

IN THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
In the Court of Appeals

APPEAL FROM GREENVILLE COUNTY
Court of General Sessions

Appellate Case No. 2018-001745

The Honorable Letitia H. Verdin, Circuit Court Judge

The State of South Carolina.....Respondent,

v.

William Lee Carpenter.....Appellant.

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STATEMENT OF THE CASE

William Lee Carpenter was indicted by the Greenville County grand jury for two counts of criminal sexual conduct first degree, two counts of exposing another to HIV, and two counts of criminal sexual conduct third degree. He was tried before the Honorable Letitia H. Verdin and a jury between September 10- 13, 2018. He was convicted and sentenced to 30 years for both counts of criminal sexual conduct in the first degree, 10 years for each count of exposing another to HIV, and 15 years for both counts of criminal sexual conduct in the third degree. The sentences were ordered to run concurrently. Carpenter was represented by Joshua Kendrick and Christopher Leonard. The State was represented by Christy Sustakovitch and Candace Clark.

This appeal timely follows.

Relevant Facts

William Lee Carpenter was convicted of the sexual abuse of two of the four grandchildren who were living with him, his girlfriend, and his son and daughter-in-law during a two-year period. Tr. 96. Complicating the trial of this case is that Carpenter has unusual sexual preferences that, though legal, the State exploited in its attempt to prove Carpenter guilty of the crimes against his grandchildren, even though these sexual preferences were irrelevant and highly prejudicial. As Carpenter ultimately explained to the jury during his testimony, he is a “submissive” sexual partner who also is a coprophilic, or someone who receives sexual arousal from feces.

Evidence relating to this aspect of Carpenter's character was admitted into evidence, over objections, and constitutes the bases of X issues raised on this appeal.

Pre-Trial Motions and Pre-Trial Hearing

On August 18, 2016, defense counsel filed various motions to exclude irrelevant and highly prejudicial evidence sought to be admitted by the State. Relevant to the claims here, counsel filed a motion to exclude any and all references to any of Carpenter's sexual predilections that do not involve illegal activity. Counsel also filed a motion *in limine* related to any photographs pertaining to Carpenter's sexual preferences. A pre-trial hearing was held on September 6, 2018 regarding the admission of this evidence. Generally, defense counsel sought to keep out any references to Carpenter's interest in coprophilia, but the hearing focused on two sets of evidence—photographs, including one of Carpenter's girlfriend covered in excrement, and computer searches related to Carpenter's sexual fetishes.

The Photograph

In response to counsel's motion to exclude admission of the photograph, the State argued the admission of this evidence was necessary to prove intent under *South Carolina Rules of Evidence*, Rule 404(b), Tr. 16, 27, and to "educate" the jury. Tr. 23-24. As the solicitor explained, the State would be unable to win its case without the evidence. Tr. 21. The State also argued it wanted to introduce the picture to show the time this activity was occurring in the household to rebut an anticipated defense argument that Carpenter was often at work, or there were too many people in the house for this kind of activity to have been occurring. Tr. 22. The State argued:

Honestly, in all the years I've prosecuted, I've never come across one. I can find no case law related to coprophilia and how a court would deal with it. It's just not a regular sex act that you can draw the commonsense intent. And what I would say is: It is outside of the common knowledge of a jury that anybody would be sexually aroused by rubbing feces on a child's back. I just believe that.

The basis of the CSC third charge is that that happened. And as we mentioned, the enema in the rectum. Your Honor, unlike those commonly understood sex acts, this type of physical contact where you're incorporating feces is outside the common knowledge that a Greenville County juror would have to understand that that act, in and of itself, would ever bring [gratification], which is one of the elements of CSC third. . .

It almost sounds fantastical. If you have no knowledge of this, you know, until you have one look at a picture like that, it's hard to describe.

Tr. 16, l. 10- 18, l. 4.

The State made a conscious decision not to use an expert to explain this subject matter to a jury since "a picture is worth a thousand words . . ." Tr. 34, l. 3.¹

The Computer Searches

The State also wanted to introduce Carpenter's computer searches into "urine" and "piss" into evidence to prove intent. The State argued:

So the state is not offering to prove that he [is] some kind of deviant person, or character evidence at all, Your Honor. The issue here is that the intent behind this defendant's actions, when he put feces on their back, is not apparent. It's not like those cases where you—you know—excuse the words, I guess, garden-variety vaginal sex or anal sex or oral sex. The intent behind that is apparent, so the state doesn't have to really prove that. And that's what the cases are saying. They're saying you don't need to prove intent in that scenario. But this one is just a different animal. It's a different case.

¹ This photograph is so inflammatory, in fact, that the trial court sealed it at some point, and undersigned counsel had to request this Court, on June 20, 2019, order the Greenville County Clerk of Court's Office to allow counsel to access it.

Tr. 15, l. 21- 16, l. 9.

When the judge asked specifically why the internet searches were relevant, the State responded:

Well, and there's a large amount of Internet searches related to urine and enemas. And when you go back to this very specific form of sexual activity, the children—Brendan is saying that they inserted—he calls it a “douche” in his rectum. And he tries to describe it. He says it's like shots are.

But I think the fact that there are no many searches for enemas does educate the jury related to this unique form of sexual activity. I think, you know, a lot of people are not into drinking urine. A lot of people are not into—most people . . . And I'm just being honest in trying to think through it. When you have over 500 hits related to that and these children are going to say that they had to drink urine, I think it just goes to prove a totality of the circumstances.

Tr. 19, ll. 2-22.

Again, the State argued it wanted to give the jury “the full picture” because coprophilia is outside the normal knowledge of the jury. Tr. 24, l. 1.

Defense Counsel Objections and the Court's Ruling

Defense counsel argued all of this testimony was inadmissible. He argued it was not admissible under SCRE, Rule 404(b). Tr. 26-28. He also argued it was irrelevant. Tr. 32. The trial judge found it admissible because the State has the burden of showing some sexual gratification from the touching, and that the jury “might not understand” that the touching was sexual without this evidence. Tr. 28, ll. 21-22. The State reiterated its two grounds for admitting this evidence were 1) because it has the burden of proving the elements of CSC third degree, and 2) to prove intent under SCRE, Rule 404(b). Tr. 29. The trial court judge found the probative

value of the photograph illustrating Carpenter's girlfriend covered in excrement outweighed its prejudicial value. Tr. 37. Per her ruling from the bench, she conducted both a SCRE, Rule 404 analysis and a SCRE, Rule 403 analysis. Tr. 38.

Before the start of the trial, the parties renewed objections to this testimony and clarified the scope of what evidence would be admitted. Tr. 24-28.

The Trial

The State offered the following evidence at trial: James Parris, an officer with the Traveler's Rest Police Department, testified that he received a report of a possible sexual assault on June 4, 2016. Tr. 107-08. The children's mother, Dalina Moore and two children came to the police department around 8:00pm that evening. Tr. 108. At that point, only her daughter was the complainant. Tr. 108. Ms. Moore was very distraught, and the officer wrote her statement for her. Tr. 109. He did not talk to the child. Tr. 110. Officer Parris then forwarded the case to Tim Kelly, who became the lead investigator on the case. Tr. 111. Ms. Moore and her children left the police station around 9:30pm. Tr. 115.

Tim Kelly, the Captain of the Traveler's Rest Police Department also testified. Tr. 117. At the time of these events, he was an investigator. Tr. 117. On June 6, 2016 he was forwarded Parris's initial report. He then contacted the Julie Valentine Center and set up forensic interviews with the two children. Tr. 118. Kelly attended the interviews. Tr. 119. According to Kelly, the female child disclosed sexual abuse that occurred at her grandfather's house. Kelly determined the child was at that house from Spring of 2014 to Spring of 2016. Tr. 120. At the time of the interview,

the female child was 9 years old. Her brother was 10. She alleged the abuse occurred around Thanksgiving but was not specific as to whether it was 2014 or 2015. Tr. 120. The male child, during this interview, did not disclose any abuse. Tr. 120.

During the investigation, Kelly obtained a search warrant. Tr. 121. He testified they were trying to find evidence related to the allegations of sexual assault. Tr. 122. Kelly testified that while executing the search warrant, he located Carpenter's cell phone. Kelly said Carpenter told him-- about what would be found on the cell phone-- that "he had a varied sex life." Defense counsel immediately objected. Tr. 130. Then, according to Kelly, Carpenter showed him pictures on the cell phone of his girlfriend (and co-defendant), nude in the bathtub with feces on her. Tr. 131. The Solicitor entered this picture into evidence at the trial. Tr. 131.

Kelly testified that Carpenter told him that his phone and computers were password protected and that he left his bedroom locked when he was not there. Tr. 136. Carpenter was arrested on June 19, 2016. Tr. 136.

November 2, 2016, nearly four and a half months after the initial complaint to the police, Dalina Moore called Kelly and told him that her son disclosed sexual assaults committed against him. Tr. 136. Additional interviews were conducted, and Carpenter was charged with additional crimes. Tr. 136. Kelly recommended the children have medical examinations. Tr. 137.

On cross-examination law enforcement admitted that Carpenter was highly cooperative. Carpenter told law enforcement about an additional computer tablet he had in the trunk of his car, and a computer he had at his place of business. Tr. 140-41.

Law enforcement never interviewed any of Carpenter's family members, or his neighbors, or any of his associates. Tr. 142.

Kelly testified on cross-examination that he later became aware of some of the male child's serious psychological conditions. He had some cursory knowledge of his history but did not know the details. Tr. 152.

The parties stipulated that Carpenter is HIV+ and was on notice of that status at the time of these alleged events. Tr. 156.

Investigator Jim Perry of the Greenville County Sheriff's Office also testified. Tr. 156. He is currently an investigator in the computer crimes investigation unit. Tr. 157. He retrieved photographs from Carpenter's cell phone. Tr. 160. The State moved State's Exhibit #14 into evidence, again over defense counsel objection and published it to the jury. Tr. 161. It was the picture of Carpenter's co-defendant and girlfriend, Regina Owens nude in the bathtub and covered in feces. The picture's date was June 28, 2015. Tr. 162.

Investigator Perry also testified to searches that Carpenter conducted on his computer. Tr. 164. There was a single search hit for "urine." Tr. 164. There were multiple search hits for "piss." Tr. 165. He got multiple hits for "enema." Tr. 165. Perry testified the sites visited by Carpenter were for sexual stimulation. Tr. 165. There was no testimony that Carpenter used his computers or cell phones to search for anything relating to child pornography or sexual interest in children.

Dalina Moore, the children's mother, also testified. Tr. 185. She is common law married to William Carpenter, III, the son of the defendant. She and her husband

have four children, ages 14, 11, 12, and 8 years old. Tr. 186. She testified that she and her family moved in with her husband's father, Carpenter, in Spring of 2014. Tr. 188. They were all living in the same house during this time frame. Shortly after she moved in, Carpenter's girlfriend, Regina Owens, also moved into the house. Tr. 189. Moore testified that her son—the one who is the subject of indictments in this case—has ADHD. It apparently caused him to be held back in kindergarten. Tr. 190. Also, he struggles with communication skills. Tr. 191. The family moved in with Carpenter when her husband was laid off from work and needed support to help them get on their feet financially. Tr. 192.

Moore testified that Regina Owens had a drug problem. She used crack cocaine, marijuana, and pills. Tr. 195. During the day, both Moore and Owens would be present at the house while the children attended school, and the men went to work. Tr. 195. The two of them would watch television, clean up the house, and talk. Tr. 196. Moore admitted that sometimes when she was at the house with Owens, they would drink and do drugs together—she testified they would get “wasted.” Tr. 196, l. 16. According to Moore, Carpenter would obtain the drugs for Owens. Tr. 197. Moore testified that typically Carpenter would leave for work early in the morning, and would get home late in the evening, sometimes after 9:00pm. Tr. 198. Carpenter and Owens would be left alone with the children if they had to go to the grocery store, if they had an occasional date, or if Moore had a doctor's appointment and her husband had to take her to it. Tr. 198.

Moore admitted she was not a very good parent. Tr. 199. She and Ms. Owens also had a sexual relationship. Tr. 200. They had sexual relations at the home, and also at other places. Tr. 200. Moore testified she was “most likely” drunk or high when they had sex. Tr. 201. DSS has been involved with the family. Tr. 201. Moore and her family moved from Carpenter’s home sometime in March 2016. Tr. 202. There were times the children would stay at home with Carpenter and Owens while they searched for a house to rent in Pickens. Tr. 203.

Around June 2016, Moore testified she became aware that her daughter claimed she had been abused. Tr. 204. Her son told her that he had witnessed something while they were living at Carpenter’s house. Based on what her son told her, they went to the Traveler’s Rest Police Department. Tr. 204.

Moore’s daughter, according to Moore’s testimony, told her she had been the victim of a sexual assault in Carpenter’s bedroom around Thanksgiving. Tr. 205. She did not know which year around Thanksgiving these events allegedly occurred. Tr. 205. Several months after the daughter’s disclosure, her son made his alleged disclosure. Tr. 208. She took him to the doctor because she was concerned about his health. He was experiencing hallucinations and hearing voices. He would urinate in the corners of their home. Tr. 209. He had nightmares and anger issues. Tr. 209. At one point, he was given Risperdal for his hallucinations, but Moore quickly took him off that medication. Tr. 219. He was also prescribed Zoloft and Prozac at various times. Tr. 229.

Moore testified that she was aware that Carpenter and Owens had an unusual sex life because Owens told her. Tr. 211. Owens showed Moore a video that related to this unusual sex life. Tr. 212.

DSS was involved with the family. At the beginning of November 2016, they came to the house and spoke to the children. Tr. 235. Moore called Investigator Kelly the day after they spoke to DSS. Tr. 235.

Moore's daughter, the alleged victim, testified. Tr. 243. At the time of her testimony, she was 11 years old. Tr. 243. She testified that she recalled Carpenter touching her twice in ways that she did not like. Tr. 248. On both occasions, she claimed that Regina Owens held her down. Tr. 250. She also claimed that Carpenter put "his poop" on her and her brother's backs. Tr. 250. Then they had to scrub each other with a rag. Tr. 251.

Dr. Mary Fran Croswell, a child abuse pediatrician with the Greenville Health System, testified for the State. Tr. 255. She examined both children in this case. Tr. 259. She examined the female child on June 15, 2016 after a referral from the Traveler's Rest Police Department. Tr. 259. Dr. Croswell testified that the child's father told her that she was "acting out, not listening, not doing what she was asked" and that those behaviors first alerted the parents that something was wrong. She was also having nightmares. Tr. 270. The child's medical examination came back normal with a small issue attributed to a form of irritation. Tr. 271-72. She tested negative for any sexually transmitted diseases. Tr. 273.

Dr. Crosswell examined the young male on November 21, 2016 after a referral by the Traveler's Rests Police Department. Tr. 274. During this interview, he disclosed that he was sexually abused in the anal area. Tr. 276. She performed her physical, and his results were normal. Tr. 276. He also tested negative for HIV. Tr. 277.

The male child testified before the jury after Dr. Crosswell. Tr. 290. At the time of his testimony, he was nearly 13 years old. Tr. 290. He testified he was touched inappropriately in his grandfather's bathroom. Tr. 295. He claimed that his grandfather put a syringe in his butt. Tr. 295. He did not know if anyone else was in the room when this happened. Tr. 296. After that, poop came out of his butt and it was rubbed all over his back. Tr. 297. He then claimed his grandfather anally penetrated him. Tr. 297. The male child also claimed that his grandfather made him drink his own urine. Tr. 297.

Amber Hiott, a licensed professional counselor from the Julie Valentine Center, testified. Tr. 307. She conducts forensic interviews in cases where there is a question of sexual assault. Tr. 308. She first conducted her interviews of the children on June 14, 2016. Tr. 310. She conducted a second interview on November 10, 2016. Tr. 310. During the June 14, 2016 interviews, the female child disclosed sexual abuse; the male child did not. Tr. 313. On November 10, 2016, she interviewed both children again. Tr. 314. During this last interview, the male child disclosed alleged sexual abuse. All four forensic interviews were published to the jury.

Shauna Galloway-Williams, Executive Director of the Julie Valentine Center, testified for the State. Tr. 351. She explained that it is not uncommon for children to delay in disclosing child abuse. Tr. 358.

The defendant's son, William Carpenter, also testified. Tr. 374. He testified, contrary to Dr. Crosswell's testimony, that his daughter has not had any behavioral or emotional problems, and that she does "wonderful" in school. Tr. 375. His son has ADHD and does not like school. Tr. 375. His son began to hallucinate when they moved to Pickens, South Carolina after leaving Carpenter's house. Tr. 375. He confirmed that both his wife and Ms. Owens were using drugs while they lived there with the children. Tr. 380. He also confirmed that the children were left alone with Carpenter and Owens on very limited occasions; like when they went grocery shopping, or when they were searching for a new place to live. Tr. 381. Carpenter admitted on cross-examination that he is also a drug user. Tr. 387. He denied that he colluded with his children to raise these allegations against his father.

Mr. Carpenter testified on his own behalf at trial. Tr. 400. At the time of trial, he was 57 years old. He denied that he was guilty of these crimes. Tr. 401. He has owned his own company in Greenville, South Carolina for 24 years. Tr. 402. As he explained to the jury, he worked long hours, especially during hail season when he was responsible for fixing the dents out of cars. Tr. 403-04. Carpenter explained that he often provided financial support for the family, even when they were living in Charleston. Tr. 405. Carpenter testified that he received an inheritance when his mother passed. Tr. 407.

Moore and the children moved in with him in February or March of 2014. Tr. 408. Regina Owens moved in shortly afterwards. The house is a little over 2300 square feet. Tr. 409. When the family moved in, it was “just sound and noise everywhere, kids everywhere.” Tr. 420, ll. 10-11. The house has a lot of wood floors, and everything echoes. Tr. 420. Carpenter testified he was at the house most Sundays, but other than that, it was a rare occasion. Tr. 421. During the week, he would get home from work around 8:00 and 9:30pm. Tr. 421. Carpenter denied that he used crack cocaine, meth, or pills. Instead, he said he liked to have a joint or two in the evenings when he got home, and after the kids were in bed. Tr. 424.

Carpenter testified he did not take off for long vacations over Thanksgiving. He would take the day off but would go back to work on Friday and Saturday. Tr. 426. For Thanksgiving, they would have Carpenter’s sister and brother-in-law come over. They would cook and have a big meal in the middle of the day. There was a large crowd at the house. Tr. 426.

Moore and Carpenter’s son prepared to move out in early 2016. They wanted their own home and were tired of being clumped in the house in one group. Tr. 427. He gave his son a talk about being financially responsible. He thought their money problems were largely of their own doing; he wanted his son to be self-sufficient. Tr. 428. It appeared there were money issues. Carpenter testified that his son and daughter-in-law informed Carpenter they found a trailer down the road from him, but they needed help making the down payment because they had not received their tax refund. He told them he could not assist them with the down payment. He felt

they were using the children to guilt him into making the down payment since the children were really excited and had already picked out their bedrooms. Tr. 429-430.

Two or three months after they moved out, Carpenter went to visit his son, daughter-in-law and grandchildren at their new house in Pickens. Carpenter had sent a van to help them and told Moore, "Hey, I'm paying for part of this; it's part of William's inheritance; and I need you to make payments on the other part." Tr. 431, ll. 1-3. He asked Moore why she never said thank you, and she said, "Well, I thought that was part of William's inheritance." Tr. 431, ll. 7-8. Carpenter then told her there was not any inheritance coming for him, but that the inheritance came to him and his sister. Tr. 431. According to Carpenter, her whole demeanor changed. She had a "tougher" and different attitude than she had five minutes before that remark. Tr. 431, l. 18. Around 20 days later, the police came to Carpenter's house. Tr. 431-32.

When law enforcement executed its search warrant, Carpenter freely cooperated. He even told them about a computer laptop that was at his business. He wanted them to know that he had not done anything wrong. There was also a tablet in the van that he voluntarily turned over, even though law enforcement did not have a warrant to search vehicles. Tr. 432-33.

Next, Carpenter testified to his unusual sex life. Tr. 433. He also testified that he has had "ED" for 15 to 18 years and that he has not had a functional erection in over six years. Tr. 436. Again, Carpenter denied that he sexually abused his two grandchildren. Tr. 440. On cross-examination, he testified that he never "sat alone at the house with those kids." Tr. 443, l. 25- 444, l. 1.

On cross-examination, the State, once again put up Exhibit #14 to ask Carpenter questions about it. The Solicitor started asking him questions about his being aroused by it, completely unrelated to anything relating to claims of sexual abuse against his grandchildren. Tr. 445. The judge asked the State to make the photograph unavailable to the jury as they approached the bench for a sidebar. Tr. 446. Again, the State asked Carpenter about Regina Owens' sexual satisfaction reflected in the photograph, a topic completely unrelated to the allegations of abuse. Tr. 446. Then, she wanted to know "what is it about urine that you enjoy?" Tr. 447. She then asked a series of questions about Carpenter's sexual activity with consenting adults, again completely unrelated to the allegations of abuse against the children. Tr. 448. The Solicitor then asked Carpenter about his enjoyment of enemas and feces. Tr. 449. She asked how he would use enemas on other consenting adults. Tr. 449.

After closing arguments and the jury charge, the jury began their deliberations at 12:13pm. They reached a verdict at 3:20pm. Tr. 577. Carpenter was found guilty on all charges. Tr. 578. The court sentenced Carpenter to 30 years for criminal sexual conduct with a minor first degree, 10 years for exposing another to HIV, and 15 years for criminal sexual conduct with a minor third degree. All sentences were ordered to run concurrently. Tr. 585.

- I. **The trial court judge erred in allowing the State to introduce evidence of Carpenter's sexual preferences because they were irrelevant, unduly prejudicial and improperly interjected Carpenter's character as an issue in the case.**

The State's admission of evidence of Carpenter's sexual proclivities, including his sexual arousal at the sight of feces, inserted rank character propensity evidence into the trial and rendered it fundamentally unfair. It has long been established in this state that evidence of other crimes or bad acts is generally inadmissible to prove the crime charged unless the evidence tends to establish (1) motive, (2) intent, (3) absence of mistake or accident, (4) a common scheme or plan, or (5) identity. *State v. Stokes*, 279 S.C. 191, 304 S.E.2d 814 (1983); *State v. Lyle*, 125 S.C. 406, 118 S.E.803 (1923). This rule is grounded on the policy that character evidence is not admissible "for purposes of proving that the accused possesses a criminal character or has a propensity to commit the crime for which he is charged." *State v. Peake*, 302 S.C. 378, 380, 396 S.E.2d 362, 363 (1990).

The introduction of this crude evidence invited the jury to base its verdict on its revulsion towards Carpenter's sexual acts and not the evidence in the case. The State's case consisted of the delayed disclosures of young children, being raised in a chaotic and neglectful environment. Their disclosures were interspersed between claims of clear fantasy as reflected in the videotaped forensic interviews. Beyond those disclosures, there was no evidence that tended to prove that Carpenter was guilty of these crimes. The introduction of Carpenter's sexual fetishes was inadmissible under SCRE, Rule 404(b) and was unduly prejudicial. *See State v. Alexander*, 303 S.C. 377, 401 S.E.2d 146 (1991) (even relevant and otherwise admissible evidence may be excluded for undue prejudice).

Repeatedly, the State argued for the admission of this evidence as necessary to prove “intent.” Like the defendant in *State v. Nelson*, 331 S.C. 1, 501 S.E.2d 716 (1998), a case defense counsel cited in his pre-trial motion, Carpenter’s defense in this case was that he did not do it, “making it highly questionable whether the element of intent was a material issue in the case.” *Id.* at 12, 722. As the South Carolina Supreme Court held in *Nelson*, “In the trial of sex offenses, extrinsic evidence of intent is admissible only in those cases where there is no challenge to the occurrence of the physical contact itself, but the intent of the actor is at issue because the nature of the contact is subject to varying interpretations” *Nelson*, 331 S.C. 1, 11 (quoting *People v. Bagarozzy*, 132 A.D. 2d 225, 235, 522 N.Y.S. 848, 854 (1987)). *See also State v. Tizard*, 897 S.W.2d 732, 744 (Tenn. Crim. App. 1994) (evidence of sexually explicit videotapes and booklet, found in defendant’s home, not probative of intent: “[T]o the extent that the ultimate inference sought to be drawn by the state, *i.e.*, the defendant’s intent to commit a sexual battery upon the victim, must be derived from initial inferences about the defendant’s character traits circumstantially drawn from the questioned evidence, such evidence’s probative value on the ultimate inference is greatly attenuated”). Here, Carpenter testified on his own behalf and adamantly denied he inappropriately touched his grandchildren. This evidence relating to coprophilia was inadmissible to show “intent” and its admission rendered Carpenter’s trial fundamentally unfair. It was additionally unduly prejudicial. Respectfully, Carpenter asks this Court to grant him a new trial.

II. The trial court judge erred in allowing the State to introduce a picture on Carpenter's phone of Owens covered in feces since this photograph was irrelevant to the charges against him, unduly prejudicial and improperly interjected Carpenter's character as an issue in this case.

SCRE, Rule 403 states that “[a]lthough relevant, evidence may be excluded if its probative value is substantially outweighed by the danger of unfair prejudice, confusion of the issues, or misleading the jury, or by considerations of delay, waste of time, or needless presentation of cumulative evidence.” “Photographs calculated to arouse the sympathy or prejudice of the jury should be excluded if they are...not necessary to substantiate material facts or conditions.” *State v. Torres*, 390 S.C. 618, 623, 703 S.E.2d 226, 228 (2010). Photographs pose a danger of unfair prejudice when they have “an undue tendency to suggest a decision on an improper basis, commonly, though not necessarily, an emotional one.” *State v. Holder*, 382 S.C. 278, 290, 676 S.E.2d 690, 697 (2009). “Unfair prejudice does not mean the damage to a defendant’s case that results from the legitimate probative force of the evidence; rather it refers to evidence which tends to suggest [a] decision on an improper basis.” *State v. Gilchrist*, 329 S.C. 621, 630, 496 S.E.2d 424, 429 (Ct. App. 1998).

The photograph of Carpenter’s girlfriend covered in feces lacked any connection with the alleged acts of abuse against the children. Carpenter’s sexual proclivities as it relates to feces did not tend to make the existence of any fact that is of consequence to the determination of the action more or less probable than it would have been without the photograph. Instead, it improperly signaled to the jury that Carpenter had strange sexual fetishes, leading a jury to make the improper inference that he, therefore, is capable of pedophilia, too in violation of SCRE, Rule 404(b). The

act portrayed in the photograph was consensual conduct by two adults and did not tend to prove that Carpenter abuses children. It was improper, and the court erred in allowing it to be admitted into evidence.

The State's decision to highlight this evidence contributed to its prejudicial effect in this case. During its cross examination of Carpenter, as discussed earlier, the State kept the photograph on a projector as it grilled Carpenter about acts he has engaged in with consenting adults. The State's cross-examination of Carpenter using this photograph belies its claims that it needed to introduce the photograph to "educate" the jury or to meet its burden of "proving intent." Respectfully, this Court should grant Carpenter a new trial.

III. The trial court judge erred in allowing the State to introduce evidence of computer searches conducted on Carpenter's computer related to his sexual preferences when those searches were irrelevant to the charges against him, unduly prejudicial, and interjected Carpenter's character as an issue in this case.

For the same reasons that the admission of evidence of Carpenter's sexual proclivities and the photograph of Regina Owens covered in feces was improper, so too was the admission of computer searches that related to Carpenter's sexual fetishes but did not tend to prove that Carpenter abused his grandchildren. This evidence was irrelevant pursuant to SCRE, Rule 403 and improperly placed Carpenter's character into evidence in violation of SCRE, Rule 404(b). Again, this evidence improperly signaled to the jury that Carpenter had strange sexual fetishes, leading the jury to make the improper inference that he was therefore capable of

pedophilia. The trial court judge erred in allowing this evidence to be admitted, and this Court should grant Carpenter a new trial.

IV. The trial court judge violated the defendant's right to a public trial when she removed a family member from the courtroom while a child witness was testifying without making the required findings.

Prior to the testimony of one of the child witnesses, the following exchange occurred:

MS. SUSTAKOVITCH: It's been made aware to me that the defendant's brother-in-law is in the courtroom now. He's not listed on the witness list, so I know he's not going to be a witness at trial. Apparently, that—seeing him has bothered the child witness that's going to be testifying second. Is there a way that he could be asked to step out, at least just during her testimony? That would be the only time that I would ask that.

THE COURT: All right. Yes, sir.

MR. KENDRICK: I don't know of any—I mean, I don't know what they're talking about. But I don't know of anything that would allow that, Your Honor. I mean, this is—

THE COURT: Well, I think a trial judge has the responsibility of—and has the discretion to make the courtroom, you know, more—or easier for a child witness to testify. I know that there have been things where witnesses have testified from other courtrooms and done it closed-circuit and things of that nature. If—I'll say, during that particular witness, I'd ask the brother-in-law to step outside. And then he can certainly be here for the remainder of the trial. I think that's too much of an imposition on anyone.

MR. KENDRICK: Can I put my reasoning on the record?

THE COURT: Absolutely.

MR. KENDRICK: It's our position that a courthouse is open to a constitutional trial and that any closing of the courtroom would be a structural defect.

THE COURT: Uh-huh.

MR. KENDRICK: So we would object to a witness being able to—allowed to control who is in and out of the courtroom, outside of any particular sequestration order. That being said, we understand your ruling.

THE COURT: All right. Very well. And as I said, I think there's certainly a great deal of precedent in the state for making a courtroom somewhat more conducive. There have even been situations where the defendant has been out of the view of the witness, either by something physical or by being put in another courtroom or things like that. I think this is a minor imposition, so we'll do that. All right.

Tr. 181-182.

The law on this issue is clear—there is a presumption that a trial shall be open to all members of the public. The right to an open trial may give way in certain instances to other rights or interests such as a defendant's right to a fair trial, or the government's interest in inhibiting disclosure of sensitive information. The United States Supreme Court, in *Waller v. Georgia*, 467 U.S. 39 (1984) set out the standards courts must apply before excluding the public from any stage of a criminal trial:

[T]he party seeking to close the hearing must advance an overriding interest that is likely to be prejudiced, the closure must be no broader than necessary to protect that interest, the trial court must consider reasonable alternatives to closing the proceeding, and it must make findings adequate to support the closure.

The trial judge's obligations on this point are beyond dispute: "The conclusion that trial courts are required to consider alternatives to closure even when they are not offered by the parties is clear not only from this Court's precedents but also from the premise that "[t]he process of juror selection is itself a matter of importance, not simply to the adversaries but to the criminal justice system." *Presley v. Georgia*, 558

U.S. 209 (2013) (quoting *Press-Enterprise Co. v. Superior Court of Cal., Riverside Cty.*, 464 U.S. 501, 505 (1984) (*Press-Enterprise I*)).

The trial court judge simply failed to undertake what the United States Supreme Court demands. The trial court judge had to identify the specific interests implicated, the threat to those interests, which must “be articulated along with findings specific enough that a reviewing court can determine whether the closure order was properly entered.” *Presley* at 215-216 (quoting *Press-Enterprise I* at 510). And see *Press-Enterprise Co. v. Superior Court of Cal., County of Riverside*, 478 U.S. 1, 15 (1986) (“The First Amendment right to access cannot be overcome by the conclusory assertion that publicity might deprive the defendant of [the right to a fair trial”]). The trial court erred by improperly closing with courtroom without making the necessary findings to do so. This Court should grant Carpenter a new trial.


CONCLUSION

This Court should reverse Carpenter’s convictions and remand for a new trial.

Respectfully submitted,

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BY: 

June 25, 2019.

THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
In The Court of Appeals

RECEIVED

JUN 26 2019

APPEAL FROM GREENVILLE COUNTY
Court of General Sessions

SC Court of Appeals

The Honorable Letitia H. Verdin, Circuit Court Judge

Case No. 2018-001745

State of South Carolina Respondent,

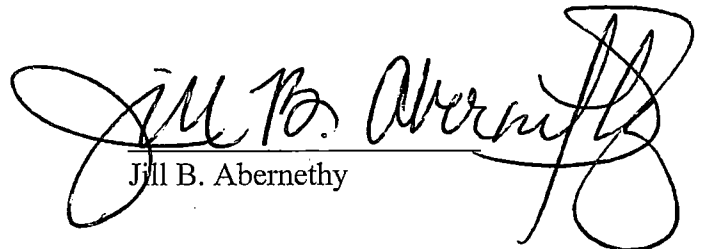
v.

William Lee Carpenter Appellant.

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

The undersigned hereby certifies that a copy of Appellate's Initial Brief of Appellant and Designation of Matter was served by first class United States mail, postage prepaid, this 25th day of June, 2019, upon the following:

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June 25, 2019

The Honorable Jenny Abbott Kitchings
Clerk of Court
South Carolina Court of Appeals
P.O. Box 11629
Columbia, SC 29211

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SC Court of Appeals

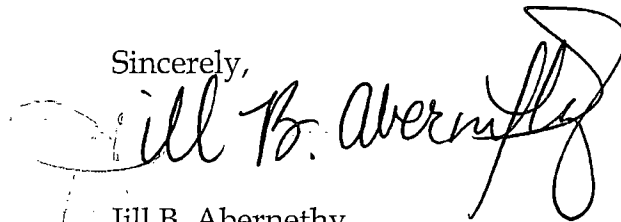
RE: *State of South Carolina v. William Lee Carpenter*
2018-001754

Dear Ms. Kitchings:

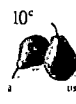
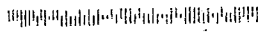
Please find enclosed for filing, with certificate of service, the original and one copy of Appellant's Initial Brief of Appellant and Designation of Matter. If you can please clock-in the extra copy and return it to me in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope.

If you should have any questions, please feel free to contact our office.

Sincerely,


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cc: William M. Blitch, Jr.
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