

 ORIGINAL

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE SUPREME COURT

Certiorari to Richland County

Honorable Jocelyn J. Newman, Circuit Court Judge

ROBIN GRAY REESE,

RECEIVED

DEC 27 2017

S.C. SUPREME COURT
PETITIONER

V.

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA,

RESPONDENT

APPELLATE CASE NO 2017-001110

PETITION FOR WRIT OF CERTIORARI

LAURA R. BAER
Appellate Defender

South Carolina Commission on Indigent Defense
Division of Appellate Defense
PO Box 11589
Columbia, SC 29211-1589
(803) 734-1330

ATTORNEY FOR PETITIONER

INDEX

INDEX i

ISSUES PRESENTED.....1

STATEMENT OF THE CASE.....2

ARGUMENT4

I. The PCR court erred where it failed to make specific findings of fact, and state expressly its conclusions of law, relating to each issue presented as required by S.C. CODE ANN. § 17-27-80.

Introduction.....4

Relevant Facts.....6

Discussion.....8

II. The PCR court erred in finding that trial counsel rendered effective assistance of counsel where he failed to object to Petitioner’s wearing both wrist and ankle shackles in view of the jury throughout the trial.

Relevant Facts.....11

Right to Effective Assistance of Counsel12

Discussion.....13

III. The PCR Court erred in finding that trial counsel rendered effective assistance of counsel where he failed to object to the unresponsive testimony of the prosecution’s investigator, Campbell Streeter, who said that he believed State’s witness Kara Chase was “being forthcoming” when she spoke with him, which was an improper comment upon another witness’ credibility.

Relevant Facts.....19

Discussion.....21

IV. The PCR court erred in finding that trial counsel rendered effective assistance of counsel where he failed to object to Sergeant William Pegram’s testimony that “in my opinion of the law, everybody involved in this case was guilty but I had to determine the principal parties in the case,” which invaded the province of the judge and jury.

Relevant Facts.....22

Discussion.....23

CONCLUSION.....24

ISSUES PRESENTED

I.

Whether the PCR court erred where it failed to make specific findings of fact, and state expressly its conclusions of law, relating to each issue presented as required by S.C. CODE ANN. § 17-27-80?

II.

Whether the PCR court erred in finding that trial counsel rendered effective assistance of counsel where he failed to object to Petitioner's wearing both wrist and ankle shackles in view of the jury throughout the trial?

III.

Whether the PCR Court erred in finding that trial counsel rendered effective assistance of counsel where he failed to object to the unresponsive testimony of the prosecution's investigator, Campbell Streeter, who said that he believed State's witness Kara Chase was "being forthcoming" when she spoke with him, which was an improper comment upon another witness' credibility?

IV.

Whether the PCR Court erred in finding that trial counsel rendered effective assistance of counsel where he failed to object to Sergeant William Pegram's testimony that "in my opinion of the law, everybody involved in this case was guilty but I had to determine the principal parties in the case," which invaded the province of the judge and jury?

STATEMENT OF THE CASE

Indictment and Trial

On October 5, 2011, the Richland County Grand Jury returned an indictment against Petitioner Robin Reese for lynching, first degree. On October 5, 2011, the Grand Jury returned an additional indictment against Reese for murder. App. 1372 – 1375.

On February 28 – March 2, 2012, Reese appeared for trial before the Honorable Thomas G. Cooper, Jr. and a jury. Reese was represented by Andrew Farley. Jointly tried co-defendant Henry Gray was represented by Mathias Chaplin. The State was represented by assistant solicitors Luck Campbell, April Sampson, and Nicole Simpson. The jury returned verdicts of guilty as to both indicted offenses against both Reese and Gray. App. 1158 – 1159. Judge Cooper sentenced Reese to concurrent terms of thirty years incarceration. App. 1180, l. 23 – 1181, l. 7.

Direct Appeal

Reese's direct appeal was perfected by the filing of a brief of appellant by appellate defender Katherine Hudgins. App. 1186. The State, represented by senior assistant attorney general William Edgar Salter, III, filed its brief of respondent. App. 1210. After holding oral argument, the Court of Appeals affirmed Reese's convictions and sentences in an unpublished opinion filed July 30, 2014. App. 1258. The case was remitted to the lower court on August 15, 2014. App. 1260.

Post-Conviction Relief

On September 14, 2014, Reese filed an application for post-conviction relief ("PCR") alleging ineffective assistance of trial counsel. App. 1261. The State filed its return on March 11, 2015. App. 1268. On August 30, 2016, an evidentiary hearing was held before the

Honorable Jocelyn J. Newman. Reese was represented by Jonathan Waller, and the State was represented by assistant attorney general Jessica Kinard. App. 1273. At the outset of the PCR hearing, PCR counsel placed on the record several oral amendments regarding additional allegations of ineffective assistance of trial counsel, all of which had been disclosed to the State at least ten days prior to the hearing. App. 1277, l. 9 – 1278, l. 8. The PCR court was then presented with testimony from both Reese and trial counsel Farley. App. 1274.

At the conclusion of the hearing, Judge Newman asked both parties to prepare proposed orders. App. 1337, ll. 13-19. PCR counsel submitted a detailed proposed order. App. 1339. However, it was the State's proposed order denying post-conviction relief that Judge Newman signed and filed on November 14, 2016. App. 1353. On December 1, 2016, PCR counsel filed a motion to amend pursuant to Rule 59(e), SCRCPP, arguing that the Order of Dismissal did not “contain specific findings of fact and conclusions of law regarding each of the claims presented at the evidentiary hearing, as required by S.C. CODE ANN. § 17-27-80” and that the summary of testimony in the Order of Dismissal “is not an objective, true, and accurate recitation of the testimony presented during the evidentiary hearing.” App. 1365. The State filed a return to the motion on December 14, 2016. App. 1367. On April 21, 2017, Judge Newman filed a form order denying the motion to amend. App. 1370.

This appeal follows.

ARGUMENT

- I. **The PCR court erred where it failed to make specific findings of fact, and state expressly its conclusions of law, relating to each issue presented as required by S.C. CODE ANN. § 17-27-80.**

Introduction

Petitioner Reese and her brother, Henry “Six” Gray, were jointly tried for the murder and lynching¹ of Kenneth Mack. Reese’s daughter, Lucy, who was thirteen at the time of the incident, testified that she walked to get her nails done but arrived to find that the salon was closed. Mack, whom Lucy did not know, saw her knock on the locked door of the shop and said “you can come in my house.” App. 919, l. 24 – 924, l. 11. Rather than going with Mack, Lucy went to the local store where Reese was playing video poker. She purchased a bag of chips and headed back to the family’s apartment at Gonzales Gardens on McDuffie Avenue in Columbia, South Carolina. App. 924, l. 12-15; App. 930, ll. 11-16; App. 934, l. 14 – 936, l. 13; see App. 258, l. 8 – 261, l. 10.

Mack approached Lucy again. When she tried to avoid him, Mack threw a snowball at her. When Lucy said she was going to get her mom, Mack grabbed Lucy’s jacket with his right hand. Lucy slapped Mack. Mack picked Lucy up and threw her down between two bushes and began “tussling” with her. App. 924, l. 16 – 925, l. 13. Marcellius “Bloom” Brooks and a group of other young men intervened and got Mack off of Lucy. They punched and kicked Mack, and Lucy hit Mack a couple of times too. App. 925, l. 14 – 926, l. 7; see also App. 245, l. 10 – 249, l. 2; App. 254, l. 12 – 261, l. 5; App. 556, l. 8 – 562, l. 17; App. 656, l. 21 – 664, l. 3. Mack

¹ The former crime of lynching was defined in section 16-3-210 of the South Carolina Code (2003). The section was amended effective June 2, 2010 and redefined first-degree lynching as “assault and battery by mob in the first degree.” S.C. CODE ANN. § 16-3-210(B) (Supp. 2017).

eventually got away and was seen stumbling through the area. App. 249, ll. 3-13; App. 476, l. 6 – 478, l. 7; App. 636, l. 21 – 638, l. 9; App. 658, ll. 5-7; App. 993, l. 24 – 995, l. 24.

Brooks took Lucy back to the store and told Reese what happened. As she took Lucy home, Reese placed telephone calls to her own apartment, her father's apartment, and to Brooks. App. 562, l. 18 – 566, l. 20; App. 926, l. 9 – 927, l. 17; App. 936, l. 14 – 942, l. 10. Meanwhile, Reese's brother, Henry Gray ran into Mack in the Gonzales Gardens area. After receiving a call on his cell phone, Gray swept Mack's legs out from under him, causing Mack to fall backwards and strike his head on the pavement. Gray then began kicking Mack. App. 276, l. 19 – 284, l. 14; App. 395, l. 22 – 401, l. 22; App. 638, l. 11 – 643, l. 25. Reese eventually came upon Gray and Mack. Reese slipped on the ice when she went to kick Mack but slapped him from where she landed on the ground. She admitted flinging a metal chair but denied that it ever made contact with Mack. App. 282, l. 22 – 283, l. 6; App. 942, l. 13 – 949, l. 14; see also App. 644, l. 14 – 645, l. 18. Other bystanders claimed that Gray and Reese both struck Mack with their hands, feet, and with the metal chair. App. 284, l. 15 – 287, l. 3; App. 348, l. 16 – 356, l. 1; App. 406, l. 18 – 407, l. 13.

Three pathologists testified at trial – Dr. Bradley Marcus for the State, Dr. Adel Shaker for defendant Gray, and Dr. Sandra Conradi for defendant Reese. App. 670; App. 841; App. 906. All of them agreed that the cause of Mack's death was a closed head injury to the brain due to blunt force trauma. App. 705, l. 1 – 710, l. 13; App. 848, ll. 3-7; App. 913, l. 22 – 914, l. 25. Dr. Conradi opined that the fatal injury was caused from falling or being propelled onto a hard surface, causing the skull to fracture. App. 912, ll. 4-20; App. 914, ll. 2-25; App. 916, l. 24 – 917, l. 6. The State called Dr. Clay Nichols in rebuttal, who agreed that “the timeline and injuries indicate that it would have been a second assault where the deceased fell and hit the

concrete, resulting in closed head injury” that caused Mack’s death. App. 1010, ll. 4-15; App. 1011, ll. 8-22. By all accounts, Gray had already caused Mack to fall and strike his head on the pavement prior to Reese’s arrival at the scene. App. 282, l. 21 – 283, l. 6; App. 404, l. 23 – 405, l. 2; App. 643, ll. 22-25; App. 943, ll. 8-11.

At the post-conviction relief hearing, Reese made several allegations of ineffective assistance of counsel. Amongst others, the specific allegations included that trial counsel rendered deficient performance in failing to request that Reese not be visibly shackled in front of the jury; failing to object to testimony of the prosecution’s investigator, Campbell Streeter; and failing to object to testimony of Sergeant William Pegram. *See* discussion *infra* in Issues II-IV. Neither these, nor any of the other allegations, were specifically ruled upon in the PCR court’s Order of Dismissal. App. 1353 – 1363. PCR counsel properly filed a motion to amend pursuant to Rule 59(e), SCRCP, but it was denied. App. 1365 – 1366; App. 1370.

Relevant Facts

In Reese’s original PCR application, she raised three allegations of ineffective assistance of trial counsel, which included that trial counsel was deficient in failing to provide explanations for the jury strikes following the State’s Batson² motion; failing to argue a proper basis for the giving of a charge on the lesser offense of voluntary manslaughter; and failing to challenge the prosecution’s allegations that Reese placed a telephone call to her co-defendant/brother, Henry Gray, on the day of the incident. App. 1263 – 1264. Without objection, PCR counsel orally amended the application to add the following allegations of ineffective assistance of trial counsel: (1) Failure to move to suppress Applicant’s statement as not voluntarily given; (2) Failure to object to impermissible comments during Solicitor’s closing argument; (3) Failure to

² Batson v. Kentucky, 476 U.S. 79 (1986).

object to Applicant being seen by jury while wearing both ankle and wrist shackles; (4) Failure to properly advise Applicant with regards to her decision to testify; (5) Failure to obtain Applicant's phone records; (6) General failure to prepare; (7) Failure to investigate and speak with state's witnesses; and (8) Failure to object during the testimony of Campbell Streeter and William Pegram. App. 1277, l. 9 – 1278, l. 8; App. 1354.

The PCR court's Order of Dismissal was divided into four sections – "Procedural History," "Allegations," "Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law," and "Conclusion." App. 1353 – 1362. The "Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law" section included sub-sections of "Summary of testimony," "Ineffective Assistance of Counsel," and "All Other Allegations." App. 1358 – 1361. The second section regarding ineffective assistance of counsel included the typical recitation of applicable law, followed by these two paragraphs:

This Court finds Applicant has failed to show that trial counsel's performance fell below an objective standard of reasonableness. All testimony indicated that trial counsel was extremely familiar with the facts of Applicant's case. This Court finds trial counsel met with Applicant an adequate number of times and was familiar with the discovery materials. Trial counsel indicated that he explained Applicant's constitutional rights, and explained the differences between going to trial and entering a guilty plea. Counsel indicated he never had trouble communicating with Applicant, and he never had any concern that Applicant did not fully understand their conversations.

Trial counsel refuted all allegations that Applicant made in her application as well as during her testimony including, but not limited to, voluntariness of her statement; preparation for the trial; specific potential objections during the course of trial; issues regarding the Applicant being shackled; Applicant's decision to testify; and allegedly impermissible comments made by the solicitor during closing argument. This Court finds that, through the presentation of evidence at the post-conviction relief hearing, Applicant has failed to demonstrate both deficiency by trial counsel, as well as any prejudice caused by trial counsel's actions. Therefore, this allegation is denied and dismissed with prejudice.

App. 1361.

PCR counsel filed a timely motion to amend pursuant to Rule 59(e), SCRCPP, pointing out the PCR court's failure to specific findings of fact and conclusions of law regarding each of the claims presented at the evidentiary hearing, as required by S.C. CODE ANN. § 17-27-80. App. 1365. The State filed a return to the motion with the following response: "Respondent submits that the Order of Dismissal contains the appropriate findings of fact and conclusions of law as required by S.C. Code Ann. § 17-27-80 (1976), and Rule 52(a) SCRCPP. See also McCray v. State, 305 S.C. 329, 408 S.E.2d 241 (1991)." App. 1367. The PCR court denied the motion to amend in a form order. App. 1370.

Discussion

The Uniform Post-Conviction Procedure Act mandates: "The court shall make specific findings of fact, and state expressly its conclusions of law, relating to each issue presented." S.C. CODE ANN. § 17-27-80; see also Rule 52(a), SCRCPP. "The PCR court's general denial of all claims not specifically addressed in the PCR court's order 'does not constitute a sufficient ruling on any issues since it does not set forth specific findings of fact and conclusions of law.'" Simmons v. State, 416 S.C. 584, 592, 788 S.E.2d 220, 225 (2016) (quoting Marlar v. State, 375 S.C. 407, 409, 653 S.E.2d 266, 266 (2007)). "The failure to specifically rule on the issues precludes appellate review of the issues." Marlar v. State, 375 S.C. 407, 408, 653 S.E.2d 266, 266 (2007). "To preserve issues for appellate review, 'after an order is filed, counsel has an obligation to review the order and file a Rule 59(e), SCRCPP motion to alter or amend if the order fails to set forth the findings and the reasons for those findings as required by section 17-27-80 of the South Carolina Code and Rule 52(a), SCRCPP.'" Id. (quoting Pruitt v. State, 310 S.C. 254, 256, 423 S.E.2d 127, 128 (1992)).

In McCray v. State, 305 S.C. 329, 408 S.E.2d 241 (1991), this Court reversed the order denying McCray relief and remanded for a new PCR hearing where the PCR court dismissed McCray's allegations of ineffective assistance of counsel without making findings of fact on the specific allegations raised. The McCray Court ruled that the PCR court's conclusions regarding ineffective assistance were insufficient for appellate review and failed to meet the standard set forth in the statute. 305 S.C. at 330, 408 S.E.2d at 241.

In Simmons v. State, 416 S.C. 584, 591-94, 788 S.E.2d 220, 224-25 (2016), this Court again remanded to the PCR court for proceedings consistent with the Court's opinion where the order "vacated Simmons's death sentence pursuant to Atkins and summarily denied the remaining claims, including Simmons's challenge to the DNA evidence, 'as without merit.'" In Simmons, despite the PCR attorney's failure to file a motion to alter or amend, this Court found that Simmons' case was one of the rare circumstances where remand was "in the best interests of justice" despite the issue preservation problem. 416 S.C. at 592-93, 788 S.E.2d at 225. The Court declined the petitioner's invitation to grant relief in the form of a new trial, finding that "making findings of fact de novo would be contrary to [the] appellate setting." Id. at 593, 788 S.E.2d at 225. The Court further ruled that "a preemptive ruling on the merits would be unfair to the State, which would be deprived of the opportunity to have this matter fully resolved by a proper order from the PCR court." Id. The Court reasoned that the State "should not be foreclosed from the panoply of arguments available to it, especially related to the prejudice prong in the PCR analysis and the strength of Petitioner's confession to the crimes." Id.

In the present case, the PCR court's Order of Dismissal constitutes little more than a general denial of the claims presented. App. 1353 – 1363. However, unlike Simmons, PCR counsel did file a motion to amend pursuant to Rule 59(e), SCRPC, arguing that the order failed

to comply with the statutory requirement for specific findings of fact and conclusions of law regarding each of the claims presented at the evidentiary hearing. App. 1365. Thus, PCR counsel's filing of the proper motion to amend should bar any claim that the issues raised herein are unpreserved. The State argued in response that "the Order of Dismissal contains the appropriate findings of fact and conclusions of law as required by S.C. Code Ann. § 17-27-80 (1976), and Rule 52(a) SCRPC." App. 1367. This should further preclude the State from arguing that a more specific order is necessary to protect its rights and interests, as such would be contrary to its argument to the PCR court.

Even so, Petitioner recognizes that "[t]he absence of factual findings makes [the appellate Court's] task of reviewing the court order impossible because the reasons underlying the decision are left to speculation." In re Treatment & Care of Luckabaugh, 351 S.C. 122, 133, 568 S.E.2d 338, 343 (2002). "Proper appellate review is extremely difficult, if not impossible, where a lower court omits specific findings of fact to support its legal conclusions." Atkinson v. Atkinson, 279 S.C. 454, 456, 309 S.E.2d 14, 15 (Ct. App. 1983). Moreover, Petitioner is entitled to only "one bite at the apple" in PCR. See Odom v. State, 337 S.C. 256, 523 S.E.2d 753 (1999); Aice v. State, 305 S.C. 448, 409 S.E.2d 392 (1991). Thus, to the extent that this Court finds a remand is necessary before it can grant relief on the issues related to the substantive allegations of ineffective assistance of counsel raised herein, Petitioner requests that the remand proceedings be expedited. See Simmons, 416 S.C. at 593 n. 13, 788 S.E.2d at 225 n. 13 (instructing "this matter should be expedited, regardless of whether the PCR court allows additional evidence").

II. The PCR court erred in finding that trial counsel rendered effective assistance of counsel where he failed to object to Petitioner's wearing both wrist and ankle shackles in view of the jury throughout the trial.

Relevant Facts

During co-defendant counsel's opening argument, he made reference to the fact that his client was "sitting here at the defense table with shackles on his feet." App. 166, ll. 9-13; see also App. 163, ll. 4-6. Unlike her co-defendant, Petitioner Reese was released on bond following her arrest. However, arrangements were not made with her bondsman so that she could remain on bond during the trial. The jury having been sworn on the morning of February 29, 2012, Reese was taken into custody at the lunch break. App. 171, l. 21 – 172, l. 19; App. 334, l. 11 – 335, l. 21. As a result, the jurors, who originally saw Reese unbound during jury selection, preliminary instructions, and opening statements, returned to court on the afternoon of February 29, 2012 to observe her shackled.

At the PCR hearing, both Reese and trial counsel testified that Reese wore plain clothes but remained shackled at both her wrists and ankles once taken into custody on the 29th and for the remainder of her trial. App. 1297, ll. 7-24; App. 1301, ll. 18-20; App. 1305, l. 24 – 1306, l. 5; App. 1312, l. 8 – 1313, l. 7. Both further agreed that when Reese took the stand to testify she walked in front of the jury from the defense table to the witness box in her ankle and wrist shackles. App. 1297, ll. 7-24; App. 1301, ll. 18-20; App. 1322, l. 10 – 1323, l. 1; see App. 933, ll. 11-23 (reflecting that no break was taken before Reese took the stand). Trial counsel Farley claimed that the reason that he failed to object to Reese wearing shackles visible to the jury was because he did not want to challenge a previous ruling made by the trial judge. App. 1332, ll. 16-21. Inexplicably, Farley testified: "It was my understanding that that was the protocol that they could have on civilian clothes, but they were going to be shackled while they were in

custody.” App. 1334, ll. 2-17. Farley seemed to equate the requirement that Reese be taken into custody during court breaks and overnight as a requirement that she be shackled in the courtroom. App. 1312, ll. 15-25; App. 1322, l. 25 – 1323, l. 1.

As discussed *supra* in Issue I, the PCR court’s ruling as to this issue did not comply with the requirement for specific findings of fact and conclusions of law. See S.C. CODE ANN. § 17-27-80; Rule 52(a) SCRPC. In the summary of testimony, the court did note that Reese “testified that even though she was dressed in street clothes during the trial, she was shackled and walked in front of the jury in shackles.” App. 1356. Regarding trial counsel’s testimony, the court wrote: “At that time, the trial judge remanded the defendants into custody and said that they would be shackled. Trial counsel did not recall objecting to his client being shackled in front of the jury, as he was under the clear understanding that the trial judge intended for them to remain in shackles.” App. 1358. As far as conclusions, the PCR court ruled: “Trial counsel refuted all allegations that Applicant made in her application as well as during her testimony including, but not limited to... issues regarding the Applicant being shackled...” App. 1361. The PCR court further generally found: “[T]hrough the presentation of evidence at the post-conviction relief hearing, Applicant has failed to demonstrate both deficiency by trial counsel, as well as any prejudice caused by trial counsel’s actions.” App. 1361. Despite the insufficiency of the PCR court’s order, there is no evidence to support a ruling that trial counsel rendered effective assistance where he never made a request at the trial that Reese not be shackled, or at the very least that her shackles not be visible to the jury.

Right to Effective Assistance of Counsel

A criminal defendant is guaranteed the right to effective assistance of counsel under the Sixth Amendment to the United States Constitution. U.S. CONST. amend. VI; Strickland v.

Washington, 466 U.S. 668 (1984). “Where allegations of ineffective assistance of counsel are made, the question becomes, ‘whether counsel’s conduct so undermined the proper functioning of the adversarial process that the trial cannot be relied on as having produced a just result.’ ” Butler v. State, 286 S.C. 441, 442, 334 S.E.2d 813, 814 (1985) (quoting Strickland, 466 U.S. at 686). Courts evaluate allegations of ineffective assistance of counsel using a two-pronged test. Cherry v. State, 300 S.C. 115, 117, 386 S.E.2d 624, 625 (1989) (citing Strickland, 466 U.S. at 668).

First, the applicant must demonstrate counsel’s representation was deficient, which is measured by an objective standard of reasonableness. Strickland, 466 U.S. at 687–88. “Under this prong, ‘[t]he proper measure of attorney performance remains simply reasonableness under prevailing professional norms.’” Cherry, 300 S.C. at 117, 386 S.E.2d at 625 (quoting Strickland, 466 U.S. at 688). “Second, the applicant must demonstrate he was prejudiced by counsel’s performance in such a manner that, but for counsel’s error, there is a reasonable probability the result of the proceedings would have been different. Strickland, 466 U.S. at 694. “A reasonable probability is a probability sufficient to undermine confidence in the outcome.” Id.

Discussion

The evidence before the PCR court was consistent that Reese was shackled at both her wrists and ankles from the afternoon of February 29, 2012 through the end of the trial on March 2, 2012. Further, she walked from the defense table to the witness box in front of the jury wearing those shackles. App. 1297, ll. 7-24; App. 1301, ll. 18-20; App. 1305, l. 24 – 1306, l. 5; App. 1312, l. 8 – 1313, l. 7. Counsel articulated no strategic reason for failing to request that she be unshackled or that the shackles not be visible to the jury. Rather, he claimed that the shackling of a defendant during their trial was “protocol” for all offenders who were in custody during trial. App. 1334, ll. 2-17. As will be discussed more fully *infra*, to the extent that such a

“protocol” existed, it is in direct contravention to the United States Supreme Court’s ruling in Deck v. Missouri, 544 U.S. 622 (2005). What appears more likely is that trial counsel misunderstood the trial court’s ruling and failed to protect Reese’s rights by raising no objection to her visible shackling.

In Illinois v. Allen, 397 U.S. 337 (1970), the United States Supreme Court examined the right of a criminal defendant to be present throughout his trial. The Court recognized the need to balance the defendant’s right to be present with the need to maintain dignity, order and decorum in the courtrooms. Id. at 343-344. Although the Court recognized that in some situations, binding and gagging a defendant may be the fairest and most reasonable way to handle some disruptive defendants, the Court explained “even to contemplate such a technique, much less see it, arouses a feeling that no person should be tried while shackled and gagged except as a last resort.” Id. at 344. The Court explained that the sight of the shackles and gags would likely have a significant effect on the jury’s feelings about the defendant and the use of the restraints represented “an affront to the very dignity and decorum of judicial proceedings.” Id. Further, a defendant’s ability to communicate with counsel is greatly reduced when a defendant is restrained. Id.

In State v. Tucker, 320 S.C. 206, 209, 464 S.E.2d 105, 107 (1995), a capital direct appeal, the appellant argued that his shackling throughout his trial violated his due process and equal protection rights and prejudiced him in both the guilt and sentencing phases. This Court noted that “[w]hether a defendant is restrained during trial is within the trial judge’s discretion. The trial judge is to balance the prejudicial effect of shackling with the considerations of courtroom decorum and security.” 320 S.C. at 209, 464 S.E.2d at 107 (citing Illinois v. Allen, 397 U.S. 337 (1970)). The Court aptly noted that “[t]he trial judge is the best equipped to decide the extent to which security measures should be adopted to prevent disruption of the trial, harm to those in the

courtroom, escape of the accused, and prevention of other crimes.” Id. Tucker had two previous convictions for escape and at least one conviction for attempted escape. Id. He had also fled the State following and resisted his arrest, assaulting the officers. Id. Additionally, the trial judge insured that Tucker’s shackles were not visible to the jury and provided a curative instruction to the jury to explain Tucker’s failure to stand when the judge entered and exited the courtroom. Id. Thus, this Court found: “Balancing the effect of the restraints and the need for security, the trial judge did not err in restraining appellant based upon appellant’s prior history of escapes and his resistance to arrest.” Id. at 209-10, 464 S.E.2d at 107.

In Humbert v. State, 345 S.C. 332, 548 S.E.2d 862 (2001), the issue before this Court was whether trial counsel was deficient in permitting the defendant to proceed to trial in the prison jumpsuit. Though Humbert was also shackled and wearing a prison identification bracelet during his trial, only the jumpsuit issue was preserved for appellate review. 345 S.C. at 337, 548 S.E.2d at 865. The Court determined that there was evidence to support the PCR court’s finding that trial counsel was deficient in allowing the defendant to proceed to trial dressed in prison clothing. Id. The Court explained “it [is] generally improper for a defendant to appear for a jury trial dressed in readily identifiable prison clothing.” Id. In a footnote, the Court explained that a defendant’s appearance at trial dressed in jail clothing is not automatically reversible error because there may be situations where counsel determines the jail attire benefits the defense as a matter of trial strategy. Id. at 338 n.4, 548 S.E.2d at 865 n.4. The Court went on to hold that there was evidence to support the PCR court’s finding that Humbert was not prejudiced by trial counsel’s deficient performance concerning the prison clothing based upon the “overwhelming evidence” against him. Id. at 338, 548 S.E.2d at 865-866.

More recently, in Deck v. Missouri, 544 U.S. 622, 626 (2005), the United States Supreme Court explained “the law has long forbidden the routine use of visible shackles during the guilt phase” of a criminal trial. Rather, the law “permits a State to shackle a criminal defendant *only* in the presence of a special need.” 544 U.S. at 626 (emphasis added). The Court noted the long history of cases which have held that it is only in “extreme and exceptional cases, where the safe custody of the prisoner and the peace of the tribunal” imperatively demand them that restraints will be tolerated. Id. at 626-27.

The Deck Court explained that “a basic element of the ‘due process of law’ protected by . . . Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution prohibit[s] the use of physical restraints visible to the jury absent a trial court determination . . . that [the restraints] are justified by a state interest specific to a particular trial;” 544 U.S. at 629. The purpose of this prohibition is to give effect to three fundamental legal principles. First, the criminal justice system presumes a defendant is innocent until proven guilty. Id. “Visible shackling undermines the presumption of innocence and the related fairness of the factfinding process.” Id. Second, physical restraints may interfere with a defendant’s ability to communicate with his counsel and participate in his own defense. Id. at 631. Third, the use of shackles undermines the dignity and decorum of judicial proceedings, “which includes the respectful treatment of defendants, reflects the importance of the matter at issue, guilt or innocence, and the gravity with which Americans consider any deprivation of an individual’s liberty through criminal punishment.” Id. Thus, the Deck Court held: “[T]he Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments prohibit the use of physical restraints visible to the jury absent a trial court determination, in the exercise of its discretion, that they are justified by a state interest specific to a particular trial. Such a determination may of course take into account the factors that

courts have traditionally relied on in gauging potential security problems and the risk of escape at trial.” Id.

The issue before this Court is whether trial counsel provided ineffective assistance by failing to object to Petitioner Reese wearing wrist and ankle shackles that were visible to the jury. While the PCR court found trial counsel’s testimony “credible,” such a finding goes merely to the sincerity of PCR counsel’s explanations for failing to object to the visible shackles worn by Reese and not to the reasonableness of those explanations. App. 1355; App. 1358. Farley seemed to contend that when Judge Cooper ruled that Reese would be taken into custody rather than remain on bond for trial, there was some implicit ruling that she would be shackled for trial. He said that “when the -- Judge Cooper made the ruling that they would be in custody, then they would be shackled. So it wasn’t my preference.” App. 1312, l. 14 – 1313, l. 7. When asked why Farley did not object to Reese walking across the courtroom to testify while shackled, Farley said, “I mean, when the judge took them into custody, that was his ruling.” App. 1322, l. 10 – 1323, l. 1. Under cross-examination by the State, Farley agreed with the suggestion that his failure to object was because he “didn’t want to challenge a previous ruling made by the judge.” App. 1332, ll. 16-21. On re-direct he further alleged that it was his “understanding that it was protocol” that defendants in custody could wear civilian clothes “but they were going to be shackled while they were in custody.” App. 1334, ll. 2-13.

In order to rule on deficiency, the PCR court was required to analyze whether trial counsel’s “understanding” and failure to object on the record to visible shackling fell below an objective standard of reasonableness. See Strickland, 466 U.S. 668. The sincerity of trial counsel’s unfounded and misguided explanations do not make them reasonable. The law discussed *supra* provides that there is a constitutional presumption against visible shackling of

defendants during the guilt phase of a criminal trial. Deck, 544 U.S. at 626, 628. In fact, Deck prohibits the routine use of visible shackles, such as the “protocol” alleged to exist by trial counsel Farley. See id. at 626. A defendant’s right to remain free from visible shackles “may be overcome in a particular instance by essential state interests such as physical security, escape prevention, or courtroom decorum.” Id. at 628.

Here, trial counsel failed to protect Reese’s constitutional rights when he made no request that she be unrestrained during trial or that any necessary restraints not be visible to the jury. Had such a request been made, the record provides no evidence that any shackling was necessary with respect to Reese. Reese was released on bond soon after turning herself in on February 19, 2010. App. 1279, ll. 17-25. She was not taken into custody until after the jury was sworn on February 29, 2012. That was not the result of any wrongdoing on her part, but rather her attorney’s failure to ensure that the bondsman provided the necessary documentation to reflect his intention to continue on the bond during the trial. App. 171, l. 21 – 172, l. 19; App. 334, l. 11 – 335, l. 21. Reese had no prior criminal convictions, with only an assault arrest showing on the rap sheet run by the prosecution. App. 1167, ll. 20-24. Further, there is nothing in the record to indicate that Reese acted unruly or disruptive at any point during the trial so as justify a departure from the constitutional presumption against shackling. Under the facts of this case, trial counsel’s acquiescence in Reese appearing before the jury in visible physical restraints was deficient performance.

Trial counsel’s deficient performance prejudiced Reese because the use of wrist and ankle shackles conveys to the jury that a person is dangerous and violent. Further, in this case, the jurors saw Reese without any restraints during the voir dire, two rounds of jury selection and opening statements. When the jurors returned from lunch on February 29th, Reese was inexplicably subject

to harsh visible restraints. With conflicting testimony from both the lay witnesses and experts, credibility was of utmost importance in the trial. Further, Reese testified on her own behalf at the trial. Notably, she walked to the witness stand in front of the jury wearing both wrist and ankle shackles. The use of physical restraints limited Reese's ability to express herself on the witness stand and undermined the presumption of innocence. See Deck, 544 U.S. at 630 ("Visible shackling undermines the presumption of innocence and the related fairness of the factfinding process."). As a result, there was no possible conclusion for the PCR court to reach other than that Reese was deprived of her constitutional right to the effective assistance of counsel.

III. The PCR Court erred in finding that trial counsel rendered effective assistance of counsel where he failed to object to the unresponsive testimony of the prosecution's investigator, Campbell Streeter, who said that he believed State's witness Kara Chase was "being forthcoming" when she spoke with him, which was an improper comment upon another witness' credibility.

Relevant Facts

Kara Chase was called by the State to testify at Petitioner Reese's trial. Chase testified that in February of 2010, she was homeless but would sometimes stay with Synovia Thompson who lived in Gonzalez Gardens. App. 394, l. 2 – 395, l. 6. On February 13, 2010, Chase was visiting Synovia when she saw an encounter between Henry "Six" Gray and Mack in front of the G building of Gonzalez Gardens. App. 395, l. 7 – 399, l. 17. Chase said that Six hit Mack and she saw Mack fall to the ground. She explained: "It looked like when he [Six] went to hit him [Mack], he kind of missed him, which caught the man off guard which kind of- that's why I said he was swept off his feet." App. 399, l. 18 – 400, l. 7. She further clarified that Six "did not kick the man down," but rather that "[i]t was has [sic] if the man lost his balance" and then went down. App. 400, ll. 8-22. After Mack fell, Six "walked off" and Mack did not get up. App. 400, l. 23 – 401, l. 10; see also App. 403, ll. 1-6.

Chase said that what happened next was “blurry” and testified that she was now blind and on dialysis. App. 401, ll. 11-25. Chase vaguely remembered giving statements to the police following the incident. App. 402, ll. 17-20. The prosecutor asked Chase numerous questions about portions of the statement, which she either clarified or denied making. App. 403, ll. 7 – 416, l. 9; App. 419, l. 1 – 420, l. 7. Chase was consistent that while it was written in her statement, she had no specific recollection of Reese ever hitting Mack with any object, especially a chair. App. 423, l. 15 – 425, l. 3. It was also revealed through cross-examination that Chase’s second “statement” was not written or signed by her. App. 430, ll. 2-24.

In an attempt to impeach Chase, the prosecutor called their investigator, Campbell Streeter, to testify over defense objection. App. 631, l. 6 – 633, l. 19. Streeter claimed that he spoke with Chase twice and that she told him on both occasions that the content of her prior statements from 2010 were “correct.” App. 731, l. 15 – 735, l. 18. On re-cross-examination by Farley, Streeter was asked: “Just to follow up, when you asked her [Chase] those questions regarding the statements, do you think she was -- did she appear nervous to you?” App. 745, ll. 9-11. Streeter responded: “No, she was not nervous when she talked to me. I felt like she was being forthcoming.” App. 745, ll. 12-13. Reese’s attorney did not object to the response. Chase’s February 16, 2010 statement to police was then admitted through investigator Robert McCracken, over the defense’s objection. App. 746 – 748.

When asked about his failure to object to Streeter’s response that Chase seemed “forthcoming” during his conversation with her, trial counsel said that he had no reason to object. When asked if he had any strategic reason for failing to object, Farley responded: “No, I don’t think there was any. That was just his testimony. I’m not sure what you mean.” App. 1314, l. 18 – 1315, l. 15.

As discussed *supra* in Issue I, the PCR court’s ruling as to this issue did not comply with the requirement for specific findings of fact and conclusions of law. See S.C. CODE ANN. § 17-27-80; Rule 52(a) SCRCF. In the summary of testimony, the PCR wrote: “Another specific point of questioning was found at page 747, line 13 of the trial transcript, in which Investigator Streeter testified that a witness’s statement ‘seemed forthcoming.’ Trial counsel did not object at the time, and testified that he still did not see a reason to object.” App. 1358. As far as conclusions, the PCR court ruled: “Trial counsel refuted all allegations that Applicant made in her application as well as during her testimony including, but not limited to... specific potential objections during the course of trial....” App. 1361. The PCR court further generally found: “[T]hrough the presentation of evidence at the post-conviction relief hearing, Applicant has failed to demonstrate both deficiency by trial counsel, as well as any prejudice caused by trial counsel’s actions.” App. 1361. Despite the insufficiency of the PCR court’s order, there is no evidence to support a ruling that trial counsel rendered effective assistance where he failed to object to a witness’ impermissible comment on the credibility of another witness.

Discussion

“Our courts have previously held that ‘[t]he assessment of witness credibility is within the exclusive province of the jury,’ and that witnesses generally are ‘not allowed to testify whether another witness is telling the truth.’” State v. Kromah, 401 S.C. 340, 358, 737 S.E.2d 490, 499–500 (2013) (quoting State v. McKerley, 397 S.C. 461, 464, 725 S.E.2d 139, 141 (Ct. App. 2012) (alteration in original)). Moreover, “[i]t is improper for the solicitor to cross-examine a witness in such a manner as to force him to attack the veracity of another witness. This error is reversible if the accused is unfairly prejudiced thereby.” State v. Bryant, 316 S.C. 216, 221, 447 S.E.2d 852, 855 (1994) (quoting State v. Sapps, 295 S.C. 484, 486, 369 S.E.2d 145, 145–46 (1988)).

Here, the improper testimony was elicited by Reese's own counsel rather than by the prosecutor. Farley provided no strategic reason for his failure to object, instead seeming not to understand why the response was objectionable at all. The proper objection was that the Streeter's testimony was an impermissible comment on the credibility of another witness, accompanied by a motion to strike. Because Farley was the attorney conducting the questioning, he could have additionally objected to Streeter's response the Chase was "being forthcoming" as unresponsive to the question posed. Farley's failure to object was deficient. Reese was prejudiced by Streeter's comment because Chase's credibility was important to the trial where the eye witnesses gave conflicting accounts events.

IV. The PCR Court erred in finding that trial counsel rendered effective assistance of counsel where he failed to object to Sergeant William Pegram's testimony that "in my opinion of the law, everybody involved in this case was guilty but I had to determine the principal parties in the case," which invaded the province of the judge and jury.

Relevant Facts

Sergeant William Pegram served as the lead investigator on the case from the Columbia Police Department. App. 757, ll. 1-4. Pegram testified that as a result of his investigation he interviewed Angelo "Ricky" Boyd. When asked by the prosecutor why Boyd was not charged with any crime following his statement, Pegram responded: "Because I was still trying to determine what we had and who the principal party was in the case. By law -- in my opinion of the law, everybody involved in this case was guilty but I had to determine the principal parties in the case." App. 776, l. 16 – 777, l. 6. Reese's trial attorney offered no objection. At the PCR hearing, trial counsel reviewed the relevant portion of the transcript and said: "Reading it now, it probably is an objection and I may have -- in the length of the trial, I may have just missed that objection." App. 1315, l. 16 – 1316, l. 3.

As discussed *supra* in Issue I, the PCR court's ruling as to this issue did not comply with the requirement for specific findings of fact and conclusions of law. See S.C. CODE ANN. § 17-27-80; Rule 52(a) SCRPC. In the summary of testimony, the PCR court wrote: "[W]hen asked why he did not object to Sergeant Pegram offering his opinion on the law at page 779, lines 3-6, trial counsel stated that he should have objected." App. 1358. As far as conclusions, the PCR court ruled: "Trial counsel refuted all allegations that Applicant made in her application as well as during her testimony including, but not limited to... specific potential objections during the course of trial" App. 1361. The PCR court further generally found: "[T]hrough the presentation of evidence at the post-conviction relief hearing, Applicant has failed to demonstrate both deficiency by trial counsel, as well as any prejudice caused by trial counsel's actions." App. 1361. Despite the insufficiency of the PCR court's order, there is no evidence to support a ruling that trial counsel rendered effective assistance where he failed to object to a law enforcement officer's testimony that everyone involved, which would have included Reese and her co-defendant, were guilty under the law.

Discussion


Pegram improperly invaded the province of the judge and jury when he testified that it was his opinion that under the law "everybody involved in this case was guilty". See App. 776, l. 16 – 777, l. 6. Because Pegram testified as a lay witness, any opinion testimony he gave was controlled by Rule 701, SCRE, which provides:

If the witness is not testifying as an expert, the witness' testimony in the form of opinions or inferences is limited to those opinions or inferences which (a) are rationally based on the perception of the witness, (b) are helpful to a clear understanding of the witness' testimony or the determination of a fact in issue, and (c) do not require special knowledge, skill, experience or training.

This Court made clear that it is “the longstanding rule of law that no one may invade the province of the jury.” Briggs v. State, 421 S.C. 316, 328, 806 S.E.2d 713, 719 (2017); Rosamond v. Lucas-Kidd Motor Co., 182 S.C. 331, 189 S.E. 641, 647 (1937) (“The Constitution has made the jurors the sole judges of the facts as testified in a case. The judge is forbidden to even intimate the opinion he may have of the truth or falsity of the testimony.”). Thus, the content of Pegram’s testimony was no less improper because he was the lead case agent. Further, it was the trial judge’s responsibility to charge the jury on the law. See App. 136, ll. 1-3; App. 1133, l. 21 – 1134, l. 4. Trial counsel was deficient in failing to object to Pegram’s testimony and admitted that his failure to object was a mistake. App. 1315, l. 16 – 1316, l. 3. In this case, where testimony of the lay and expert witnesses varied wildly, there is a reasonable probability that Pegram’s testimony affected the outcome of the trial.

CONCLUSION

Based on the foregoing, Petitioner Robin Gray Reese respectfully requests that this Court grant the petition for writ of certiorari and order further briefing of the issues raised herein. In the event that this Court dispenses with further briefing, Reese requests that the order denying post-conviction relief be reversed, that her convictions and sentences be reversed, and that her case be remanded for a new trial. Alternatively, Reese requests that her case be remanded to the post-conviction relief court for the issuance of an order with sufficient findings and conclusions as to each issue presented, as required by S.C. CODE ANN. § 17-27-80.



Laura R. Baer
Appellate Defender
ATTORNEY FOR PETITIONER

This 27th day of December, 2017.

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE SUPREME COURT

—————
Certiorari to Richland County

Honorable Jocelyn J. Newman, Circuit Court Judge
—————

ROBIN GRAY REESE,

PETITIONER

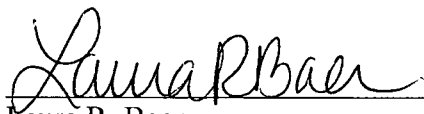
V.

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA,

RESPONDENT

—————
CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE
—————

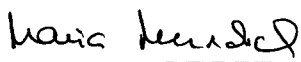
The undersigned hereby certifies that a true copy of the Petition for Writ of Certiorari and a copy of the Appendix in the above referenced case has been served upon Jessica Kinard, Esquire, at the Rembert Dennis Building, 1000 Assembly Street, Room 519, Columbia, SC 29201; and a copy of the Petition for Writ of Certiorari and a copy of the Appendix have been served on Robin G. Reese, at Camille Griffin Graham Correctional Center, 4450 Broad River Road, Columbia, SC 29210, this 27th day of December, 2017.



Laura R. Baer
Appellate Defender

ATTORNEY FOR PETITIONER

SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN TO before me
this 27th day of December, 2017.

 (L.S)

Notary Public for South Carolina

My Commission Expires: July 3, 2023