



REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
SUPREME COURT
Manila

SECOND DIVISION

NOTICE

Sirs/Mesdames:

*Please take notice that the Court, Second Division, issued a Resolution dated **October 19, 2022** which reads as follows:*

“G.R. No. 248924 (People of the Philippines, Plaintiff-Appellee v. Jasmine Gimotea y Castillo, Accused-Appellant). — This Court resolves an Appeal¹ filed by accused-appellant Jasmine Gimotea y Castillo (*Gimotea*), seeking the reversal of the Decision² of the Court of Appeals in CA-G.R. CR-HC No. 02721, which affirmed the Decision³ of the Regional Trial Court, finding Gimotea guilty of violating Section 5 of Republic Act No. 9165, for which she was sentenced to suffer life imprisonment and fined in the amount of PHP 500,000.00 and Section 11 of Republic Act No. 9165, for which she was sentenced to suffer imprisonment of 12 years and one day as minimum, to 14 years and eight months as maximum, and fined in the amount of PHP 300,000.00.

Antecedents

The Informations charging Gimotea with violation of Sections 5 and 11 of Article II of Republic Act No. 9165 read as follows:

CRIMINAL CASE NO. 17-3920-HC

That on or about the 24 April 2017 in the City of Himamaylan, Negros Occidental, Philippines, and within the jurisdiction of this Honorable Court, said accused, with deliberate intent, did then and there, willfully, unlawfully and feloniously and criminally sell, deliver and give away to another, one (1) small heat-sealed plastic sachet containing Methamphetamine Hydrochloride or “Shabu”, marked as JG-BB weighing 0.315gm/s, a dangerous drug, without being authorized by the law therefor.

CONTRARY TO LAW.⁴

¹ *Rollo*, p. 16.

² The Decision dated March 26, 2019 of the Court of Appeals, Cebu City was penned by Associate Justice Edward B. Contreras and concurred in by Associates Justices Gabriel T. Ingles and Dorothy P. Montejo-Gonzaga; *rollo*, pp. 4-15.

³ The Decision dated November 14, 2017 of Branch 55, Regional Trial Court, Himamaylan City, Negros Occidental was penned by Presiding Judge Walter G. Zorilla; *CA rollo*, pp. 25-34.

⁴ *Rollo*, p. 5.

CRIMINAL CASE NO. 17-3921-HC

That on or about the 24 April 2017 in the City of Himamaylan, Negros Occidental, Philippines, and within the jurisdiction of this Honorable Court, said accused, with deliberate intent, did then and there, willfully, unlawfully and (sic) feloniously possess, and have in his control and custody one (1) small heat sealed transparent plastic [sachet] containing Methamphetamine Hydrochloride or “Shabu”, marked as JG-2 weighing 0.349gm/s and three (3) unsealed transparent plastic sachet[s] marked as JG-3, JG-3A & JG-3B each with traces of Methamphetamine Hydrochloride or “Shabu”, a dangerous drug, without being authorized by the law therefor.

CONTRARY TO LAW.⁵

On arraignment, Gimotea pleaded not guilty to the charges.⁶

During trial, the prosecution established the following facts:

From the testimonies of the prosecution witnesses, it could be gathered that at around 2:00 in the afternoon on April 24, 2017, police officer Ruel Dela Peña (“Dela Peña”) and a confidential asset performed casing and surveillance activity inside the eatery of Zenaida Gimotea, mother of appellant [G]imotea, at Rizal St., Barangay 2, Himamaylan City, Negros Occidental. During the activity, they saw users and pushers coming in and out of the eatery. After about 30 minutes, Dela Peña and the asset left and returned to the police station to make a report and plan the buy-bust operation.

At around 5:30 in the afternoon of the same day, Dela Peña and the asset returned to the eatery. They approached Gimotea who was with Vincent Bern Gimotea (“Vincent”), her nephew. Gimotea asked the asset[,] “*balor two thousand imo?*” to which the asset replied while looking at Dela Peña, “*siya day makuwa.*” Dela Peña confirmed, “*huo day balor two thousand.*” Gimotea then took out from her maroon pouch one big heat-sealed transparent plastic sachet containing substance suspected to be shabu. She gave it to Dela Peña, who in turn, handed her the ₱2,000.00 marked money in exchange for the sachet. This item recovered from Gimotea during the buy-bust was later marked as “JG-BB”.

After the sale was consummated, Dela Peña took off his bull-cap which was the pre-arranged signal. He then introduced himself as a police officer to Gimotea and immediately tried to hold her. Gimotea ran, but Dela Peña managed to neutralize her. Dela Peña recovered from Gimotea the buy-bust money and a maroon pouch which contained the following items: one big heat-sealed transparent plastic sachet containing substance suspected to be shabu marked as “JG-2”; three open small empty transparent sachets with traces of suspected shabu marked as “JG-3,” “JG-3A,” and “JG-3B”; six open small empty transparent plastic sachets collectively

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.*

marked as JG-4; five lighters collectively marked as JG-5; and cash of various denominations totaling to (sic) ₱850.00. The marking of the recovered items was done at the area after Gimotea was frisked. An inventory was conducted in the presence of barangay captain Jonathan Guancia and Department of Justice (DOJ) representative Bobby Zayco.

Gimotea was brought to Himamaylan police station. A letter request for the examination of the seized plastic sachets containing substance suspected to be shabu and the three empty plastic sachets with traces of suspected shabu was prepared. Dela Peña took the seized items to the PNP crime laboratory in Bacolod City. Police superintendent Helen Pasoy (“Pasoy”) received the items and later turned these over to forensic chemist Grace Eustaquio (“Eustaquio”) who examined the items. Eustaquio found these positive of methamphetamine hydrochloride and reflected her findings in Chemistry Report No. D-304-2017. She brought the items to court and turned these over to the handling prosecutor when she testified.⁷

Meanwhile, Gimotea denied the charges against her. She proffered the defense of frame-up as follows:

[A]t around 4:30 in the afternoon on April 24, 2017, Gimotea was cleaning their yard together with her child. Suddenly, somebody held her neck, another pointed a gun at her and another one held her hand. Gimotea recognized three of the four armed policemen even if their faces were covered with handkerchief at that time. While those persons were holding her, men with long firearms entered through their gate and when Gimotea’s husband asked what was happening, the men pointed their long firearms at him.

The policemen brought Gimotea inside the eatery that was annexed to their main house and made her sit on a bench together with her nephew Vincent. Dela Peña asked for their names and wrote these down on a paper. Then[,] someone handed a maroon pouch to Dela Peña. When Dela Peña emptied it in front of Gimotea and Vincent, the pouch contained an empty lighter and small plastic sachets. Dela Peña separated the items and listed some of these in Gimotea’s name and others in Vincent’s name. Dela Peña kept listing items even if Gimotea protested against their ownership.

Surprisingly, Rona, the helper, handed to Gimotea the sales of the eatery. Gimotea instructed her to keep it but Dela Peña told the helper to bring it to the table as evidence. Dela Peña then wrote the serial numbers of the money and segregated these for marking. Gimotea told Dela Peña that the money is the income of their eatery and their helper had not yet been paid her salary. Gimotea’s mother asserted similarly but Dela Peña told the former to shut up, or otherwise she would be implicated in the case. The policemen told them that they could get the money in court.

When the lady police officer arrived, Gimotea was body-searched and nothing was found on her. The policemen arranged the items on the table and photographed them. Thereafter, they called the barangay captain

⁷ *Id.* at 5–7.

and Bobby Zayco to sign the list. Gimotea and her nephew refused to sign the list.⁸

After trial, the Regional Trial Court rendered a Decision,⁹ which found Gimotea guilty beyond reasonable doubt for: (1) the illegal sale of drugs in violation of Section 5 of Republic Act No. 9165, for which she was sentenced to suffer life imprisonment and fined in the amount of PHP 500,000.00; and (2) the illegal possession of drugs in violation of Section 11 of Republic Act No. 9165, for which she was sentenced to suffer imprisonment of 12 years and one day as minimum, to 14 years and eight months as maximum, and fined in the amount of PHP 300,000.00.¹⁰

Aggrieved, Gimotea filed an appeal before the Court of Appeals. In the Appellant's Brief,¹¹ the defense argued that the Regional Trial Court erred in convicting Gimotea despite the broken chain of custody of the *corpus delicti* and the police's flagrant lapses on record.¹² Specifically, the defense questioned the identity of the *corpus delicti*, as these were inconsistently described by the prosecution as big and small sachets and were not properly marked with the initials and signatures of Police Officer 1 Ruel Dela Peña (*PO1 Dela Peña*), and the arresting officer, PO2 Reysy Nombre (*PO2 Nombre*).¹³ Moreover, the defense argued that the dismissal on the ground of lack of probable cause of the case against Gimotea's nephew, Vincent Bern Gimotea (*Vincent*), for violation of Section 11 of Republic Act No. 9165 in the same incident should have negated the presumption of regularity in the performance of the police officers' duties. Gimotea likewise called attention to her negative result for drug use and the ill-motive of the arresting officers, in the light of the nationwide extrajudicial killings committed under *Oplan Double Barrel* and *Oplan Tokhang*.¹⁴

After considering Gimotea's arguments, the Court of Appeals rendered the assailed Decision,¹⁵ which affirmed her conviction for violation of both Sections 5 and 11 of Republic Act No. 9165. According to the Court of Appeals, the variance in the description of the seized drugs and the use of Gimotea's initials in the marking did not affect the integrity and evidentiary value thereof.¹⁶ Further, Vincent's case, which is distinct from the case at bar, did not affect the presumption of regularity in the performance of the police officers' duty.¹⁷ Hence, the Court of Appeals disposed the case as follows:

⁸ *Id.* at 7.

⁹ *CA rollo*, pp. 25–34.

¹⁰ *Id.* at 34.

¹¹ *Id.* at 13–24.

¹² *Id.* at 13.

¹³ *Id.* at 19, 22.

¹⁴ *Id.* at 23.

¹⁵ *Rollo*, pp. 4–15.

¹⁶ *Id.* at 9, 11–12.

¹⁷ *Id.* at 14.

WHEREFORE, the appeal is DENIED. The Decision dated November 14, 2017, of the Regional Trial Court, Branch 55, Himamaylan City, Negros Occidental is AFFIRMED.

SO ORDERED.¹⁸

On May 28, 2019, Gimotea filed a Notice of Appeal¹⁹ to elevate the case before this Court.

The People of the Philippines, through the Office of the Solicitor General, manifested that it would no longer submit a supplemental brief. Instead, it would adopt the Appellee's Brief filed before the Court of Appeals.²⁰ On the other hand, with the failure of Gimotea to file her supplemental brief in accordance with this Court's Resolution²¹ dated March 17, 2021, the filing of the same was deemed waived.²²

Our Ruling

We find the Appeal meritorious.

In the prosecution of illegal sale and illegal possession of dangerous drugs, the State carries the burden of proving not only the elements of the offense, but also to prove the integrity of the *corpus delicti*.²³ As the dangerous drug seized from the accused constitutes such *corpus delicti*, it is of utmost imperative for the prosecution to establish that the identity and integrity of the seized drug is duly preserved to support a verdict of conviction. Hence, the fact that the substance seized from Gimotea was indeed the substance offered in court as the *corpus delicti*, it must be proven with the same unshakeable accuracy as that required to sustain a finding of guilt.²⁴

For the crime of illegal sale of dangerous drugs, the *corpus delicti* is the heat-sealed plastic sachet containing *shabu* weighing 0.315 gram, marked as "JG-BB" and later admitted into evidence as Exhibit "N." For the crime of illegal possession of dangerous drugs, the *corpora delicti* are the heat-sealed plastic sachet containing *shabu* weighing 0.349 gram, marked as "JG-2" and later admitted into evidence as Exhibit "O," and the three opened plastic sachets with traces of *shabu*, marked as "JG-3," "JG-3A" and "JG-3B." Accordingly, the prosecution has the burden of establishing the identity and

¹⁸ *Id.*

¹⁹ The Notice of Appeal is dated May 10, 2019; *id.* at 16.

²⁰ *Id.* at 33–36.

²¹ *Id.* at 28–29.

²² *Id.* at 57–58.

²³ *People v. Mama*, 840 Phil. 782, 794–795 (2018) [Per J. Perlas-Bernabe, Second Division].

²⁴ *Largo v. People*, G.R. No. 201293, June 19, 2019, p. 6 [Per J. Lazaro-Javier, Second Division]. The pinpoint citation refers to the copy of this Decision uploaded to the Supreme Court website.

integrity of these items and proving with exactitude that these are indeed the very same items recovered from Gimotea during the buy-bust operation.

To prove the identity and integrity of the *corpus delicti*, our ruling in *People v. Watamama*,²⁵ instructs that the prosecution must account for each link in its chain of custody, to wit:

[F]irst, the seizure and marking of the illegal drug recovered from the accused by the apprehending officer; second, the turnover of the illegal drug seized by the apprehending officer to the investigating officer; third, the turn over by the investigating officer of the illegal drug to the forensic chemist for laboratory examination; and fourth, the turn over and submission of the marked illegal drug seized by the forensic chemist to the court.²⁶

Further, in *People v. Angeles*,²⁷ this Court clarified the need for the prosecution to establish the continuous whereabouts of the *corpus delicti*, such that every person who touched the dangerous drug would describe how and from whom it was received, where it was and what happened to it, the condition in which it was received and the condition in which it was delivered to the next link in the chain.²⁸

The purpose of the chain of custody requirement is to ensure that the integrity and evidentiary value of the seized items are preserved, so much so that unnecessary doubts as to the identity of the evidence are removed. To avoid any doubt, the prosecution must show the continuous whereabouts of the exhibit at least between the time it came into possession of the police officers and until it was tested in the laboratory to determine its composition up to the time it was offered in evidence. This includes testimony about every link in the chain, from the moment the item was picked up to the time it is offered into evidence, in such a way that every person who touched the exhibit would describe how and from whom it was received, where it was and what happened to it while in the witness' possession, the condition in which it was received and the condition in which it was delivered to the next link in the chain. These witnesses would then describe the precautions taken to ensure that there had been no change in the condition of the item and no opportunity for someone not in the chain to have possession of the same.²⁹ (Citations omitted)

With respect to proving the first link in the chain of custody of the *corpus delicti*, *i.e.*, the seizure and marking of the illegal drug, Section 21 of Republic Act No. 9165, as amended by Republic Act No. 10640, requires that

²⁵ 692 Phil. 102 (2012) [Per J. Villarama, First Division].

²⁶ *Id.* at 107.

²⁷ G.R. No. 224223, November 20, 2019 [Per J. Inting, Second Division].

²⁸ *Id.* at 8. The pinpoint citation refers to the copy of this Decision uploaded to the Supreme Court website.

²⁹ *Id.* at 8–9. The pinpoint citation refers to the copy of this Decision uploaded to the Supreme Court website.

the inventory and photograph of the dangerous drug be immediately conducted after the seizure thereof:

SECTION 21. *Custody and Disposition of Confiscated, Seized, and/or Surrendered Dangerous Drugs, Plant Sources of Dangerous Drugs, Controlled Precursors and Essential Chemicals, Instruments/Paraphernalia and/or Laboratory Equipment.* — The PDEA shall take charge and have custody of all dangerous drugs, plant sources of dangerous drugs, controlled precursors and essential chemicals, as well as instruments/paraphernalia and/or laboratory equipment so confiscated, seized and/or surrendered, for proper disposition in the following manner:

(1) The apprehending team having initial custody and control of the dangerous drugs, controlled precursors and essential chemicals, instruments/paraphernalia and/or laboratory equipment shall, **immediately after seizure and confiscation, conduct a physical inventory of the seized items and photograph the same** in the presence of the accused or the person/s from whom such items were confiscated and/or seized, or his/her representative or counsel, with an elected public official and a representative of the National Prosecution Service or the media who shall be required to sign the copies of the inventory and be given a copy thereof: *Provided*, That the physical inventory and photograph shall be conducted at the place where the search warrant is served; or at the nearest police station or at the nearest office of the apprehending officer/team, whichever is practicable, in case of warrantless seizures: *Provided, finally*, That noncompliance of these requirements under justifiable grounds, as long as the integrity and the evidentiary value of the seized items are properly preserved by the apprehending officer/team, shall not render void and invalid such seizures and custody over said items. (Emphasis supplied)

Contrary to the foregoing procedure prescribed by Section 21 of Republic Act No. 9165, a perusal of the records reveals that the inventory and photographing of the contraband were not immediately conducted after the seizure of the items from Gimotea. On this score, the failure of the apprehending officers to comply with Section 21(1) of Republic Act No. 9165 implies a concomitant failure on the part of the prosecution to establish the identity of the *corpora delicti* and produces doubts as to the origins of the seized drugs.³⁰

At this juncture, it must be recalled that the apprehending team went to the eatery at 5:30 p.m. of April 24, 2017 to conduct the buy-bust operation.³¹ Only two minutes later, the sale between PO1 Dela Peña and Gimotea was consummated and possession of the plastic sachet of *shabu* marked as “JG-

³⁰ *People v. Morales y Midarasa*, 630 Phil. 215, 229 (2010) [Per J. Del Castillo, Second Division].

³¹ Exhibits “A” and “B;” records (Crim. Case No. 17-3920-HC), pp. 6-9; TSN, August 14, 2017, pp. 19, 21-22.

BB” was transferred to PO1 Dela Peña.³² Immediately after this, PO1 Dela Peña introduced himself as a police officer and PO2 Nombre arrested Gimotea.³³ The search subsequent to Gimotea’s arrest then led to the discovery of the maroon pouch containing the sachets marked as “JG-2,” “JG-3,” “JG-3A,” and “JG-3B.”³⁴

Meanwhile, the barangay captain, Jonathan Guancia (*Guancia*), testified that his presence was only requested by members of the Hiramaylan City Police Station at around 6:00 p.m. of the same day.³⁵ According to both Guancia and the Department of Justice representative, Bobby Zayco (*Zayco*), the illegal drugs were already on the table upon their arrival.³⁶ Guancia also recalled that many people were at the crime scene and that he had no idea as to the events that transpired prior to his arrival thereat:

Q Who were present at the scene upon your arrival?

A **When I arrived at the location of Jasmin, there were already so many people and the policemen were already there also.**

.....

Q Now, you were brought there and guided to that place?

A When I arrived there at the store of Jasmin, I saw some things on the table.

.....

Q What was the condition of the place the very moment you entered?

A SPO2 called me to get inside the store and **they showed me the items placed on the table and also the money and nothing more.**

Q And you had no idea how that event took place where you were asked to be present?

A **I have no idea** but they only contacted me to be present sir.³⁷
(Emphasis supplied)

Aside from the failure to immediately conduct the inventory of the seized items, it did not escape this Court’s attention that the apprehending officers failed to give account of the precautionary measures taken during the half-an-hour interval between the time of seizure and the time of inventory of the illegal drugs. In this regard, case law states that the prosecution must provide a credible account on the whereabouts and handling of the drugs, even while police officers are still waiting for the arrival of the witnesses.³⁸ With the dearth of details on these matters, this Court cannot simply presume that

³² TSN, August 14, 2017, pp. 21; 27.

³³ Exhibits “A” and “B;” records (Crim. Case No. 17-3920-HC), pp. 6–9.

³⁴ *Id.* at 7–9

³⁵ TSN, August 30, 2017, pp. 23.

³⁶ *Id.* at 23–24; TSN, October 4, 2017, pp. 11–12.

³⁷ TSN, August 30, 2017, pp. 23–24.

³⁸ See *People v. Areola, Jr.*, G.R. No. 251919, May 12, 2021 (Notice).

all the illegal drugs were left lying on the table, untouched by all of people at the crime scene as soon as they were seized by PO1 Dela Peña. Surely, the absence of evidence on the handling of drugs during such stage created a substantial gap in the chain of custody, exposing the items to the possibility of switching and tampering to the detriment of Gimotea.

While the prosecution, through PO1 Dela Peña, tried to establish that the search incidental to the arrest of Gimotea was conducted in front of the witnesses,³⁹ we find this version to be undeserving of credence. In both the Affidavit of poseur-buyer/seizing officer executed by no less than PO1 Dela Peña himself, and the Affidavit of Arresting Officer executed by PO2 Nombre, the narration of facts clearly stated that PO1 Dela Peña had already seized the maroon pouch containing “JG-2,” “JG-3,” “JG-3A,” and “JG-3B,” and PO1 Lymie Base had already searched and frisked Gimotea, even before Guancia and Zayco were invited by the police to proceed to the eatery.⁴⁰ This Court finds the contradiction in these statements material, considering that the inconsistencies ultimately cast doubts on the officers’ faithful compliance with Republic Act No. 9165.

Additionally, the prosecution failed to account for the second link in the chain of custody, which involves the transfer of the seized drugs from the apprehending officer to the investigating officer.

In *People v. Bangcola*,⁴¹ this Court considered the apprehending officer’s act of keeping the seized evidence until its transfer to the forensic chemist and the failure to transfer the seized evidence to the investigating officer to be breaks in the chain of custody. Similar to *Bangcola*, the actual turnover of the seized items to the investigating officer, Police Chief Inspector Antonio P. Benitez, Jr., who prepared the request for laboratory examination of the dangerous drugs, could not be ascertained based on the records of the instant case.⁴² For one, nowhere in Chain of Custody Form does the investigating officer’s name appear as one of the persons who secured possession of the illegal drugs.⁴³ For another, the prosecution did not bother to provide details regarding the whereabouts of the drugs after they were taken by PO1 Dela Peña to the Himamaylan City Police Station, up to the time they were transferred to P/Supt. Helen Pasoy at the Bacolod City Regional Crime Laboratory for laboratory examination. As observed in *Bangcola*, “it is improbable for an investigator in a drug-related case to effectively and properly perform his work, and to accomplish the necessary documents for the transfer of evidence, without having custody of the seized items.”⁴⁴ Thus, not only should the prosecution explain the handling of the drugs before and

³⁹ TSN, August 14, 2017, p. 29.

⁴⁰ Exhibits “A” and “B;” records (Crim. Case No. 17-3920-HC), pp. 6–9.

⁴¹ G.R. No. 237802, March 18, 2019, pp. 14 [Per J. Gesmundo, First Division].

⁴² Exhibit “H;” records (Crim. Case No. 17-3920-HC), p. 8.

⁴³ Exhibit “W;” *id.* at 76.

⁴⁴ *Supra* note 40, at 13-14.

during the transit thereof to Bacolod City, it likewise had the duty to explain the irregularity in the procedure and the deficiency in the second link, with the non-turnover of the illegal drugs seized by the apprehending officer to the investigating officer.

Finally, this Court notes the material gap in the chain of custody as a result of the prosecution's failure to describe the condition of the seized items when they were handed over by the forensic chemist to the evidence custodian, and the precautions taken by the latter in safekeeping the drugs before their presentment in court. To be sure, the non-presentation of the evidence custodian, PO3 Ariel Magbanua, coupled with the non-stipulation of facts as to the steps taken to ensure the integrity of the illegal drugs in his custody, raise serious questions on the evidentiary value of the items presented before the trial court.

Time and again, We have held that “[s]trict adherence to the chain of custody rule must be observed; the precautionary measures employed in every transfer of the seized drug item, proved to a moral certainty.”⁴⁵ There should even be “stricter compliance with the rules when the amount of the dangerous drug is minute[,]” as in this case, “due to the possibility that the seized item could be tampered.”⁴⁶ In the case at bar, the apprehending officers failed to comply with the procedure embodied in Section 21 of Republic Act No. 9165 without justification, and to ensure an unbroken chain of custody to preserve the integrity and evidentiary value of the *corpora delicti*. Perforce, the acquittal of Gimotea is in order.

FOR THESE REASONS, this Court resolves to **GRANT** the instant Appeal. The Decision dated March 26, 2019 of the Court of Appeals in CA-G.R. CR-HC No. 02721 is **REVERSED** and **SET ASIDE**. Accused-appellant Jasmine Gimotea y Castillo is hereby **ACQUITTED** of the crimes charged for the failure of the prosecution to prove her guilt beyond reasonable doubt.

The Superintendent of the Correctional Institution for Women is hereby **ORDERED** to: (a) immediately release accused-appellant Jasmine Gimotea y Castillo from custody unless she is being held for some other lawful cause; and (b) submit his or her report on the action taken within five days from notice. Copies of this Resolution shall also be furnished to the Chief of the Philippine National Police and the Director General of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency for their information.

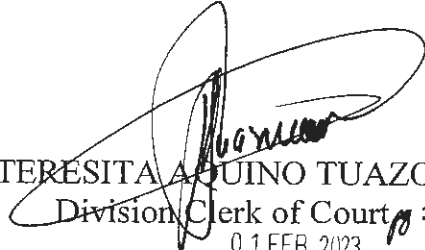
⁴⁵ *Jacson v. People*, G.R. No. 199644, June 19, 2019, p. 11 [Per J. Lazaro-Javier, Second Division]. The pinpoint citation refers to the copy of this Decision uploaded to the Supreme Court website.

⁴⁶ *People v. Angeles*, G.R. No. 224223, November 20, 2019, p. 7 [Per J. Inting, Second Division]. The pinpoint citation refers to the copy of this Decision uploaded to the Supreme Court website.

Let an entry of final judgment be issued immediately.

SO ORDERED.”

By authority of the Court:


 TERESITA AQUINO TUAZON
 Division Clerk of Court
 01 FEB 2023

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 (Crim. Case Nos. 17-3920 to 21-HC)

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 CA-G.R. CR-HC No. 02721

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