

FILED  
March 19, 2015  
Court of Appeals  
Division I  
State of Washington

NO. 72056-2-I

COURT OF APPEALS OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

DIVISION I

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STATE OF WASHINGTON,

Respondent,

v.

ADAN YUSUF,

Appellant.

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APPEAL FROM THE SUPERIOR COURT FOR KING COUNTY

THE HONORABLE JUDGE WILLIAM DOWNING

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**BRIEF OF RESPONDENT**

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DANIEL T. SATTERBERG  
King County Prosecuting Attorney

DENNIS J. McCURDY  
Senior Deputy Prosecuting Attorney  
Attorneys for Respondent

King County Prosecuting Attorney  
W554 King County Courthouse  
516 3rd Avenue  
Seattle, Washington 98104  
(206) 296-9000

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**A. ISSUES PRESENTED**

On multiple occasions the Washington State Supreme Court has held that the language of WPIC 4.01 defining “reasonable doubt,” provides an accurate statement of the law. Has the defendant shown that the Supreme Court got it wrong, that these cases are “incorrect and harmful,” the standard required to overturn precedent?

**B. STATEMENT OF THE CASE**

**1. PROCEDURAL FACTS**

The defendant was charged in count I with Assault in the First Degree, and in count II with Assault in the Second Degree. CP 1-2. Each count carried a deadly weapon sentencing enhancement. Id. A jury found the defendant guilty as charged. CP 68-69.<sup>1</sup> The defendant received a standard range sentence, plus the deadly weapon enhancements, for a total sentence of 156 months. CP 75-83.

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<sup>1</sup> The verbatim report of proceedings is cited as follows: 1RP—5/2, 5/5, 5/13 & 5/14/14; 2RP—5/15 & 5/19/14; 3RP—5/20/14; 4RP—5/21 & 5/22/14; and 5RP—5/23 & 6/13/14.

## **2. SUBSTANTIVE FACTS**

The only issue raised in this case is the propriety of a single sentence in a single jury instruction. Thus, the substantive facts are not relevant to this appeal.

### **C. ARGUMENT**

#### **THE WPIC JURY INSTRUCTION DEFINING “REASONABLE DOUBT” IS A CORRECT STATEMENT OF THE LAW**

The defendant asserts that the language of WPIC 4.01 defining “reasonable doubt” as “one for which a reason exists,” is a misstatement of the law and therefore his conviction (along with every other conviction where WPIC 4.01 has been given) must be reversed. This argument has no merit and was never raised below. The defendant fails to cite the plethora of Supreme Court and Court of Appeals cases that have upheld WPIC 4.01, and the language used therein, and he fails to show that these cases are “incorrect and harmful,” the standard required to overturn precedent.

#### **1. The Facts**

Here, the trial court instructed the jury as follows:

The defendant is charged in two counts, Count I alleging the crime of assault in the first degree and Count II alleging the crime of assault in the second degree. Although these charges have been joined for trial, you must decide each count separately. Your verdict on one count should not control your verdict on the other count.

The defendant has entered pleas of not guilty to all charges. That plea puts in issue every element of each crime charged. The State, as the plaintiff, has the burden of proving each element of the charged crimes beyond a reasonable doubt.

The defendant has no burden of proving that a reasonable doubt exists. A defendant in a criminal case is not compelled to testify and the fact that a defendant does not testify cannot be used as a basis for any inference by the jury and should not prejudice the defendant in any way.

A defendant is presumed innocent. This presumption continues throughout the entire trial unless during your deliberations you find it has been overcome by the evidence beyond a reasonable doubt.

***A reasonable doubt is one for which a reason exists and may arise from the evidence or lack of evidence.*** It is such a doubt as would exist in the mind of a reasonable person after fully, fairly, and carefully considering all of the evidence or lack of evidence. If, from such consideration, you have an abiding belief in the truth of the charge, you are satisfied beyond a reasonable doubt.

CP 55 (Jury Instruction # 5) (emphasis added). It is the highlighted language to which the defendant complains. This language is from WPIC 4.01. The defendant did not raise an objection to the giving of this language. 4RP 478-83, 553, 572-89.

## **2. The Alleged Error Is Not Manifest Allowing For Appellate Review Absent An Objection**

An instructional error not objected to below may be raised for the first time on appeal only if it is a "manifest error affecting a

constitutional right.” RAP 2.5(a)(3); State v. Scott, 110 Wn.2d 682, 686-87, 757 P.2d 492 (1988) (failure to instruct on “knowledge” was not manifest error). To obtain review, the defendant must show that the claimed error is of constitutional magnitude and that it resulted in actual prejudice. State v. O’Hara, 167 Wn.2d 91, 98-99, 217 P.3d 756 (2009). A reviewing court will not assume that an error is of constitutional magnitude. Id. The court will look to the asserted claim and assess whether it implicates a constitutional interest as compared to another form of trial error. Id. If the claimed error is of constitutional magnitude, the court will determine whether the error is manifest. An error is manifest if it is “so obvious on the record that the error warrants appellate review.” O’Hara, 167 Wn.2d at 99-100. Manifest also requires a showing of “actual prejudice.” Id. To demonstrate actual prejudice there must be a “plausible showing by the appellant that the asserted error had practical and identifiable consequences in the trial of the case.” Id.

The defendant never objected to the instructions given here. This bars review unless the defendant can prove the error is manifest constitutional error with identifiable consequences. See State v. Jacobson, 74 Wn. App. 715, 724, 876 P.2d 916 (1994); State v. Lynn, 67 Wn. App. 339, 342-44, 835 P.2d 251



(1992). Here, there can be nothing more than pure speculation that the alleged error -- the inclusion of the disputed language in the jury instructions -- had identifiable consequences. This is insufficient to allow for appellate review. State v. Donald, 178 Wn. App. 250, 271, 316 P.3d 1081 (2013) (This Court refused to hear Donald's argument regarding the "to convict" jury instructions because Donald failed to object below and failed to demonstrate prejudice as required under RAP 2.5.).

### **3. The Instructions Correctly State The Law**

Ignoring the instruction(s) as a whole, the defendant claims that the highlighted language actually shifts the burden of proof; in other words, that jurors would be led to believe that it is a defendant's burden to prove he or she is not guilty or that they must be able to write out their reason for acquittal. The Supreme Court has found otherwise.

Jury instructions are read as a whole and in a commonsense manner. State v. Bowerman, 115 Wn.2d 794, 809, 802 P.2d 116 (1990). A court will not assume a strained reading of an instruction. State v. Moultrie, 143 Wn. App. 387, 394, 177 P.3d 776, rev. denied, 164 Wn.2d 1035 (2008). The instructions are legally sufficient if they permit the parties to argue their theories of the

case, do not mislead the jury, and properly inform the jury of the applicable law. State v. Barnes, 153 Wn.2d 378, 382, 103 P.3d 1219 (2005). The instructions must define reasonable doubt and convey to the jury that the State bears the burden of proving every essential element of the crime beyond a reasonable doubt. State v. Bennett, 161 Wn.2d 303, 307, 165 P.3d 1241 (2007).

The latest Supreme Court case to hold that the language of WPIC 4.01 is an accurate statement of the law is State v. Bennett, supra. In addressing a challenge to a substitute instruction to WPIC 4.01, the Court stated the following:

We have approved WPIC 4.01 and concluded that it adequately permits both the government and the accused to argue their theories of the case. . . Even if many variations of the definition of reasonable doubt meet minimal due process requirements, the presumption of innocence is simply too fundamental, too central to the core of the foundation of our justice system not to require adherence to a clear, simple, accepted, and uniform instruction. We therefore exercise our inherent supervisory power to instruct Washington trial courts not to use the Castle instruction. We have approved WPIC 4.01 and conclude that sound judicial practice requires that this instruction be given until a better instruction is approved. ***Trial courts are instructed to use the WPIC 4.01 instruction to inform the jury of the government's burden to prove every element of the charged crime beyond a reasonable doubt.***

Bennett, 161 Wn.2d at 317-18 (emphasis added).

The Bennett case is not the first time that the Court has ruled on similar language in jury instructions. As far back as 1901, the Supreme Court addressed the following instructional language which defined reasonable doubt as “**a doubt for which a good reason exists**, - a doubt which would cause a reasonable and prudent man to hesitate and pause in a matter of importance, such as the one you are now considering.” State v. Harras, 25 Wash. 416, 421, 65 P. 774 (1901) (emphasis added). In upholding the giving of the instruction, the Court stated that “[t]his instruction is according to the great weight of authority, and is not error.” Id.

In State v. Tanzymore, the Court addressed the then standard reasonable doubt instruction that provided in part that “[t]he jury is further instructed that the doubt which entitles the defendant to an acquittal **must be a doubt for which a reason exists**.” 54 Wn.2d 290, 291 n.1, 340 P.2d 178 (1959) (emphasis added). In rejecting a claim that the trial court should have given a different reasonable doubt instruction, the Court stated that “the court gave the standard instruction on reasonable doubt. This instruction has been accepted as a correct statement of the law for so many years, we find the assignment [of error] without merit.” Id. at 291; see also State v. Pirtle, 127 Wn.2d 628, 658, 904 P.2d 245

(1995) (“the jury instruction here follows WPIC 4.01, which previously has passed constitutional muster”), accord, State v. Nabors, 8 Wn. App. 199, 202, 505 P.2d 162 (1973).

In State v. Thompson, the defendant challenged this exact same language “argu[ing] rather strenuously that this phrase (1) infringes upon the presumption of innocence, and (2) misleads the jury because it requires them to assign a reason for their doubt in order to acquit.” 13 Wn. App. 1, 4-5, 533 P.2d 395 (1975). In rejecting Thompson’s challenge the court stated:

Although we recognize that this instruction has its detractors, it was specifically approved in State v. Tanzymore, [...] and also in State v. Nabors, [...]. We are, therefore, constrained to uphold it. We would comment only that ***it does not infringe upon the constitutional right that a defendant is presumed innocent; but tells the jury when, and in what manner, they may validly conclude that the presumption of innocence has been overcome.***

***Furthermore, the particular phrase, when read in the context of the entire instruction does not direct the jury to assign a reason for their doubts, but merely points out that their doubts must be based on reason, and not something vague or imaginary.*** A phrase in this context has been declared satisfactory in this jurisdiction for over 70 years.

Id. (emphasis added).

The defendant fails to address, or even cite, to many of these cases. Instead, he tries to equate a misconduct case involving improper closing argument with the statement of the law as contained in the jury instructions. Specifically, he claims that the jury instruction improperly requires jurors to articulate a reason for having reasonable doubt — similar to the “fill-in-the-blank” argument that the Court held improper in State v. Emery, 174 Wn.2d 741, 759, 278 P.3d 653 (2012). But the defendant’s argument fails under Emery, the very case upon which he principally relies.

In Emery, the Court held that the prosecutor committed misconduct telling the jurors that they had to articulate a reason for any doubt they found, i.e., to fill in the blank what their doubt was. But in finding that the argument itself was misconduct, the Court specifically noted that the prosecutor had “properly describ[ed] reasonable doubt as a ‘doubt for which a reason exists[.]’” 174 Wn.2d at 760. Emery only prohibits the misuse of this instruction by prosecutors in closing argument; but in so doing, it starts with the premise that the definition of reasonable doubt employed by WPIC 4.01 is correct.

The doctrine of stare decisis requires a "clear showing that an established rule is incorrect and harmful" before precedent is abandoned. In re Stranger Creek, 77 Wn.2d 649, 653, 466 P.2d 508 (1970). "The test for determining if jury instructions are misleading is not a matter of semantics, but whether the jury was misled as to its function and responsibilities under the law." State v. Brown, 29 Wn. App. 11, 18, 627 P.2d 132 (1981). The defendant has failed to show that the Supreme Court's multiple decisions are wrong.

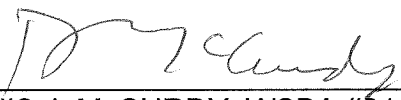
**D. CONCLUSION**

For the reasons cited above, this Court should affirm the defendant's conviction.

DATED this 19 day of March, 2015.

Respectfully submitted,

DANIEL T. SATTERBERG  
King County Prosecuting Attorney

By:   
DENNIS J. McCURDY, WSBA #21975  
Senior Deputy Prosecuting Attorney  
Attorneys for Respondent  
Office WSBA #91002

Certificate of Service by Electronic Mail

Today I directed electronic mail addressed to the attorneys for the appellant, Keven March at Nielsen, Broman & Koch, containing a copy of the Brief of Respondent, in STATE V. YUSUF, Cause No. 72056-2-I, in the Court of Appeals, Division I, for the State of Washington.

I certify under penalty of perjury of the laws of the State of Washington that the foregoing is true and correct.



Name  
Done in Seattle, Washington

03-19-15  
Date