



Republic of the Philippines  
Supreme Court  
Manila

EN BANC

**WILLIAM S. UY,**  
Complainant,

**A.C. No. 13368**  
[Formerly CBD Case No. 13-3851]

**Present:**

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

-versus-

**ATTY. ELERIZZA A. LIBIRAN-  
METEORO,**  
Respondent.

**Promulgated:**  
May 21, 2024

x-----x

**DECISION**

**PER CURIAM:**

**The Case**

Complainant William S. Uy (Uy) charged respondent Atty. Elerizza A. Libiran-Meteoro (Atty. Libiran-Meteoro) with gross misconduct for issuing two bouncing checks and failing to pay her debt despite demands.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Rollo*, pp. 1-2.

### Antecedents

Uy alleged that he was a representative of the Maliliw Lending Corporation. Sometime in the last quarter of 2012, Atty. Libiran-Meteoro accompanied her client Rowena Lopez (Lopez), to Maliliw Lending Corporation's office to assist Lopez in a transaction. Later on, Atty. Libiran-Meteoro returned and applied for a personal loan herself which she promised to pay via post-dated checks. Relying on her representations that the post-dated checks will be good when they fall due, he agreed.<sup>2</sup>

Atty. Libiran-Meteoro thus issued three postdated checks in favor of Maliliw Lending Corporation, two of which are described as: (1) RCBC Savings Bank Check No. 1492854 dated March 14, 2013, in the amount of PHP 122,500.00; and (2) RCBC Savings Bank Check No. 1492855 dated April 14, 2013 in the amount of PHP 122,500.00 (subject checks). As it was, the subject checks got dishonored when they were deposited on their respective due dates, due to "ACCOUNT CLOSED" and "DAIF" or drawn against insufficient funds. He allegedly called Atty. Libiran-Meteoro's attention regarding the dishonored checks but his calls were ignored.<sup>3</sup>

He discovered that in 2014, Atty. Libiran-Meteoro had been suspended from the practice of law for six months for gross misconduct in *Barrientos v. Atty. Libiran-Meteoro*.<sup>4</sup> Despite this, she again committed acts constituting gross misconduct<sup>5</sup> and was not deterred from defrauding businesspersons like him. She allegedly continued to evade his calls, causing him damage in the amount of PHP 245,000.00.<sup>6</sup>

### Proceedings before the Integrated Bar of the Philippines

The Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP)-Commission on Bar Discipline (IBP-CBD) sent a copy of the complaint to Atty. Libiran-Meteoro's last known address at Unit 504/505 Riverfront Residences, Dr. Sixto Antonio Avenue, Brgy. Caniogan, Pasig City and ordered her to submit a verified answer within 15 days from notice. The order warned her that the case will be heard *ex-parte* if she failed to file her answer.<sup>7</sup> She nonetheless failed to do so. The IBP-CBD then scheduled a mandatory conference on May 22, 2014 and ordered the parties to submit their respective mandatory conference briefs.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* at 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* at 28.

<sup>4</sup> 480 Phil. 661 (2004) [Per J. Austria-Martinez, Second Division].

<sup>5</sup> *Rollo*, pp. 28-29.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.* at 1.

<sup>7</sup> *Id.* at 10.

<sup>8</sup> *Id.* at 11.

The notice of mandatory conference sent to Atty. Libiran-Meteoro was returned with a notation "Unknown." The IBP-CBD thus directed Uy to notify it of Atty. Libiran-Meteoro's current address.<sup>9</sup> Subsequently, it issued a second order directing Atty. Libiran-Meteoro to file a verified answer, this time sent to her new address at 11 Gladiola Sta. Mesa Gardenville.<sup>10</sup> Upon service, however, the process server was informed that she had already moved out of the address sometime in 2006.<sup>11</sup> Finally, the IBP-CBD set another mandatory conference and served Atty. Libiran-Meteoro with notice at her third address at 36 Panay Avenue, Quezon City.<sup>12</sup> But she still failed to appear during the mandatory conference.<sup>13</sup>

### Report and Recommendation

In its Report and Recommendation<sup>14</sup> dated December 4, 2019, the IBP-CBD found Atty. Libiran-Meteoro guilty of violating Canon 1 of the Code of Professional Responsibility and recommended that she be suspended from the practice of law for a period of one year and pay Uy PHP 245,000.00.<sup>15</sup> It noted that despite three attempts to serve Atty. Libiran-Meteoro with notice at three different addresses, she still could not be located. Nonetheless, the IBP-CBD posited that there was no deprivation of due process considering that she was given the opportunity to dispute the charges against her.<sup>16</sup>

The IBP-CBD confirmed Atty. Libiran-Meteoro's previous suspension from the practice of law for six months for gross misconduct for issuing bouncing checks as payment for her loan and repeatedly renegeing on her promises to pay. In the same case, she was also made to pay the complainant the balance of her debt. By issuing worthless checks again, she displayed her unfitness for the trust and confidence reposed upon her and her lack of personal honesty and good moral character, which constitutes a ground for disciplinary action.<sup>17</sup>

In its Extended Resolution<sup>18</sup> dated June 16, 2021, the IBP-Board of Governors (BOG) approved and adopted the IBP-CBD's recommendations with modification, recommending the additional penalty of fine in the amount of PHP 15,000.00 for her failure to file an answer and mandatory conference brief and non-appearance at the mandatory conference despite notice; and deleting the recommendation to pay PHP 245,000.00 for being the proper subject of a separate civil action.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *Id.* at 12.

<sup>10</sup> *Id.* at 13.

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*

<sup>12</sup> *Id.* at 14.

<sup>13</sup> *Id.* at 22.

<sup>14</sup> *Id.* at 28–30. Penned by Commissioner Dr. Jose I. Dela Rama, Jr.

<sup>15</sup> *Id.* at 30.

<sup>16</sup> *Id.* at 29.

<sup>17</sup> *Id.* at 29–30.

<sup>18</sup> *Id.* at 31–33. Penned by Deputy Director for Bar Discipline Ramon Manolo A. Alcasabas.

<sup>19</sup> *Id.* at 33.

### Issues

- 1) Is Atty. Libiran-Meteoro administratively liable for issuing the two worthless subject checks which were dishonored due to insufficient funds and closed account?
- 2) Is she administratively liable for her failure to file her answer and mandatory conference brief?

### Our Ruling

First off, Members of the Bar are now governed by the new Code of Professional Responsibility and Accountability (CPRA) which took effect on May 30, 2023. Notably, its provisions shall be applied to all pending and future cases, except where the same would not be feasible or would work injustice.<sup>20</sup> Though Atty. Libiran-Meteoro's acts were committed way back 2012, the provisions of the CPRA shall nonetheless serve as the metric to determine her administrative liability.

Lawyers are instruments for the administration of justice. As vanguards of our legal system, they are expected to maintain not only legal proficiency but also a high standard of morality, honesty, integrity, and fair dealing.<sup>21</sup> Thus, lawyers may be disciplined for any conduct, whether in their professional or in their private capacity, if such conduct renders them unfit to continue to be officers of the court.<sup>22</sup>

***Atty. Libiran-Meteoro is guilty of gross misconduct for issuing worthless checks***

Canon II, Sections 1 and 2 of the CPRA ordain:

#### **CANON II PROPRIETY**

A lawyer shall, at all times, act with propriety and maintain the appearance of propriety in personal and professional dealings, observe honesty, respect and courtesy, and uphold the dignity of the legal profession consistent with the highest standards of ethical behavior.

**SECTION 1. Proper conduct.**—A lawyer shall not engage in unlawful, dishonest, immoral, or deceitful conduct.

<sup>20</sup> Code of Professional Responsibility and Accountability, General Provisions, sec. 1.

<sup>21</sup> *Cham v. Atty. Paita-Moya*, 578 Phil. 566, 574–575 (2008) [Per J. Chico-Nazario, Third Division].

<sup>22</sup> *Buenaventura v. Atty. Gille*, 892 Phil. 1, 7 (2020) [*Per Curiam, En Banc*].

**SECTION 2. Dignified conduct.**—A lawyer shall respect the law, the courts, tribunals, and other government agencies, their officials, employees, and processes, and act with courtesy, civility, fairness, and candor towards fellow members of the bar.

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

A lawyer is not only mandated to personally obey the laws and the legal processes but is expected to inspire respect and obedience to the laws.<sup>23</sup> As such, any unlawful, dishonest, immoral or deceitful conduct by a lawyer cannot be countenanced. In *Saladaga v. Astorga*,<sup>24</sup> the Court defined “unlawful,” “dishonest,” and “deceitful” conduct, as follows:

Any act or omission that is contrary to, prohibited or unauthorized by, in defiance of, disobedient to, or disregards the law is “unlawful.” “Unlawful” conduct does not necessarily imply the element of criminality although the concept is broad enough to include such element.

To be “dishonest” means the disposition to lie, cheat, deceive, defraud or betray; be untrustworthy; lacking in integrity, honesty, probity, integrity in principle, fairness and straightforwardness. On the other hand, conduct that is “deceitful” means as follows:

[Having] the proclivity for fraudulent and deceptive misrepresentation, artifice or device that is used upon another who is ignorant of the true facts, to the prejudice and damage of the party imposed upon. In order to be deceitful, the person must either have knowledge of the falsity or acted in reckless and conscious ignorance thereof, especially if the parties are not on equal terms, and was done with the intent that the aggrieved party act thereon, and the latter indeed acted in reliance of the false statement or deed in the manner contemplated to his [or her] injury.<sup>25</sup>

The act of Atty. Libiran-Meteoro in issuing worthless checks and blatantly ignoring demands to pay is, without a doubt, unlawful, dishonest, and deceitful. To be sure, it violates Batas Pambansa Blg. 22, which penalizes the making or drawing and issuance of worthless checks which results in injury to the public. The harmful practice of putting valueless commercial papers in circulation, multiplied a thousandfold, can pollute the channels of trade and commerce, injure the banking system and eventually hurt the welfare of society and the public interest.<sup>26</sup>

As a member of the Bar, Atty. Libiran-Meteoro was expected, not only to know the deleterious and pernicious effect of issuing worthless checks and the fact that it is proscribed by law but be the first to faithfully abide by its

<sup>23</sup> *Saladaga v. Astorga*, 748 Phil. 1, 12–13 (2014) [Per J. Leonardo-De Castro, *En Banc*].

<sup>24</sup> *Id.*

<sup>25</sup> *Id.* at 13.

<sup>26</sup> *Lozano v. Martinez*, 230 Phil. 406, 424 (1986) [Per J. Yap, *En Banc*].

provisions. Yet, this did not deter her from committing this unlawful act. Our ruling in *Ong v. Atty. Delos Santos*,<sup>27</sup> where We found Atty. Delos Santos administratively liable for issuing bouncing checks, is *apropos*:

Being a lawyer, Atty. Delos Santos was well aware of the objectives and coverage of Batas Pambansa Blg. 22. If he did not, he was nonetheless presumed to know them, for the law was penal in character and application. His issuance of the unfunded check involved herein knowingly violated Batas Pambansa Blg. 22, and exhibited his indifference towards the pernicious effect of his illegal act to public interest and public order. He thereby swept aside his Lawyer's Oath that enjoined him to support the Constitution and obey the laws.<sup>28</sup>

Apart from being unlawful, Atty. Libiran-Meteoro's issuance of the subject checks constituted dishonest and deceitful conduct. To recall, the reason why Uy agreed to loan her money was because she assured him that the post-dated checks she issued as payment would be good when they fall due.<sup>29</sup> As it turned out, however, the checks were not sufficiently funded or were drawn against a closed account and consequently got dishonored, revealing Atty. Libiran-Meteoro's ruse, to the damage and prejudice of Uy. Worse, the dishonesty she exhibited was exacerbated by her continued refusal to pay, much less acknowledge, her obligation.<sup>30</sup>

To the mind of the Court, there is no question that Atty. Libiran-Meteoro fell short of the high standards of morality and integrity expected of members of the Bar. Her brazen deception and utter disregard of her financial obligations cast a dishonorable light on the supposedly dignified and noble profession she represents, for which she must be held accountable.

In *Carrillo v. Atty. Soriano*,<sup>31</sup> We found Atty. Soriano guilty of serious misconduct for issuing worthless checks, in violation of Batas Pambansa Blg. 22. "Serious or gross misconduct" has been defined as improper or wrong conduct, the transgression of some established and definite rule of action, a forbidden act, a dereliction of duty, willful in character, and implies a wrongful intent and not a mere error in judgment.<sup>32</sup>

The fact that Atty. Libiran-Meteoro issued the subject checks, which were later dishonored for the reason "ACCOUNT CLOSED" and "DAIF" or drawn against insufficient funds, is duly evidenced by copies of the dishonored checks submitted by Uy.<sup>33</sup> There is thus no question that he was able to hurdle the quantum of evidence required in disbarment proceedings,

<sup>27</sup> 728 Phil. 332 (2014) [Per J. Bersamin, *En Banc*].

<sup>28</sup> *Id.* at 338.

<sup>29</sup> *Rollo*, p. 1.

<sup>30</sup> *Id.*

<sup>31</sup> A.C. No. 13416, July 13, 2022 [Notice, Third Division].

<sup>32</sup> *Buenaventura v. Gille*, 892 Phil. 1, 4 (2020) [*Per Curiam, En Banc*].

<sup>33</sup> *Rollo*, p. 3.

i.e., substantial evidence or “that amount of relevant evidence which a reasonable mind might accept as adequate to justify a conclusion.”<sup>34</sup>

Meanwhile, considering the totality of the facts on record, the Court ordains that Atty. Libiran-Meteoro’s issuance of the unfunded checks was willful and intentional. *First*, she blatantly ignored Uy’s calls to pay the amounts covered by the subject checks; and *second*, her present and past infractions reflected her *modus* of issuing worthless checks to obtain loans from unknowing victims.

Unquestionably, Atty. Libiran-Meteoro is guilty of gross misconduct. Canon VI, Section 33 of the CPRA classifies gross misconduct as a serious offense for which the following penalties may be imposed: (1) disbarment; (2) suspension from the practice of law for a period exceeding six months; (3) revocation of notarial commission and disqualification as notary public for not less than two years; or (4) a fine exceeding PHP 100,000.00.<sup>35</sup>

Per Canon VI, Section 39 of the CPRA, if one or more aggravating circumstances and no mitigating circumstances are present, the Court, in its discretion, may impose the penalty of disbarment depending on the number and gravity of aggravating circumstances. Under Section 38(b)(1) of the same Canon, a finding of previous administrative liability where a penalty is imposed, regardless of nature or gravity, counts as an aggravating circumstance.

In *Barrientos v. Atty. Libiran-Meteoro*,<sup>36</sup> Atty. Libiran-Meteoro was previously found guilty of gross misconduct when she issued two worthless Equitable PCI Bank checks in the amounts of PHP 67,000.00 and PHP 234,000.00, respectively, in favor of the complainants therein for payment of a pre-existing debt. The checks bounced due to insufficient funds. Atty. Libiran-Meteoro later on committed to pay her debt to the complainants but failed many times to fulfill her promises. When finally threatened with criminal charges for violation of Batas Pambansa Blg. 22, she gave the complainants a title of a parcel of land she claimed was paid to her by a client, Victoria Villamar (Villamar), but which turned out to have merely been entrusted to her pursuant to a transaction with the Quedan and Rural Credit Guarantee Corporation. Though the Court did not find Atty. Libiran-Meteoro liable for negotiating a title entrusted to her by Villamar for insufficiency of evidence, she was suspended for six months from the practice of law as a penalty for issuing worthless checks, taking into consideration her partial payment of PHP 50,000.00.

<sup>34</sup> Code of Professional Responsibility and Accountability, Canon VI, sec. 32. *See also Tan v. Alvarico*, 888 Phil. 345, 355 (2020) [Per C.J. Peralta, First Division].

<sup>35</sup> Code of Professional Responsibility and Accountability, Canon VI, sec. 37(a).

<sup>36</sup> 480 Phil. 661 (2004) [Per J. Austria-Martinez, Second Division].

Considering her previous offense, the Court finds that the imposition of the supreme penalty of disbarment upon Atty. Libiran-Meteoro is warranted. In her first case, Atty. Libiran-Meteoro already displayed quite flagrantly her propensity to defraud people by employing unlawful means to secure loans. Instead of owning up to her obligations, she repeatedly failed to make good her promises to pay such that therein complainants were ultimately compelled to file suits against her. Undaunted, she again repeated her infractions here. She defrauded Uy, and issued anew two checks in the amounts of PHP 122,500.00 each or PHP 245,000.00 in total which apparently were unfunded. As in the first case, she brazenly failed to pay her debt despite numerous demands. She could not be contacted. She ignored calls.

Enough is enough.

Allowing her to remain a member of the Bar discredits and puts into disrepute the legal profession. By letting her carry the title of a lawyer—an officer of the court sworn to uphold the Constitution and the laws—while being herself a person who breaks the same makes a mockery of this noble calling and erodes the trust and confidence that the public places upon the legal profession. Her name, as it stands, is now but a speck of dirt in the Roll of Attorneys which must be removed at all costs, if only to prevent her disreputable example from smearing the entire profession. Though the penalty of disbarment must always be a last resort, We have not hesitated to disbar lawyers for clear cases of misconduct that seriously affect their standing and character as officers of the court,<sup>37</sup> *as here*.

Indeed, Atty. Libiran-Meteoro's history of deceiving individuals to part with their money in exchange for worthless checks reveals her propensity for dishonesty and fraud unfitting of a member of the Bar. This, despite previous sanctions from the Court for similar acts, no less. For which reason, the Court does not hesitate to now cleanse the ranks of the legal profession of such an unworthy member.

***Atty. Libiran-Meteoro is also guilty of violating IBP rules and issuances governing membership in the IBP for failing to update her records, specifically her present address***

As for the IBP's recommendation to fine Atty. Libiran-Meteoro for her failure to file her answer and mandatory conference brief and non-appearance during the mandatory conference, we cannot adopt the same.

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<sup>37</sup> *Juni v. Atty. Juni*, A.C. No. 11599, August 3, 2021 [*Per Curiam, En Banc*].



Under Canon VI, Section 34(c) of the CPRA, disobedience to the orders of the IBP must be willful and deliberate to constitute as a less serious offense. Here, however, Atty. Libiran-Meteoro cannot be said to have intentionally failed to submit the required pleadings or to appear during the conference since she never received the notices in the first place.

We nonetheless find her guilty of violation of IBP rules and issuances governing membership in the IBP, a light offense under Canon VI, Section 35(a) of the CPRA. Under Section 19 of the Revised IBP By-Laws,<sup>38</sup> a change in, among others, the residential or office address of members of the Bar must be reported by the member concerned to the IBP chapter secretary within 60 days, who shall in turn promptly report the change to the national office.

Under Resolution<sup>39</sup> dated June 14, 2023, the Court directed the IBP to submit the address of Atty. Libiran-Meteoro per its records. In the Letter<sup>40</sup> dated September 27, 2023, Atty. Doroteo B. Aguila, National Secretary of the IBP, informed the Court that based on their records, the home address of Atty. Libiran-Meteoro is No. 11 Gladiola Street, Sta. Mesa Gardenville, Sta. Mesa, Manila. Yet, when the second order to file a verified answer was sent to the said address by the IBP-CBD, the process server was informed that Atty. Libiran-Meteoro already moved out of the said address in 2006.<sup>41</sup> Clearly, she failed to report her change of address to the IBP, in violation of the rules and issuances governing membership therein.

Per Canon VI, Section 37(c) of the CPRA, a light offense is penalized with: (1) a fine within the range of PHP 1,000.00 to PHP 35,000.00; (2) censure; or (3) reprimand. In addition, the Atty. Libiran-Meteoro respondent may also be required to do community services or service in the IBP legal aid program. For her violation of IBP rules and issuances governing membership in the IBP, We impose upon Atty. Libiran-Meteoro payment of fine in the amount of PHP 35,000.00. It bears emphasis that her failure to update her records with the IBP caused serious delays in the proceedings as the IBP-CBD had to try to serve her notices to three different addresses.

Lastly, Canon VI, Section 37 of the CPRA allows the Court to order the Atty. Libiran-Meteoro to return any money or property owed, but only where the same was intrinsically linked to the lawyer-client relationship. Considering that the PHP 245,000.00 owed by Atty. Libiran-Meteoro was a personal obligation, i.e., personal loan obtained from Uy not arising from a lawyer-client relationship, We affirm the IBP BOG's finding that the recovery of the same must be coursed through the proper civil action.

<sup>38</sup> B.M. No. 4261, March 8, 2023 [Notice, *En Banc*].

<sup>39</sup> *Rollo*, p. 36.

<sup>40</sup> *Id.* at 38.

<sup>41</sup> *Id.* at 13.

**ACCORDINGLY**, respondent Atty. Elerizza A. Libiran-Meteoro is found **GUILTY** of gross misconduct for her issuance of worthless checks, in violation of Canon II, Sections 1 and 2 of the Code of Professional Responsibility and Accountability. She is **DISBARRED** from the practice of law and her name is **ORDERED** stricken off from the Roll of Attorneys, effective immediately.


She is also found **GUILTY** of violation of the IBP rules and issuances governing membership in the IBP for her failure to report the change in her residence or office address and is meted a **FINE** in the amount of **PHP 35,000.00**.

Let a copy of this Decision be furnished the Office of the Bar Confidant to be appended to the personal records of respondent Atty. Elerriza A. Libiran-Meteoro, the Integrated Bar of the Philippines, and the Office of the Court Administrator for circulation to all the courts.

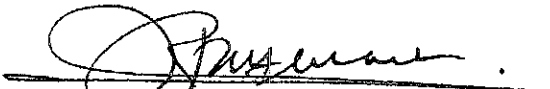
**SO ORDERED.**


**WE CONCUR:**


  
**ALEXANDER G. GESMUNDO**  
Chief Justice


  
**MARVIC M.V.F. LEONEN**  
Senior Associate Justice


  
**ALFREDO BENJAMIN S. CAGUIOA**  
Associate Justice

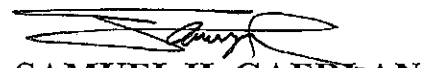
  
**RAMON PAUL L. HERNANDO**  
Associate Justice


  
**AMY C. LAZARO-JAVIER**  
Associate Justice


  
**HENRI JEAN PAUL B. INTING**  
Associate Justice


  
**RODIL V. ZALAMEDA**  
Associate Justice

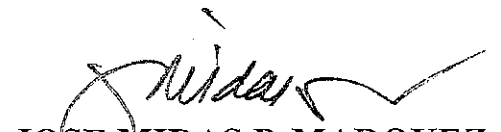
  
**MARION LOPEZ**  
Associate Justice


  
**SAMUEL H. GAERLAN**  
Associate Justice

  
**RICARDO R. ROSARIO**  
Associate Justice

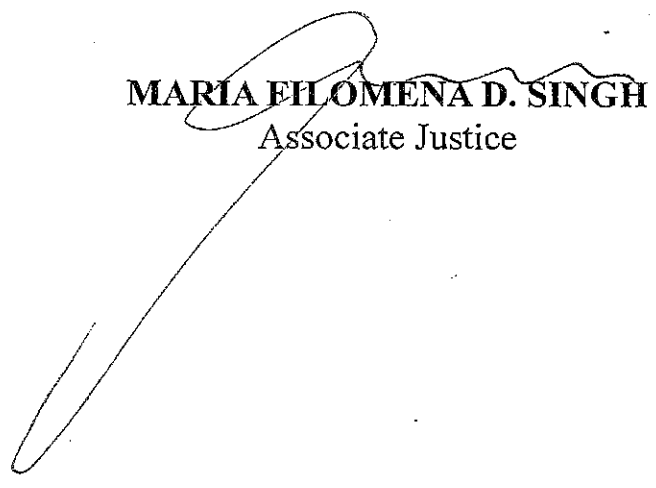
  
**JHOSEP V. LOPEZ**  
Associate Justice

  
**JAPAR B. DIMAAMPAO**  
Associate Justice

  
**JOSE MIDAS P. MARQUEZ**  
Associate Justice



**ANTONIO T. KHO, JR.**  
Associate Justice



**MARIA EULOMENA D. SINGH**  
Associate Justice