STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE COURT OF APPEALS

Appeal from Orangeburg County

Edgar Dickson, Circuit Court Judge

THE STATE,

RESPONDENT,

V.

DAISY LYNNE MIMMS,

APPELLANT.

Appellate Case No. 2012-212931

FINAL BRIEF OF APPELLANT

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STATEMENT OF THE CASE

This appeal arises out of Daisy Mimms' conviction for driving under the influence in violation of S.C Code § 56-5-2930. On April 11, 2011, Ms. Mimms was tried in the Magistrate's Court of Orangeburg County with the Honorable Meree D. Williamson presiding.

At the conclusion of the State's case, counsel moved for a directed verdict arguing the evidence was insufficient to show Ms. Mimms' driving was "materially and appreciably impaired." Counsel also moved for a directed verdict, asserting there was no evidence Ms. Mimms possessed criminal intent. The motions were denied. R. 31.

At the conclusion of the evidence, counsel renewed the motions. The motions were again denied. Counsel requested the court instruct the jury on criminal intent. The court refused, ruling that driving under the influence is a strict liability crime. R.* Electronic Recording of Trial.

Ms. Mimms was found guilty. The court imposed a sentence of thirty days incarceration, suspended upon the payment of a fine of $997.00. R. p. 4.

The motions were renewed after the verdict.

A Notice of Appeal was filed on April 21, 2011 R. p. 27.

The appeal to the circuit court was heard by the Honorable Edgar W. Dickson on January 5, 2012. R. p. 32. The undersigned again represented the Appellant, and Assistant Solicitor Anne Hutto represented the State. Id. Judge Dickson issued an Order dated September 6, 2012, finding that there was no legal or factual grounds constituting error on the part of the magistrate and dismissing the appeal with prejudice. R. p. 53. Appellant filed and served notice of appeal dated September 14, 2012.

STATEMENT OF THE FACTS

On the night of October 23, 2010, Trooper James H. Burriss of the South Carolina Highway Patrol was notified of a driver driving erratically on Interstate 26 R. p. 31. The Trooper testified he saw a car that fit the description and travelled behind the car. He saw the vehicle veer outside of the lane of travel, crossing the white line on the right side of the roadway but not leaving the paved portion of the roadway, and then return to the travel lanes R.* Electronic Recording of Trial. This occurred once whereupon he initiated his blue lights and stopped the vehicle R.* Electronic Recording of Trial. The Trooper testified he smelled the odor of alcohol R. p. 30.

At the scene, Ms. Mimms was given the horizontal gaze nystagmus test R. p. 30. Trooper Burriss testified Ms. Mimms was unable to keep her balance and that he felt the roadside was unsafe to administer any further field sobriety tests. R. p. 30.

The Trooper testified that Ms. Mimms stated she was being treated for cancer and was taking chemotherapy as a result thereof R.* Electronic Recording of Trial. Trooper Burriss' testified he believed Ms. Mimms might be suffering from cancer as he observed that she did not have any hair. R.* Electronic Recording of Trial. The Trooper testified Ms. Mimms stated that she had consumed one alcoholic drink earlier R.* Electronic Recording of Trial. There was no evidence that Ms. Mimms knew that consuming a beer while undergoing chemotherapy would impact her ability to drive R.* Electronic Recording of Trial.

Ms. Mimms was arrested. She refused to take a breathalyzer test.

Ms. Mimms did not testify at the trial.

After deliberations, the jury returned a verdict of guilty.

ARGUMENT

I. The trial court erred in ruling that there is no criminal intent required for the crime of driving under the influence.

The law to be charged is determined from the evidence presented at trial, and if any evidence exists to support a charge, it should be given. State v. Burriss, 334 S.C. 256, 262, 513 S.E.2d 104, 108 (1999). The trial court in the instant matter declined to instruct the jury on the issue of criminal intent believing driving under the influence is a strict liability crime. This was error. When the lack of criminal intent is raised by the evidence, as it was in this case, due process requires the jury be instructed on criminal intent.

Driving under the influence is not a strict liability crime. Strict liability crimes, with few exceptions, are regulatory in nature and do not involve substantial terms of incarceration. At the trial, the crime of driving under the influence of alcohol was analogized to speeding. However, driving under the influence carries significant penalties including a potential prison sentence of up to five years for a fourth offense. Therefore, driving under the influence is not a crime with insignificant consequences and due process requires criminal intent.

A legislative intent to do away with a mens rea requirement should not be lightly inferred and courts have imposed a mens rea requirement when one was not written into the statute. The crime of kidnapping is such a situation.

In Morissette v. United States, 342 U.S. 246, 72 S. Ct. 240 (1952), the defendant was charged with violating a criminal statute. At the trial and in the lower appellate courts, it was asserted that if no mens rea appeared in the statute that there was no criminal intent required. The Supreme Court found that although there was no mens rea element in the statute, a court could impose such a requirement. The court stated, "We hold that mere omission ... of any

mention of intent will not be construed as eliminating that element from the crimes denounced." Id. at 263 (Emphasis added.). The court explained its rationale with the following language:

> Crime, as a compound concept, generally constituted only from concurrence of an evil-meaning mind with an evil-doing hand, was congenial to an intense individualism and took deep and early root in American soil. As the states codified the common law of crimes, even if their enactments were silent on the subject, their courts assumed that the omission did not signify disapproval of the principle but merely recognized that intent was so inherent in the idea of the offense that it required no statutory affirmation.

Id. at 251.

In State v. Ferguson, 302 S.C. 269, 395 S.E.2d 182 (1990), the defendant was charged with distribution of cocaine. The trial court ruled there was no mens rea requirement for the offense of distribution of cocaine. Our Supreme Court determined that even though a mental state was not included in the statute, the court could determine the required mental state. The court imposed a criminal intent requirement although one was not written into the statute.

The issue in this case was whether Ms. Mimms knew her chemotherapy treatment and the consumption of one beer would impact her ability to drive. As there was no evidence that she was aware of any potential negative impact on her ability to drive, the issue of criminal intent was an appropriate one for submission to the jury. The trial court was empowered to instruct the jury on criminal intent and due process required it do so.

II. The trial court erred in ruling that the mere veering off of a roadway on one occasion is sufficient to show impaired driving.

Driving under the influence is therefore established by proof that defendant's ability to drive was materially and appreciably impaired. State v. Kerr, 330 S.C. 132, 498 S.E.2d 212 (Ct. App. 1998)

The testimony was unequivocal that Ms. Mimms only left the main lane of travel on one occasion when she traveled over the white line on the right side of the roadway. She never left the paved portion of the roadway and never veered over the yellow line on the left side of her lane. Her driving was not enough to meet the requirement of "materially and appreciably impaired" driving. South Carolina law only requires a driver maintain a lane in travel as much as practicable.

The relevant statute is S.C Code § 56-5-1900(a) which provides, "A vehicle shall be driven as nearly as practicable entirely within a single lane and shall not be moved from the lane until the driver has first ascertained that such movement can be made with safety." (Emphasis added.) The statute does not penalize the act of leaving a lane of travel on one occasion.

As the only driving witnessed was the one occurrence of leaving her lane of travel, appellant submits her driving was not impaired and her motion for directed verdict should have been granted.

CONCLUSION

The trial court erred in ruling there is no criminal intent required for the crime of driving under the influence. The issue of whether the appellant possessed criminal intent was presented in testimony at the trial. The jury should have been instructed on criminal intent. Additionally, driving under the influence is a criminal statute with the potential for significant periods of incarceration. Due process requires that before an individual can be convicted and punished for a violation of such a statute, a jury should be required to find the individual possessed criminal intent.

The trial court erred in ruling that veering off of a roadway is sufficient to show impaired driving. Driving that is materially and appreciably impaired is a requirement for a conviction for driving under the influence. Leaving a lane of travel on one occasion and then returning to the travel lane is simply insufficient to show driving that is materially and appreciably impaired.

Accordingnly, Appellant respectfully requests reversal of her conviction and remand of her case for a new trial.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mark Wise

Mark Wise
Assistant Public Defender
ATTORNEY FOR APPELLANT

This 4th day of December 2013.

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THE STATE,

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

The undersigned attorney hereby certifies that a true copy of the Final Brief of Appellant in the above referenced case has been served upon Salley W. Elliott, Esq., attorney for Respondent, by depositing a copy of same in the United States Mail, postage prepaid, on this 4th day of December, 2013, addressed to Salley W. Elliott, Esq., Office of the Attorney General, Post Office Box 11549, Columbia, SC 29211, and upon Daisy Lynn Mimms, Appellant, by depositing a copy of same in the United States Mail, postage prepaid, on this 4th day of December, 2013, addressed to Daisy Lynn Mimms, 1150 Rosemead Road, Mount Pleasant, SC 29464.

Mark Wise

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Assistant Public Defender
ATTORNEY FOR APPELLANT