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**Our Rights, Our Victories:
Landmark Cases in the Supreme Court
by Marites Dañguilan Vitug and Criselda Yabes**

Book Notes

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literary figures against a transpacific backdrop, the author goes beyond the typical categorization of Filipino American literature as a mere subspecies of Asian American literature. What distinguishes the Filipino American variant from its fellow Asian “immigrant literatures” are the contingencies created by US imperialism in the emergence of a Philippine nation-state and whose effects reverberate back to the mainland. It is imperialism as well that is at the center of Ponce’s framework, which problematizes the invisibility of Filipinos and Filipino Americans in the literary and historical discourses in the US. Recovering their muted voices is thus necessary, although the author is cautious of the heteronormative tendencies even among the ideological critiques of empire, such as in dominant notions of diaspora and anti- and postcolonial nationalisms. Ponce turns to the scholarship of “queer diasporas” to address this important concern.

MARITES DAÑGUILAN VITUG AND CRISELDA YABES

Our Rights, Our Victories: Landmark Cases in the Supreme Court

Quezon City: Cleverheads Publishing, 2011. 227 pages.

Written by two veteran journalists, Marites Dañguilan Vitug and Criselda Yabes, *Our Rights, Our Victories* is a highly readable account of sixteen landmark cases brought before the Supreme Court from the 1960s to 2008 that enunciated fundamental legal principles in Philippine jurisprudence. The court’s decisions on these cases either were unprecedented or they overturned unchallenged doctrines, and in the end what “they had in common was that they upheld our rights and had an impact on our lives” (11). In twelve chapters the authors tell riveting stories that bring to light the right against illegal searches, the right to know, freedom of religion, freedom of speech, indigenous people’s rights, the Writ of Amparo, individual liberty (in relation to “love motels”), the right to a balanced and healthful ecology, the battered woman’s syndrome as legal defence, the death penalty, the people’s initiative on charter change, and martial law. Each chapter presents a succinct narrative of the case or cases, the main litigants, the decision reached by the court, and a “postscript” that tracks later developments. In narrating these stories, Vitug and Yabes consulted the Supreme Court archives, interviewed key individuals familiar with these cases, and read other

references to understand the events that transpired and the context of those events. The book opens with the case that Jose Diokno as Secretary of Justice lost, the raids—which he had directed the National Bureau of Investigation to conduct in his attempt to pin down Harry Stonehill, who bought off numerous government officials—declared illegal and the incriminating evidence deemed inadmissible in court. It was a monumental decision that enshrined the right against illegal searches despite Stonehill's unsavory character. Rather than on a high note, the book ends with the “cautionary tale” (185–95) of how, in its decision promulgated on 31 March 1973, six of the ten justices of the court took the side of Ferdinand Marcos, legitimated martial law, and declared the 1973 Constitution valid and in force despite the farcical citizens' assemblies that approved it. Amid this grim background, the authors nonetheless hail the courage of the four dissenters, most especially Chief Justice Roberto R. Concepcion—who, vindicated, would later head the committee on the judiciary in the 1987 Constitutional Commission.