

IN THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA  
In the Court of Appeals

APPEAL FROM GREENVILLE COUNTY  
Court of General Sessions

Appellate Case No. 2018-001745

**RECEIVED**

**Apr 15 2020**

**SC Court of Appeals**

The Honorable Letitia H. Verdin, Circuit Court Judge

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

v.

William Lee Carpenter.....Appellant.

**FINAL REPLY BRIEF OF APPELLANT**

Fletcher N. Smith, Jr.  
Law Firm of Fletcher N. Smith, Jr., LLC  
112 Wakefield Street  
Greenville, South Carolina 29601  
(803) 232-6541

Elizabeth Franklin-Best  
Elizabeth Franklin-Best, P.C.  
2725 Devine Street  
Columbia, South Carolina 29205  
(803) 331-3421

*Counsel for Appellant*

*Other Counsel:*

William Blich, Jr.  
South Carolina Attorney General's Office  
P.O. Box 11549  
Columbia, South Carolina 29211  
(803) 734-3372

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## ARGUMENTS

- I. **The issue of the improper admission of the obscene photograph pursuant to 404(b) of the South Carolina Rules of Evidence is properly preserved. Additionally, the improper admission of the search terms and results is likewise preserved.**

Respondent argues that objections to the obscene photograph and the search terms and results from appellant's computer are not properly preserved. Respectfully, this is inaccurate. Respondent's brief fails to note that these issues were exhaustively argued during a pre-trial hearing on September 6, 2018. Supp ROA 26-38. Additionally, trial counsel filed written motions specifically raising a 404(b) objection to the admission of the photographs, as well as motions to prevent the State from discussing appellant's sexual preferences altogether. ROA 593. At the conclusion of the hearing on September 6, 2018, the trial court judge indicated that the material was admissible, and that she had made her ruling based on both 404(b) grounds and 403. Supp ROA 38.

### *Photographic evidence*

When the evidence was admitted during trial, counsel renewed his objection. The State argues that because counsel mentioned relevance and Rule 403, but did not mention 404(b) that he therefore abandoned that claim. That is an ambiguous reading of the objection. Trial counsel stated: "Your Honor, we previously objected for relevance and—under Rule 403, and *renew those previous grounds.*" ROA 161, ll. 5-7 (emphasis added). The passage reads as though counsel intended to communicate that ground raised before and argued extensively earlier were on-going. It is clear—

since this was a central issue in the case—that trial counsel did not abandon this claim. Any other reading needlessly puts form over substance. Counsel’s objection was as specific as our rules require. To preserve an issue for appeal, specific grounds in support of the objection must be clearly stated. *Wilder Corp. v. Wilke*, 330 S.C. 71, 497 S.E.2d 731 (1998). The objection must be sufficiently specific to bring into focus the precise nature of the alleged error so that it can be reasonably understood by the trial judge. *Id.* The trial court was well-familiar with trial counsel’s objections as evidenced by her review of his written motion and the lengthy pre-trial hearing. Trial counsel renewed the objections at the time the evidence was sought to be admitted. Respectfully, this Court should find that the objection to the photograph was properly preserved for appellate review.

***The search terms and results***

After the officer testified to the photograph at issue in the argument above, he immediately testified to the search terms and results. Counsel’s objection at page 161 appear to apply to his objections to these search terms and results. Given that the arguments at the pre-trial hearing tended to conflate the issues, it is likely that both trial counsel and the judge understood counsel’s objections to apply to both the photograph and the search terms and results from the computer. Again, the trial court judge thoroughly reviewed trial counsel’s objections at the pre-trial hearing. Counsel objected when the material was introduced. Respectfully, this Court should find that trial counsel’s objection to the search terms and results from appellant’s computer is properly preserved for this Court’s review.

## **II. Appellant is entitled to prevail on the merits of his claims.**

The obscene photograph showing a woman covered in feces as part of an erotic experience should not have been admitted at appellant's trial, and appellant was prejudiced by its admission. Indeed, the trial court recognized its highly inflammatory quality by sealing the photograph at some point during these proceedings. In transporting this exhibit to this Court, it has remained under seal. Respondent argues that showing the jury this exhibit was necessary because "the average person would never believe someone obtained sexual gratification from anything to do with feces or urine" without it. Respondent's Brief, p. 6. But the State could have used expert testimony to make that point without the need to show the jury this picture. But, as appellant argued in his initial brief, the State made the conscious decision not to use an expert but to rely on the photograph since "a picture is worth a thousand words..." Supp ROA 34, l. 3. To the extent that this Court finds this evidence probative at all, surely the State had other means of conveying to the jury what coprophilia is without subjecting them to such a shocking picture. The picture was gratuitous and shocking, and appellant was prejudiced by its improper admission.

Respondent also argues that computer searches were admissible because appellant could have raised a certain defense—that an enema could have had a medically recognized purpose and therefore its use was not illegal. But, appellant did not raise that defense. His defense was, categorically, that he did not do it. Had appellant raised that defense, perhaps the State could have offered testimony in

rebuttal. Instead, the State used this testimony to show that appellant had deviant sexual fetishes and therefore was more likely to have committed these acts against his grandchildren, an improper inference in violation of SCRE Rule 404(b).

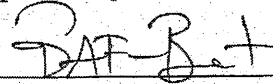
**III. The admission of this evidence was not harmless.**

Respondent argues that the admission of all this evidence was harmless in light of appellant's testimony to the jury. Respectfully, appellant disagrees. The State was allowed to introduce an obscene photograph and computer searches and results during its case in chief. Appellant had the constitutional right to try to defend himself from the State's accusations and to push back against this improperly admitted evidence. In admitting his unorthodox sexual proclivities to the jury, appellant maintained his innocence of these crimes. Respondent now argues that appellant's exercise of his right to defend himself renders the State's error "harmless." Respectfully, appellant should not be punished, nor the State rewarded, because appellant had to confront the improper evidence the State introduced against him.

**IV. The trial court judge violated appellant'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.**

For the reasons argued in appellant's initial brief, the trial court committed reversible error by closing the courtroom without complying with the law as articulated by the United States Supreme Court.

Respectfully submitted,



Elizabeth Franklin-Best  
Elizabeth Franklin-Best, P.C.  
2725 Devine Street  
Columbia, South Carolina 29205  
(803) 331-3421

Fletcher N. Smith, Jr.  
Law Firm of Fletcher N. Smith, Jr. LLC  
112 Wakefield Street  
Greenville, South Carolina 29601  
(803) 232-6541

*Counsel for Appellant*

March 18, 2020.

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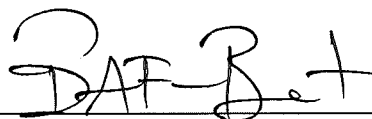
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**CERTIFICATE OF COUNSEL**

The undersigned certified that this Final Reply Brief complies with Rule 211(b), SCACR.



Elizabeth Franklin-Best, P.C.  
2725 Devine Street  
Columbia, South Carolina 29205  
(803) 331-3421  
elizabeth@franklinbestlaw.com

*Counsel for Appellant*

April 14, 2020

