortune Medicare, Inc. v. Lee*, 849 Phil. 791 (2019).

⁵¹ *Id.*

⁵² *Id.*

⁵³ *Id.*

⁵⁴ Section 1, Rule 139-B of the Rules of Court.

⁵⁵ *Hierro v. Nava II*, A.C. No. 9459, January 7, 2020.

⁵⁶ *Supra* note 45.

⁵⁷ *Id.*

Section 27. Attorneys removed or suspended by Supreme Court on what grounds. — A member of the bar may be removed or suspended from his office as Attorney by the Supreme Court for any deceit, malpractice, or other gross misconduct in such office, grossly immoral conduct, or by reason of his conviction of a crime involving moral turpitude, or **for any violation of the oath which he is required to take before the admission to practice**, or for a willful disobedience of any lawful order of a superior court, or for corruptly or willful appearing as an Attorney for a party to a case without authority so to do. The practice of soliciting cases at law for the purpose of gain, either personally or through paid agents or brokers, constitutes malpractice. (Emphasis supplied)

In this case, when the OBC deferred action on Atty. Ramirez's request to lift the order of her suspension to practice law for her failure to file a sworn statement, respondent boldly berated and ridiculed then Bar Confidant Atty. Layusa and made foul and offensive remarks to the Justices of this Court.⁵⁸ Atty. Ramirez's outrage happened in the OBC and was even witnessed by the OBC personnel and a security guard of this court who all signed the Incident Report⁵⁹ dated March 16, 2017. Unabashed, Atty. Ramirez maligned not only officers of this Court but the Court itself as an institution with her erratic outbursts in the confines of this office. Evidently, Atty. Ramirez had shown a penchant for being arrogant and disrespectful in her dealings, whether in her private or professional life, pompously using her title "Atty." as a license to belittle and mock others who do not follow her suit. To the mind of this Court, her actions do not merit judicial empathy.

As aptly held by this Court in *In Re: Supreme Court Resolution*⁶⁰ dated April 28, 2003 in G.R. Nos. 145817 & 145822:

Lawyers shall conduct themselves with courtesy, fairness and candor towards their professional colleagues. They shall not, in their professional dealings, use language that is abusive, offensive or otherwise improper. Lawyers shall use dignified language in their pleadings despite the adversarial nature of our legal system. The use of intemperate language and unkind ascriptions has no place in the dignity of a judicial forum.

The Court cannot countenance the ease with which lawyers, in the hopes of strengthening their cause in a motion for inhibition, make grave and unfounded accusations of unethical conduct or even wrongdoing against other members of the legal profession. It is the duty of members of the Bar to abstain from all offensive personality and to advance no fact prejudicial to the honor or reputation of a party or witness, unless required by the justness of the cause with which they are charged.⁶¹ (Citations omitted)

⁵⁸ *Rollo*, p. 300.

⁵⁹ *Id.* at 266.

⁶⁰ 685 Phil. 751 (2012).

⁶¹ *Id.* at 807.

Similarly, in *Malabed v. Atty. De La Peña*,⁶² this Court reminded lawyers to refrain from using improper and derogatory language because it undermines the dignity of the legal profession:

While a lawyer is entitled to present his [or her] case with vigor and courage, such enthusiasm does not justify the use of offensive and abusive language. Language abounds with countless possibilities for one to be emphatic but respectful, convincing but not derogatory, illuminating but not offensive.

On many occasions, the Court has reminded members of the Bar to abstain from all offensive personality and to advance no fact prejudicial to the honor or reputation of a party or witness, unless required by the justice (*sic*) of the cause with which he [or she] is charged. In keeping with the dignity of the legal profession, a lawyer's language even in his [or her] pleadings must be dignified.⁶³ (Citations omitted)

All told, lawyers should always guard their language because any careless remark can “promote distrust in the administration of justice, undermine the people's confidence in the legal profession, and erode public respect for it.”⁶⁴

Unfortunately, there were instances when members of the Bar were found wanting in this respect. One of which happened in the case of *Bautista v. Ferrer*⁶⁵ (*Bautista*). During the material period, the respondent in *Bautista*, is an Assistant Regional State Prosecutor. The respondent lawyer took the cellphone of her alleged debtor who failed to settle her obligations.⁶⁶ She thrust a pair of scissors in the direction of her alleged debtor while she hurled “*putang ina mo Arlene, ang kapal ng mukha mo. Ayusin mo muna ako bago mo makuha ang mga gamit mo.*”⁶⁷ In the said case, this Court declared that “these words surely have no place in the mouth of a lawyer in a high government office such as Ferrer, an Assistant Regional State Prosecutor no less.”⁶⁸ In *Bautista*, this Court ruled that the respondent lawyer is liable for violating Rule 8.01 of Canon 8 of the Code, which prohibits a lawyer from using language which is abusive, offensive, or otherwise improper. For this reason, the respondent lawyer was suspended from the practice of law for one year.⁶⁹

⁶² 780 Phil. 462 (2016).

⁶³ Id. at 467.

⁶⁴ *Canlapan v. Balayo*, 781 Phil. 63 (2016) (Resolution).

⁶⁵ 855 Phil. 743 (2019).

⁶⁶ Id. at 747.

⁶⁷ Id. at 748.

⁶⁸ Id. at 752.

⁶⁹ Id.

Another case with a similar factual milieu with the case at bench is *Dallong-Galicinao v. Atty. Castro*⁷⁰ (*Dallong-Galicinao*). In *Dallong-Galicinao*, a lawyer was ordered to pay a fine of ₱10,000.00 for maligning complainant who was the clerk of court of the Regional Trial Court. In the said case, the respondent lawyer went to the complainant's office to inquire whether the complete records of a case had already been remanded to the court of origin.⁷¹ Complainant answered that no records had been transmitted since a certified true copy of the decision of the Court of Appeals should first be presented to serve as basis for the transmittal of the records to the court of origin.⁷² The respondent lawyer was enraged at the response since he had been frequenting complainant's office but was not informed of said requirement.⁷³ When complainant answered that it was not their duty to inform him of said requirement, respondent retorted scornfully in his local dialect, "*Kayat mo nga saw-en, awan pakialam yon? Kasdiay?*" ("You mean to say you don't care anymore? Is that the way it is?") and banged the door on his way out while a hearing was ongoing.⁷⁴

After a few minutes, the respondent lawyer returned to the office, pointed his finger at complainant and shouted, "*Ukinnan, no adda ti unget mo iti kilientek haan mo nga ibales kaniak ah!*" ("Vulva of your mother if you are harboring ill feelings against my client, don't turn your ire on me!") Taken aback, complainant replied that she didn't even know respondent's client. Thereafter, he left the office and as he passed by complainant's window, he again shouted, "*Ukinnam nga babai!*" ("Vulva of your mother, you woman!")

In *Dallong-Galicinao*, the respondent lawyer was held liable for violating Rule 7.03, Canon 8 and Rule 8.01, of the Code. However, this Court tempered the penalty imposed on him owing to the fact that he had apologized to the complainant and the latter had accepted the same.⁷⁵

On the other hand, the respondent lawyer in *Nava II v. Artuz*,⁷⁶ (*Nava II*) suffered a different fate. In *Nava II*, the respondent lawyer was meted the supreme penalty of disbarment for calling out opposing counsel and his father "*barbaric, nomadic and outrageous.*" The respondent lawyer also imputed to the complainant that he used his alleged influence as a godson of the City Prosecutor who, by virtue thereof, allegedly had the audacity to display "*his bad manners and wrong conduct and arrogance*" in an official pleading.⁷⁷ In the said case, this Court emphasized that "the hurling of insulting language to

⁷⁰ 510 Phil. 478 (2005) (Resolution).

⁷¹ Id. at 480.

⁷² Id. at 481.

⁷³ Id. at 480-481.

⁷⁴ Id. at 481.

⁷⁵ Id. at 486.

⁷⁶ A.C. No. 7253 & A.M. No. MTJ-08-1717, February 18, 2020 (Resolution).

⁷⁷ Id.

describe the opposing counsel is considered conduct unbecoming of the legal profession”⁷⁸ which “should never be countenanced as it tends to degrade the dignity of the legal profession.”⁷⁹

It is well to note that in *Nava II*, the respondent lawyer was also found to have made untruthful statements in her Personal Data Sheet regarding her pending cases to make it appear that she is qualified for the judgeship position.⁸⁰

As can be gleaned therefrom, this Court remains firm in its resolve to hold its officers accountable for any violation of their duty to respect the courts and their colleagues. Notably, in determining the proper penalty, this Court has considered the position held by Atty. Ramirez and her previous violation as aggravating factors. Meanwhile, this Court has considered the apology or remorse shown by the respondent as a mitigating circumstance.

Guided by these considerations, this Court finds it proper to impose upon Atty. Ramirez the ultimate penalty of disbarment based on the following grounds:

First, Atty. Ramirez brazenly insulted the Bar Confidant, an official of this Court, in front of her staff in the confines of this office. Let it be stressed that the OBC acts on behalf of this Court in receiving and processing administrative complaints against lawyers.⁸¹ Consequently, maligning the Bar Confidant is not only an *ad hominem* attack on her person, but should be considered an affront to the Supreme Court as an institution which she vowed to honor and respect.⁸² It also has not escaped this Court’s attention that Atty. Ramirez also made disparaging remarks against the Justices of this Court during the incident at the OBC. Lamentably, her statements showed her utter lack of reverence to this Court, even more, which is the very institution that gave her the privilege to practice law. Indeed, by her acts, Atty. Ramirez proved herself to be what a lawyer should not be.⁸³

Second, she neither confirmed nor denied the charges against her. Worthy of note is the fact that this Court gave her two opportunities⁸⁴ to comment on the OBC Incident Report⁸⁵ dated March 16, 2017, but she simply ignored the resolutions of this Court. Moreover, the records of this case are bereft of any manifestation of apology or remorse from Atty. Ramirez since

⁷⁸ Id.

⁷⁹ Id.

⁸⁰ Id.

⁸¹ *Rollo*, pp. 288–288-A.

⁸² Id.

⁸³ *Bihag v. Atty. Era*, A.C. No. 12880, November 23, 2021.

⁸⁴ *Rollo*, p. 268.

⁸⁵ Id. at 266–267.

the incident transpired five years ago, more or less. What remains apparent is that Atty. Ramirez relies on her years of service in government to cover up her contemptuous acts. This will not absolve her from her actuations. "People are accountable for the consequences of the things they say and do even if they repent afterwards. The fact remains that things done cannot be undone and words uttered cannot be taken back. Hence, [s]he should bear the consequences of [her] actions."⁸⁶

Third, this is not Atty. Ramirez's first offense. This Court has previously suspended her for six months for violation of Canon 7.03 of the Code in a Resolution⁸⁷ dated July 30, 2014. Notably, the said resolution came with a stern warning that a repetition of the same or similar acts shall be dealt with more severely. Regrettably, the penalty of suspension imposed upon Atty. Ramirez did not deter her from exhibiting deplorable conduct and had proven futile in reforming her ways.

In *Bihag v. Atty. Era*,⁸⁸ this Court imposed the penalty of disbarment on a lawyer who was previously suspended from the practice of law for two years, because he has repeatedly committed reprehensible acts in violation of the sacred duties that he sworn to fulfill when he took the Lawyer's Oath. Similarly, this court in *Arde v. Atty. De Silva*,⁸⁹ imposed the penalty of disbarment on a lawyer who was already suspended from the practice of law for two years, who still refused to comply with the lawful order of this Court.

Despite the warning given to Atty. Ramirez, she continues to show offensive behavior which "evinces a serious flaw in her moral fiber justifying the extreme penalty of disbarment."⁹⁰ To stress, "[p]ossession of good moral character is not only a prerequisite to admission to the bar, but also a continuing requirement to the practice of law."⁹¹

In a disbarment proceeding, the object is not to punish the individual Attorney himself or herself, but rather "to safeguard the administration of justice by protecting the Court and the public from the misconduct of officers of the Court."⁹² It is "intended to cleanse the ranks of the legal profession of its undesirable members,"⁹³ especially those who have disregarded their oath and have proved to be "unfit to continue discharging the trust reposed in them as members of the bar,"⁹⁴ just like Atty. Ramirez in this case.

⁸⁶ *Dallong-Galiciano v. Castro*, *supra* note 70.

⁸⁷ *Rollo*, pp. 290-294.

⁸⁸ *Supra* note 83.

⁸⁹ A.C. No. 7607, October 15, 2019.

⁹⁰ *Domingo-Agaton v. Cruz*, A.C. No. 11023, May 4, 2021.

⁹¹ *AAA v. De Los Reyes*, 840 Phil. 212, 230 (2018).

⁹² *Supra* note 83.

⁹³ *AAA v. De Los Reyes*, *supra* note 91.

⁹⁴ *Bihag v. Era*, *supra* note 83.

Finally, it is wise to heed the word of caution of this Court in *Dallong-Galicinao*:⁹⁵

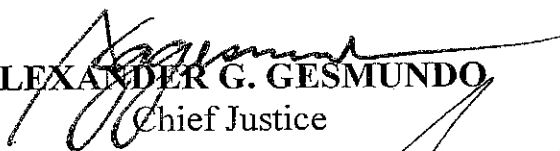
The highest reward that can be bestowed on lawyers is the esteem of their brethren. This esteem cannot be purchased, perfunctorily created, or gained by artifice or contrivance. It is born of sharp contexts and thrives despite conflicting interest. It emanates solely from integrity, character, brains and skills in the honorable performance of professional duty.⁹⁶

ACCORDINGLY, this Court finds and declares respondent Atty. Perla D. Ramirez **GUILTY** of violating the Lawyer's Oath and Rule 7.03 of Canon 7, Rule 8.01 of Canon 8, and Rule 11.03 of Canon 11 of the Code of Professional Responsibility. She is **DISBARRED** from the practice of law and her name is ordered **STRICKEN** off the Roll of Attorneys, effective immediately.

Let copies of this Decision be furnished to: (a) the Office of this Court Administrator for dissemination to all courts throughout the country for their information and guidance; (b) the Integrated Bar of the Philippines; and (c) the Office of the Bar Confidant to be appended to Atty. Perla D. Ramirez's personal record.

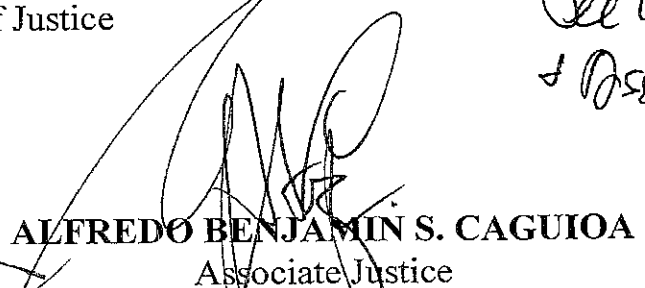
SO ORDERED.

WE CONCUR:


ALEXANDER G. GESMUNDO
Chief Justice

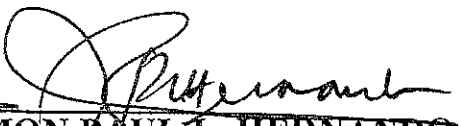
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& Ossatj*


MARVIC M.V.F. LEONEN
Senior Associate Justice



ALFREDO BENJAMIN S. CAGUIOA
Associate Justice

⁹⁵ *Supra* note 70.


⁹⁶ *Id.* at 486.



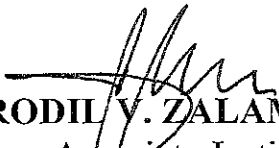
RAMON PAUL L. HERNANDO
Associate Justice



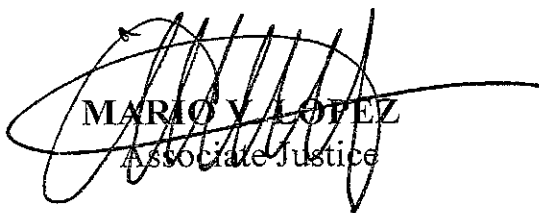
AMY C. LAZARO-JAVIER
Associate Justice




HENRI JEAN PAUL B. INTING
Associate Justice




RODIL V. ZALAMEDA
Associate Justice



MARIO V. LOPEZ
Associate Justice



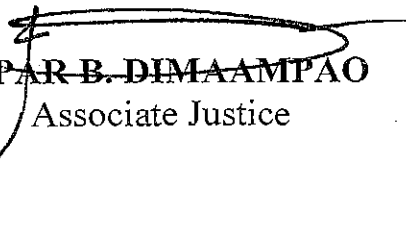
SAMUEL H. GAERLAN
Associate Justice



RICARDO R. ROSARIO
Associate Justice



JHOSEP Y. LOPEZ
Associate Justice



JAPAR B. DIMAAMPAO
Associate Justice



JOSE MIDAS P. MARQUEZ
Associate Justice



ANTONIO T. KHO, JR.
Associate Justice



MARIA FILOMENA D. SINGH
Associate Justice