



**Supreme Court  
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands**

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***Commonwealth v. Cepeda, 2014 MP 12***

The NMI Supreme Court affirmed Franklin C. Cepeda, Jr.'s convictions for assault and battery, and theft. His appeal focused on the trial court's decisions excluding various pieces of evidence and limiting his ability to attack the credibility of witnesses.

The Court began by addressing the exclusion of chain-of-custody receipts and an officer's affidavit from substantive evidence. The trial court erred by excluding the receipts but the error was harmless because the information in the receipts was ultimately presented to the court. Additionally, the trial court erred by excluding the affidavit but the error was also harmless because the affidavit's information was introduced through other means.

Next, the Court turned to Cepeda's claims that the trial court erred by preventing him from using the affidavit to attack Detective Mark Taisacan's credibility and introducing prior testimony to attack George Ilo's credibility. Neither of these arguments persuaded the Court; the trial court never precluded Cepeda from using the affidavit or the prior testimony to attack the witnesses' credibility.

Finally, the Court addressed Cepeda's argument that multiple individually harmless errors warranted reversing his convictions. But the Court concluded the evidence was strong enough to sustain the convictions even without the errors.

The Supreme Court's full opinion, 2014 MP 11, can be found at:  
<http://www.cnmilaw.org/supreme14.html>.

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