

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
In The Supreme Court

CERTIORARI TO LEXINGTON COUNTY
Court of Common Pleas

The Honorable R. Knox McMahon, Trial Judge
The Honorable Frank R. Addy, PCR Judge

Appellate Case No. 2014-000446

Stanley Golson, Petitioner,

v.

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA, Respondent.

BRIEF OF RESPONDENT

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QUESTION PRESENTED

1. Was the grant of Certiorari necessary to review whether the PCR Judge erred in finding Petitioner's allegation that counsel's performance was ineffective for failing to object to the Trial Judge providing audio equipment to jury that allowed them to listen to State's evidence during deliberation?

STATEMENT OF THE CASE

Respondent adopts Petitioner's statement of the case.

STATEMENT OF FACTS

In 2004, the Double Branch Community of Lexington County was plagued by narcotics crime. The police took notice, developed Petitioner as a personality in the activity, and initiated a buy/bust operation to rid the community of the pestilence. **App.p.61, ln. 12-16.** Police sought out an informant, Jannie Wiseman, who was familiar with Petitioner and his dealings. **App.p.65, ln. 16-21.** On May 25, 2004, Jannie went to Petitioner's residence on Holmes' Street to purchase forty (\$40) dollars worth of crack-cocaine. Petitioner and another male greeted her at the door. **App.p.92, ln. 24-25.** Upon entering the residence, Jannie initiated the transaction with Petitioner whereupon he took her money, jettisoned to his stash spot to retrieve the drugs, then tendered two rocks, .25 grams, of crack-cocaine to her.¹ **App.pp.93-94; p.137, ln. 17-19.** Before Jannie exited the residence, Petitioner provided a phone number² to her in conjunction to his sells pitch concerning the consistency of his product. **App.p.95, ln. 7-8.** The police monitored the transaction through a wire that had been placed on Petitioner's person. The audio recording captured from the wire was admitted into evidence and played for the jury. **App.p.100.**

In pertinent part, the Trial Judge instructed the jury:

I will ask you, Mr. Foreman -- well, just several others things. We will make arrangements for you to have the equipment in there where you can listen to the tape. I assume and I am sure -- I think there was a software computer engineer on the jury. I am sure there is someone that can operate it with ease in there. If not I will make arrangements to have someone do

¹ Jannie had known Petitioner for over twenty (20) years and had no difficulty identifying him as the culprit. **App.p.87; App.p.77.**

² Petitioner's grandmother, Viola Martin, testified for the State that Petitioner had been living with her at the Holmes Street address. She further testified that she gave Petitioner permission to make and receive calls from her telephone. **App.p.117.**

that. But if you have any problems technically, please let me know. We will have all the exhibits in there with you.

App.p.202, ln.20—p.203, ln.3.

Applicant alleged counsel was ineffective for failing to object to the admissibility of the audio recording to the informant's wiretap based on (1) violation of State and Federal wiretap code; (2) authenticity. App.pp.263-65; p.276. Petitioner opined that he was harmed because the jury considered inadmissible evidence during deliberations. Counsel testified that there was no basis to have lodged a meritorious objection on the matter. **App.p.286; pp.290-91.**

In the order denying and dismissing Petitioner's Application, the PCR Judge found the audio recording from the wiretap constituted admissible evidence; In ruling on all of Petitioner's unavailing allegations, the PCR Judge further found the Applicant's companion allegation that he was prejudiced because the jury had access to access to the purported inadmissible audio recording during its deliberations.

This discretionary appeal follows.

STANDARD OF REVIEW

The proper standard for review of a PCR evidentiary hearing is whether "any evidence of probative value" exists to sustain the post-conviction relief judge's findings. Cherry v. State, 300 S.C. 115, 119, 386 S.E.2d 624, 626 (1989). In a post-conviction relief proceeding, the applicant bears the burden of proving the allegations in their application. Butler v. State, 286 S.C. 441, 442, 334 S.E.2d 813, 814 (1985).

ARGUMENT

Certiorari was unwarranted to review whether the PCR Judge's ruling that the allegation of ineffective assistance of counsel for failure to object to the trial judge providing audio equipment to the jury during deliberations was readily without merit where the allegation itself was facially deficient.

Petitioner's argument is not preserved for this Court's review; and even if it was preserved, Petitioner's argument is entirely without merit where the PCR Judge's jury instructed the jury that equipment.

A.

Petitioner argues that the "audio tape in petitioner's case was cumulative to the State's case and sending it into the jury room unduly emphasized it." **BOP, p.7.**

In the order of dismissal, the PCR Judge found Pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. §17-27-80 (2003), the PCR Judge fully addressed the allegation in his "Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, Section (B)" as follows: "[t]his Court finds [Petitioner had no privacy interest in the wire worn on the informant's person. At the PCR hearing, [Petitioner] acknowledged that he invited the informant into his home as a social guest." App.p.327. The PCR Judge also found "[Petitioner]'s allegation that counsel was ineffective for failing to object to the admission of the audio tape from the informant's wire based on authenticity is without merit. A proper foundation for the evidence was established." App.p.327. Based on the PCR Judge's rejection Petitioner's admissibility allegation, he made a further rudimentary finding that "[Petitioner]'s allegation that counsel was ineffective for not objecting to the jury having access to exhibits during the deliberations to be wholly without merit." **App.p.337.**

In denying and dismissing Petitioner's PCR Application, the PCR Judge ruled "[Petitioner]'s allegation that counsel was ineffective for not objecting to the jury having access to the exhibits during deliberations to wholly without merit." App.p.327. The PCR Judge made the following findings in support of his ruling: Petitioner alleged counsel's performance was ineffective for failing to object to the admission of the wire tape because the State failed to properly authenticate the exhibit at trial based on Petitioner's assertion that "you couldn't hardly hear nobodies voice, you definitely could not hear my voice on the tape." **App.p.323.**³

Because Petitioner's post hoc Strickland allegation is facially flawed, the PCR Judge made the correct ruling in finding that the allegation itself was readily without merit. For an applicant to be granted PCR as a result of ineffective assistance of counsel, he must show both: (1) that his counsel failed to render reasonably effective assistance under prevailing professional norms, and (2) that he was prejudiced by his counsel's ineffective performance. See Strickland v. Washington, 466 U.S. 668 (1984); Porter v. State, 368 S.C. 378, 383, 629 S.E.2d 353, 356 (2006). In order to prove prejudice, an applicant must show "there is a reasonable probability that, but for counsel's unprofessional errors, the result of the proceeding would have been different." Cherry v. State, 300 S.C. at 117-18, 386 S.E.2d at 625. "A reasonable probability is a probability sufficient to undermine confidence in the outcome of trial." Johnson v. State, 325 S.C. 182, 186, 480 S.E.2d 733, 735 (1997) (citing Strickland, 466 U.S. at 668).

Petitioner's allegation is deficient where he asserted that counsel's failure to

³ The PCR Judge's Order here was supported by Petitioner's testimony at the hearing. See App.p.264, ln.4-6; p.275 ln.22—p.276, ln.1.

object on this matter prejudiced his case because the audio from the wire tape did not capture his voice, thereby lacking evidentiary value because it did not implicate him in the controlled buy that led to his arrest. Petitioner asserted that he was denied the fundamental right to an adversarial proceeding because the jury purportedly should not have been improperly urged to listen to evidence that supported the defense's case based on the proposition that audio tape was inadmissible evidence that lacked relevance to the State's case-in-chief. Thus, the PCR Judge's swift denial and dismissal here was appropriate where the allegation was solely supported by Petitioner's illogical speculation. See White v. Livingston, 231 S.C. 301, 308, 98 S.E.2d 534, 537 (1957) ("It may be added that the evidence adduced before the referee indicates that the result of the case is not a serious miscarriage of justice, if it is a miscarriage at all. At any rate, appellant has made his bed and he must lie in it").

Furthermore, the solicitor's purportedly improper request that the jury listen to the audio tape played into counsel's certain trial strategy to focus the jury's attention to this item of evidence.⁴ Counsel must articulate a valid reason for employing a certain strategy to avoid a finding of ineffectiveness. See Roseboro v. State, 317 S.C. 292, 294, 454 S.E.2d 312, 313 (1995). "Courts must be wary of second-guessing counsel's trial tactics; and where counsel articulates a valid reason for employing certain strategy, such conduct will not be deemed ineffective assistance of counsel." Whitehead v. State, 308 S.C. 119, 122, 417 S.E.2d 529, 531 (1992) (citing Goodson v. United States, 564 F.2d 1071 (4th Cir.1977)).

⁴ See Wood v. Allen, 558 U.S. 290 (2010) ("a strategic or tactical decision does not have to be articulated by counsel on the record; counsel doesn't have to personally identify his or her thinking. It is enough that the record show a basis for strategy, not that counsel announce that strategy on the record.")

In the defense's closing argument, counsel commented "[The police] didn't want to tip anybody off to what they were doing. Because as you have heard, there was a lot of people around here. As you will hear on that tape, there were a lot of people around. [The police] don't want to drive into that mess and get found out." **App.p.178, ln.9-13** (emphasis added). Counsel summarized the solicitor's closing argument and the State's case as follows:

[The State] didn't play the whole thing for you in this last argument because [the State] needed to give you a snapshot in hopes that you will lose sight of the big picture. Listen to the rest of that tape. Listen to the other people there. Listen to what other people are saying.

Listen to who is saying way, who is not saying what. Listen to the inflections. Listen to the tones. Listen to what they are discussing on there. Think about what [the informant] said happened while that tape was going on.

Stanley, my buddy, known him for 20 years, he is the target. He's the guy I will get paid to get arrested. Stanley left. Where did he go? I don't know. Out the back door? Yeah. Could you see out back? Yeah. So where did he go? I don't know. I didn't see.

App.p.182, ln. 10—p. 183, ln. 6 (emphasis added). Counsel circled back to this matter of the tape, **App.p.185, ln. 3-12**, and concluded the defense's closing argument by stating "Like I said, go back, look at the evidence, listen to that tape. Think about what is not here. Think about what hasn't been shown to you. Realize that is also as important as what has been. I think when you do that, you will come back with a verdict of not guilty." **App.p.187, ln. 11-16**. Therefore, the matter at issue was the central focus of counsel's valid trial strategy in the presentation of the defense's theory of the case. See Caprood v. State, 338 S.C. 103, 110, 525 S.E.2d 514, 517 (2000) ("This was a valid **trial strategy**, and should not be the basis of a finding of **ineffective** assistance of counsel").

Accordingly, Petitioner failed to prove the first prong of the Strickland test – that

counsel failed to render reasonably constitutionally effective assistance under prevailing professional norms. Similarly, Petitioner also failed to prove the second prong of Strickland – that he was prejudiced by counsel’s performance.

As Petitioner failed to meet this burden of proving ineffective assistance of trial counsel on this issue, the PCR judge did not err in denying the PCR application. See Frasier v. State, 351 S.C. 385, 389, 570 S.E.2d 172, 174 (2002) (“The burden of proof is on the applicant to prove his allegations by a preponderance of the evidence.”).

CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, Respondent submits this Court should deny and dismiss the grant Certiorari as improvidently granted.

Respectfully submitted,

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By: 

ATTORNEYS FOR RESPONDENT

Sept. 21st, 2015

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
IN THE SUPREME COURT

Certiorari to Lexington County

The Honorable Frank R. Addy, Circuit Court Judge

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STANLEY GOLSON,

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STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA,

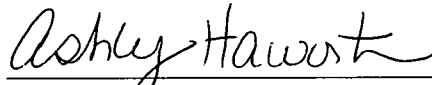
RESPONDENT.

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

The undersigned hereby certifies that a true copy of the **Brief of Respondent** has been served upon opposing counsel by mailing two (2) copies in the United States mail, postage prepaid:

Robert M. Pachak, Esquire
SC Commission of Indigent Defense
Appellate Defense
Post Office Box 11589
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This 21ST day of September, 2015.



Ashley Haworth
Legal Assistant
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RECEIVED

SEP 22 2015

S.C. Supreme Court

ALAN WILSON
ATTORNEY GENERAL

September 21, 2015

The Honorable Daniel E. Shearouse
Clerk, South Carolina Supreme Court
Post Office Box 11330
Columbia, South Carolina 29211

RE: Stanley Golson v. State of South Carolina
Appellate Case No.: 2014-000446

Dear Mr. Shearouse:

Attached are the original and thirteen (13) copies of the **Brief of Respondent** in the above referenced case for filing in your office.

Sincerely,

J. Walt Whitmire
Assistant Attorney General

JWW/ah
Enclosures

cc: Robert M. Pachak, Esquire