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**Republic of the Philippines
Supreme Court
Manila**

EN BANC

**CONCERNED LAWYERS OF
BULACAN,**

Complainants,

**A.M. No. RTJ-09-2183
[Formerly OCA IPI No. 05-
2346-RTJ]**

Present:

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

- versus -

**PRESIDING JUDGE
VICTORIA VILLALON-
PORNILLOS, REGIONAL
TRIAL COURT, BRANCH 10,
MALOLOS CITY, BULACAN,**

Respondent.

Promulgated:

March 15, 2022

X-----*Antonio Lopez*-----X

R E S O L U T I O N

PER CURIAM:

Before the Court is a Petition for Judicial Clemency¹ dated October 5, 2020² filed by Victoria Villalon-Pornillos (respondent),

* Took no part.

** Took no part

¹ *Rollo*, pp. 1950-1969. The petition is captioned as “*Petition for Judicial Clemency with Prayer for the Reopening of the Administrative Case Against Her for the Reception of Improperly Excluded Evidence.*”

² The pleading was erroneously dated October 10, 2020.

former Presiding Judge of Branch 10, Regional Trial Court, Malolos City, Bulacan.

In *Concerned Lawyers of Bulacan v. Judge Villalon-Pornillos*,³ the Court dismissed respondent from the service for Gross Misconduct, *i.e.*, borrowing money from a lawyer in a case pending before her court, aggravated by undue delay in rendering decisions or orders, and violation of Supreme Court rules, directives, and circulars.

The administrative case arose from an anonymous administrative complaint dated August 31, 2005 filed by some “Concerned Lawyers of Bulacan,” charging respondent as follows:⁴

Respondent has a notorious history of committing graft and corruption by “fixing” cases and “selling” decisions or orders, such as receiving P5 million from Lorna Silverio, extorting P6 million from Romeo Estrella, and obtaining P200,000 from Leonardo de Leon and asking him to pay her electric bills while simultaneously extorting from de Leon’s detractors, all relative to the election protests involving the mayoralty race at San Rafael, Baliuag and Angat, respectively.

Respondent is maintaining amorous relationships with her driver and bodyguards, borrowing money from her staff and other court officers to cover up her corruption, vindictively detailing almost all of her staff to other offices, and bragging about her associations with former classmates now working in the judiciary.

Respondent has ostentatiously displayed ill-gotten wealth. She rented a taxi for P2,000 a day for almost six months. She maintains and enrolls her four children in first-class schools. And she acquired a new *Ford Lynx* car.

Respondent reports to court only twice a week. She became mentally ill when her husband passed away in 1993 and experienced mental trauma when her alleged lover was killed.⁵

The complaint was referred to the Office of the Court Administrator (OCA) for investigation. The OCA found that the allegations of corruption, extortion, and respondent’s illicit amorous

³ 609 Phil. 504 (2009).

⁴ *Id.* at 510.

⁵ *Id.* at 511.

relationships with her driver and bodyguards were based on hearsay and rumors.⁶

The OCA, however, confirmed that respondent obtained loans from court personnel and lawyers. One lawyer who maintained a law office in Malolos City disclosed, under the condition of anonymity, that respondent obtained a loan from her in the amount of ₱5,000.00 which remained unpaid. One court employee similarly revealed that respondent obtained loans from her ranging from ₱500.00 to ₱1,000.00 in 1991 to 1992.⁷

The OCA also found that respondent reported to court only for 20 days for the period from September 1, 2005 to October 11, 2005, which covered 29 working days. Further, respondent notably arrived late in court and departed therefrom almost always earlier than 4:30 p.m.⁸

By Resolution dated January 17, 2006, the Court directed the OCA to conduct a judicial audit to ascertain conclusively whether respondent could be held to answer administratively for (a) habitual tardiness, (b) failure to report to the court during all working days of the week, and (c) apparent poor records management; and to forthwith submit a judicial report thereon.⁹

On July 7, 2009, the Court found respondent guilty of Gross Misconduct for violating Section 8,¹⁰ Rule 140 of the Rules of Court and

⁶ *Id.* at 512.

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.* at 513.

¹⁰ Section 8, Rule 140 of the Rules of Court provides:

SEC. 8. *Serious Charges.* — Serious charges include:

1. Bribery, direct or indirect;
2. Dishonesty and violations of the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Law (Republic Act No. 3019);
3. *Gross misconduct constituting violations of the Code of Judicial Conduct;*
4. Knowingly rendering an unjust judgment or order as determined by a competent court in an appropriate proceeding;
5. Conviction of a crime involving moral turpitude;
6. Willful failure to pay a just debt;
7. *Borrowing money or property from lawyers and litigants in a case pending before the court;*
8. Immorality;
9. Gross ignorance of the law or procedure;
10. Partisan political activities; and
11. Alcoholism and/or vicious habits. (Italics supplied.)

the Code of Judicial Conduct, aggravated by undue delay in rendering decision or orders, and violation of Supreme Court rules, directives, and circulars. The Court dismissed her from the service, with forfeiture of all retirement benefits and with prejudice to reemployment in the government service:

WHEREFORE, Judge Victoria Villalon-Pornillos, Presiding Judge of Branch 10 of the Regional Trial Court of Malolos City, is found guilty of violating paragraph 7, Section 8, Rule 140 of the Rules of Court (borrowing money from a lawyer in a case pending before her court) which is also a gross misconduct constituting violation of the Code of Judicial Conduct, aggravated by, *inter alia*, undue delay in rendering decisions or orders, and violation of Supreme Court rules, directives and circulars. She is *DISMISSED* from the service, with forfeiture of all retirement benefits, except accrued leave credits, with prejudice to re-employment in any government agency or instrumentality. Immediately upon service on her of this decision, she is deemed to have vacated her office and her authority to act as judge is considered automatically terminated.

SO ORDERED.¹¹

Seven years later, or on August 8, 2016, respondent filed a petition for absolute pardon from “dismissal from the service sentence” accompanied by a Letter dated August 4, 2016 addressed to the Office of the President (OP).¹² On November 3, 2016, respondent also wrote the OCA a letter, informing the OP’s transmittal of her petition for judicial clemency to the Court.¹³

On December 28, 2016, respondent filed with the Court another letter, reiterating her plea for judicial clemency. Respondent averred that she had endured almost *eight years of* what she characterized as an *unfounded punishment from charges and findings based on mere gossip*.¹⁴

In the Resolution¹⁵ dated February 14, 2017, the Court denied respondent’s petition for judicial clemency, for failure to adduce *proof of remorse and reformation*. The Court underscored as follows:

¹¹ *Concerned Lawyers of Bulacan v. Judge Villalon-Pornillos*, supra note 3 at 530.

¹² *Concerned Lawyers of Bulacan v. Judge Villalon-Pornillos*, 805 Phil. 688, 690 (2017).

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ *Id.* at 691.

¹⁵ *Concerned Lawyers of Bulacan v. Judge Villalon-Pornillos*, 805 Phil. 688 (2017).

In this case, records are bereft of showing that respondent has exhibited remorse for her past misdeeds, which occurred more than eight (8) years ago. Apart from respondent's submission to the Court's disciplinary authority, there were *no signs of repentance showing that at the very least, she accepted the judgment of the Court in her case.* In fact, she even sees nothing wrong with her actions. In her petition, respondent narrates that she “stood her ground against offers of bribery for her to agree to issue orders that would give a go signal to the anomalous Bullet Train Project of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.” She even touts herself as a judge who committed “honest acts and deeds,” and submits that the only way to give her justice is through absolute pardon. In this relation, *she firmly insists that she was unduly deprived of her fundamental rights under the constitution when she was unceremoniously disrobed, raising doubts as to the integrity and impartiality of the court process.*

Likewise, respondent points out that the charge of borrowing money from a litigant, for which she was dismissed, occurred more than fourteen (14) years ago and, at that time, she had a very “slim chance” of borrowing money since: (a) her “salary as a judge was substantially big enough compared against other employees or lawyers or businessman”; and (b) both her parents are lawyers who left her “substantial real and personal property that would easily be sufficient for her and her children to live for a lifetime.” She claims the same of her late husband who was “well-off” and landed thus, making the act imputed against her unbelievable.

Far from exhibiting remorse and reformation, the tenor of respondent's petition only demonstrates her attitude of impenitence, self-righteousness, and even, vindictiveness, which unquestionably renders her undeserving of judicial clemency. Neither did she show compliance with the other requisites for judicial clemency xxx. Accordingly, there is no quibble that the instant petition should be denied.¹⁶ (Citations omitted; italics supplied.)

On October 6, 2020, respondent filed the subject petition for judicial clemency captioned as “*Petition for Judicial Clemency with Prayer for the Reopening of the Administrative Case Against Her for the Reception of Improperly Excluded Evidence.*”¹⁷ She maintains that she was illegally dismissed from the service; thus, she seeks the review of the Court's Decision dated July 7, 2009 and prays for the reopening of the subject administrative case and reception of “improperly excluded

¹⁶ *Id.* at 692-693.

¹⁷ *Rollo*, pp. 1950-1969.

evidence.” Respondent insists that her dismissal from service is null and void for violating her constitutional right to due process.¹⁸

On March 17, 2021, respondent filed a Manifestation.¹⁹ She still avers that she was “summarily dismissed from service and barred from government work.”²⁰ Attached to her Manifestation is the petition for judicial clemency dated October 6, 2020.

The Court’s Ruling

The Court denies the petition.

As similarly underscored by the Court in the Resolution dated February 14, 2017, which denied respondent’s previous petition for judicial clemency, *respondent still fails to exhibit remorse for her past misdeeds*. In the subject petition, respondent insists that she was summarily dismissed and even characterizes the Court’s Decision dated July 7, 2009, which dismissed her from the service, as null and void on the grounds that she was not given the opportunity to be heard, denied the right to a fair trial, and denied the right to cross-examine the complainants.

In *In Re: Ong*,²¹ the Court underscored that clemency should be preceded by an apology, which must likewise be “preceded by a full and unconditional acceptance of the wrong committed and the justness of the penalty imposed.”²² To deserve judicial clemency, evidence of remorse and potential must be shown.²³ The claimant officers must convince “that the long period of dismissal moved the erring officers to reform themselves, exhibit remorse and repentance, and develop a capacity to live up again to the standards demanded from court officers.”²⁴

¹⁸ *Id.* at 1953-1956.

¹⁹ *Id.* at 2006-2017.

²⁰ *Id.* at 2007.

²¹ A.M. No. SB-14-21-J (Resolution), January 19, 2021.

²² *Id.*

²³ *Id.*, citing *Re: Letter of Judge Augustus C. Diaz, MTC-QC, Br. 37, Appealing for Judicial Clemency*, 560 Phil. 1, 5 (2007).

²⁴ *Id.*, citing *Re: 2003 Bar Examinations (Atty. Danilo De Guzman)*, 604 Phil. 284 (2009).

The foregoing requirements flow from the core consideration in the grant of judicial clemency, *i.e.*, the preservation of public confidence in the courts.²⁵

In *Junio v. Judge Rivera, Jr.*,²⁶ the Court explains:

To be sure, we have always been unsparing in wielding the rod of discipline against members of the Judiciary who fall short of the exacting standards decreed by the Code of Judicial Conduct. This is because a judge, upon his assumption to office, becomes the visible representation of the law and of justice. Membership in the judiciary circumscribes one's personal conduct and imposes upon him certain restrictions, whose faithful observance is the price one has to pay for holding such an exalted position. Thus, a magistrate of the law must comport himself in a manner that his conduct must be free of a whiff of impropriety, not only with respect to the performance of his official duties, but also to his behavior outside his sala and as a private individual. His conduct must be able to withstand the most searching public scrutiny, for the ethical principles and sense of propriety of a judge are essential to the preservation of the people's faith in the judicial system. We certainly do not require judges to measure up to the standards of conduct of the saints and martyrs, but we do expect them to be like Caesar's wife in all their actions. Hence, their faithful adherence to the Code of Judicial Conduct is strictly demanded. A lackadaisical attitude towards these judicial standards is impermissible.²⁷

In fine, respondent's lack of remorse and persistent demonstration of impenitence, self-righteousness, and even, vindictiveness, renders her undeserving of judicial clemency.

WHEREFORE, the petition for judicial clemency is **DENIED**.

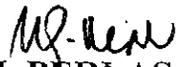
SO ORDERED.

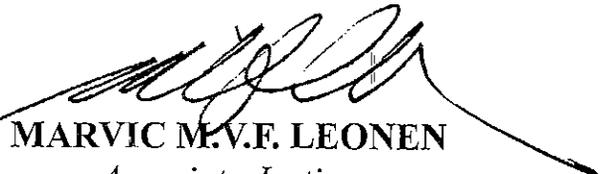
(No part)
ALEXANDER G. GISMUNDO
Chief Justice

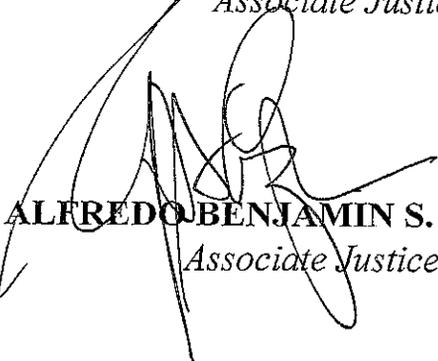
²⁵ *Id.*

²⁶ 509 Phil. 65 (2005).

²⁷ *Id.* at 67-68. Citations omitted.


ESTELA M. PERLAS-BERNABE
Associate Justice

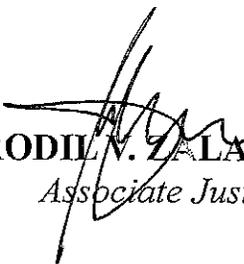

MARVIC M.V.F. LEONEN
Associate Justice

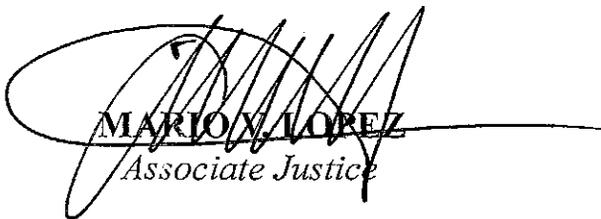

ALFREDO BENJAMIN S. CAGUIOA
Associate Justice

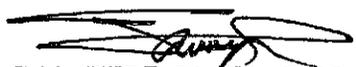

RAMON PAUL L. HERNANDO
Associate Justice

(No part)
AMY C. LAZARO-JAVIER
Associate Justice


HENRI JEAN PAUL B. INTING
Associate Justice

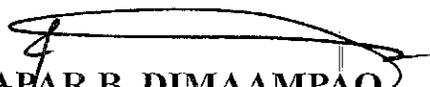

RODIL V. ZALAMEDA
Associate Justice

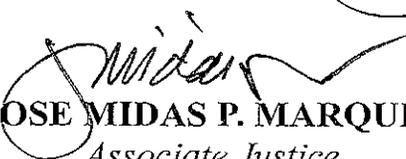

MARION V. LOPEZ
Associate Justice

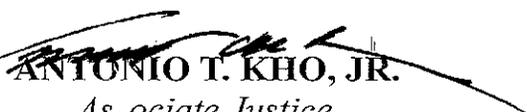

SAMUEL H. GAERLAN
Associate Justice


RICARDO R. ROSARIO
Associate Justice


JHOSEP V. LOPEZ
Associate Justice


JAPAR B. DIMAAMPAO
Associate Justice


JOSE MIDAS P. MARQUEZ
Associate Justice


ANTONIO T. KHO, JR.
Associate Justice