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Court of Appeals
Division III
State of Washington
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Supreme Court No. 96287-1

No. 35043-6-III

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

STATE OF WASHINGTON,

Respondent,

v.

EDUARDO PEREZ,

Petitioner.

PETITION FOR REVIEW

JAN TRASEN
Attorney for Petitioner
WSBA # 41177

WASHINGTON APPELLATE PROJECT
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- 1. The State presented insufficient evidence to convict Mr. Perez of attempted residential burglary.5**
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A. IDENTITY OF PETITIONER

Eduardo Perez, appellant below, seeks review of the Court of Appeals decision designated in Part B.

B. COURT OF APPEALS DECISION

Mr. Perez appealed his Yakima County convictions for attempted residential burglary and third degree malicious mischief. The Court of Appeals affirmed in an unpublished decision on August 9, 2018. Appendix. This motion is based upon RAP 13.3(e) and 13.5A.

C. ISSUES PRESENTED FOR REVIEW

1. The United States and Washington Constitutions require the State prove all elements of a charged offense. Where the State failed to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that Mr. Perez attempted to enter Ms. Porter's home, was the Court of Appeals decision in conflict with decisions of this Court, and with other decisions of the Court of Appeals, requiring review? RAP 13.4(b)(1), (2)?

2. The State must prove all elements of a charged offense. In order to convict an individual of an attempted crime, sufficient evidence must be presented that the accused took a substantial step toward the commission of the crime. Was there sufficient evidence presented at trial for the jury to conclude that Mr. Perez took a substantial step toward the commission of residential burglary, and specifically that he intended to

commit a crime within the residence, and thus, was the Court of Appeals decision in conflict with decisions of this Court, requiring review? RAP 13.4(b)(1)?

3. Under RCW 9.94A.777(1), a sentencing court must determine whether a defendant who suffers from a mental health condition has the ability to pay LFOs. Where the trial court failed to determine whether Mr. Perez had the ability to pay LFOs in light of his mental health condition and the Court of Appeals found inadequate evidence of Mr. Perez's mental health difficulties in the record, should this Court grant review, as a matter of substantial public interest? RAP 13.4(b)(4)

D. STATEMENT OF THE CASE

For many years, Eduardo Perez lived with his mother in a small house in the rural community of Outlook, in Yakima County. RP 45-49.¹ The homes in this community are surrounded by generous acreage, including vineyards and fields. RP 45-51.

Next to the Perez house is a home owned by Ethel Porter, who was approximately 79 years old at the time of the events described.² Ms.

¹ The verbatim report of proceedings consists of two consecutively-paginated volumes, referred to as "RP ___." A separately-paginated volume containing hearings conducted in 2015-16 is referred to as "2RP."

² By the time of the trial, Ms. Porter was 81. RP 45.

Porter's home is separated from Mr. Perez's by a small field. RP 49. A lane runs by the mailboxes serving the two homes and connects the houses to the main road. Id. The two families have lived next door to each other peacefully for over 50 years. Id. at 49, 79.

On September 30, 2015, Ms. Porter's older sister Mary Lou Ribail drove over to her sister Ethel Porter's home for a visit. RP 54. At approximately 11:00 a.m., the two sisters were socializing inside the house when they heard a loud sound at the front door. RP 56. Ms. Porter heard a voice outside "hollering and cussing," stating, "I know you're in there." RP 57-58. Ms. Porter believed the voice belonged to Mr. Perez, based upon her previous conversations with him. Id.³

Ms. Porter's front door was never opened, nor any other door to her property, but the two women began to hear the sound of windows breaking. RP 57-59. Ms. Porter and her sister saw rocks coming through the windows of the home, until almost every window of the house was broken. RP 57-59. At one point, Ms. Porter looked through the window blinds and saw a figure in a red shirt, who she believed to be Mr. Perez. RP 60.

³ Ms. Porter stated Mr. Perez complained that the Porter grandsons were peeking into the Perez family windows and saying things about Mr. Perez. RP 51-52. Mr. Perez also claimed the boys had taken his cell phone from the vineyards near both homes. RP 52. A neighbor dispute ensued.

Ms. Porter called 911, and the Yakima County Sheriff's Department, as well as Sunnyside Police officers, responded to the scene. RP 139, 185. Extensive damage was noted to Ms. Porter's windows, as well as to Ms. Ribail's car, which had been parked in the driveway. RP 61-69, 99-102.

When officers arrived, Mr. Perez was in front of his own home, down the lane and next door to Ms. Porter's house. RP 142. When Officer Thomas Orth asked Mr. Perez to come speak with him, Mr. Perez cooperated. RP 145. Mr. Perez's only statement was, "It's the neighbor, it's the neighbor." RP 145-46. Mr. Perez also asked the officer to accompany him to Ms. Porter's house to help him explain, telling the officer, "Let's go to the neighbor's." RP 146-47. Mr. Perez never suggested he was trying to enter Ms. Porter's house.

Mr. Perez was charged with attempted residential burglary, malicious mischief in the third degree for the damage to Ms. Porter's house, and malicious mischief in the second degree for the damage to Ms. Ribail's car. CP 10-11.

Following trial, Mr. Perez was acquitted of the malicious mischief count related to the car. CP 58. He was convicted of attempted residential burglary and malicious mischief in the third degree for the damage to the house. CP 56, 57.

Mr. Perez appealed, and on August 9, 2018, following oral argument, the Court of Appeals affirmed in an unpublished decision. Appendix.

Mr. Perez seeks review in this Court. RAP 13.4(b)(1), (2), (4).

E. ARGUMENT WHY REVIEW SHOULD BE GRANTED

THIS COURT SHOULD GRANT REVIEW, AS THE COURT OF APPEALS DECISION IS IN CONFLICT WITH DECISIONS OF THIS COURT AND WITH OTHER DECISIONS OF THE COURT OF APPEALS, AND INVOLVES A MATTER OF SUBSTANTIAL PUBLIC INTEREST. RAP 13.4(b)(1), (2), (4).

1. The State presented insufficient evidence to convict Mr. Perez of attempted residential burglary.

The State has the burden of proving all essential elements of the crime charged beyond a reasonable doubt. Blakely v. Washington, 542 U.S. 296, 300-01, 124 S.Ct. 2531, 159 L.Ed.2d 403 (2004); Apprendi v. New Jersey, 530 U.S. 466, 490, 120 S.Ct. 2348, 147 L.Ed.2d 435 (2000). The absence of proof of an element beyond a reasonable doubt requires dismissal of the conviction and charge. E.g., Jackson v. Virginia, 443 U.S. 307, 319, 99 S.Ct. 2781, 61 L.Ed.2d 560 (1979); State v. Green, 94 Wn.2d 216, 616 P.2d 628 (1980).

To prove a residential burglary, the State is required to prove two elements: (1) that an individual entered or remained unlawfully in a

dwelling; and (2) that he intended to commit a crime against a person or property therein. RCW 9A.52.025(1).

For the State to prove a person is guilty of an attempt to commit a crime, the State must establish that, with intent to commit a specific crime, the person committed any act which is a substantial step toward the commission of that crime. RCW 9A.28.020(1). “Both the substantial step and the intent must be established beyond a reasonable doubt for a conviction to lawfully follow.” State v. Bencivenga, 137 Wn.2d 703, 707, 974 P.2d 832 (1999) (quoting State v. Aumick, 126 Wn.2d 422, 429-30, 894 P.2d 1325 (1995)).

Here, there was insufficient evidence that Mr. Perez took a substantial step toward entering Ms. Porter’s home. The State’s theory was that Mr. Perez kicked the door of Ms. Porter’s home in an attempt to enter. RP 218-19. First, there was no evidence the alleged kicking was done in effort to enter, as opposed to with intent to cause damage, as with the windows. There was no other evidence presented that Mr. Perez attempted to enter the home, such as actually trying to open the door with the doorknob or using tools to pry open the door. RP 57-60, 91-92. Nor did either witness testify that Mr. Perez attempted to enter through one of the windows that he broke or even reached a hand or any body part into

the house. Id., RP 196-97 (officers stated Mr. Perez had no injuries from broken glass when he was arrested).

The State failed to meet its burden to prove a substantial step toward entry of the premises beyond a reasonable; therefore, the Court of Appeals decision upholding the conviction is in conflict with this Court's decisions and should be reviewed by this Court. Bencivenga, 137 Wn.2d at 707; RAP 13.4(b)(1).

In addition to proving a substantial step toward entering the home, the State was required to prove Mr. Perez intended to commit a crime against a person or property, once inside. Bencivenga, 137 Wn.2d at 707. Because there was no actual unlawful entry, the State could not rely on an inference of unlawful intent, and had to prove the intent to commit a crime beyond a reasonable doubt. State v. Bergeron, 105 Wn.2d 1, 19-20, 711 P.2d 1000 (1985) (the court may not infer intent to commit a crime from evidence that is "patently equivocal"); State v. Jackson, 112 Wn.2d 867, 876, 774 P.2d 1211 (1989).

2. The Court of Appeals decision requires this Court's review, because the decision is in conflict with decisions of this Court, as well as with its own decisions.

This decision requires review, because the Perez's case is indistinguishable from State v. Jackson. In Jackson, this Court found the defendant's conduct consistent only with malicious mischief, and at best,

“patently equivocal.” 112 Wn.2d at 876. In Jackson, the defendant approached a business and took several “running kicks at the door and bounc[ed] off ... aimed at the window area of the door.” Id. at 870. When Mr. Jackson realized he was being observed by police, he attempted to walk briskly away, and was quickly arrested. Id.

As in Jackson, witnesses believed Mr. Perez kicked the door and shouted, but there was no evidence of forced entry or of any similar attempt. RP 189-90, 195 (no evidence that door was opened or doorknob damaged, nor that threshold was crossed). The facts in Mr. Perez’s case are even stronger than in Jackson, as Mr. Perez’s visit occurred at 11:00 a.m., rather than the late night setting of Jackson. 112 Wn.2d at 870.

The Court of Appeals found Jackson inapposite, asserting that this Court explained the circumstances of attempted burglary may raise more than one reasonable conclusion about the intent of a defendant’s actions, and that Jackson involved instructional error, rather than sufficiency. 112 Wn.2d at 870. The fact that Jackson addressed instructional error does not render the analysis “irrelevant,” as the Court suggests. Appendix at 5-6. This Court held in Jackson, “an inference cannot follow that there was intent to commit a crime *within* the building just by the defendants’ shattering of the window in the door. This evidence is consistent with two

different interpretations; one indicating attempted burglary, a felony; and the other malicious mischief, a misdemeanor.” 112 Wn.2d at 876.

Further, the Court of Appeals decision is in conflict with its own published decisions. In State v. Sandoval, a case discussed in the briefing, as well as at oral argument, the Court of Appeals reversed a Yakima County burglary conviction. 123 Wn. App. 1, 5-6, 94 P.3d 323 (2004). Although Mr. Sandoval kicked in the front door of a stranger’s home at 3:00 a.m., shoving the owner in the chest, the Court stated, “there is no fact, alone or in conjunction with others, from which entering with intent to commit a crime more likely than not could flow.” Id. at 5. The Court noted that Mr. Sandoval was not carrying burglar’s tools, he did not try to sneak in, he was not wearing “burglary-like apparel,” and he did not attempt to flee. Id. (citing Bencivenga, 137 Wn.2d at 705; Bergeron 105 Wn.2d at 11). The Court also relied upon the fact that Mr. Sandoval “did not try to take any of [the complainant’s] property or confess to doing so.” Id. at 6 (citing State v. Brunson, 76 Wn. App. 24, 30-31, 877 P.2d 1289, aff’d, 128 Wn.2d 98, 905 P.2d 346 (1995)).

Mr. Perez’s case cannot be meaningfully distinguished from Sandoval and Jackson; therefore, the Court of Appeals decision is in conflict with these decisions, and review should be granted under RAP 13.4(b)(1) and (2).

3. This Court should grant review, due to the trial court's failure to make an appropriate inquiry into Mr. Perez's ability to pay LFO's, considering his known mental health history.

Under RCW 9.94A.777(1), a sentencing court must make an individualized inquiry into a defendant's ability to pay legal financial obligations (LFOs) when he or she suffers from a mental health condition. State v. Tedder, 194 Wn. App. 753, 756, 378 P.3d 246 (2016). This Court held in State v. Blazina that trial courts "must consider the defendant's current or future ability to pay" based on the "particular facts of the defendant's case." 182 Wn.2d 827, 834, 344 P.3d 680 (2015) (the court shall take account of the financial resources of the defendant and the nature of the burden that payment of costs will impose).⁴

The Court of Appeals finds that the record contains no evidence that Mr. Perez suffers from a mental health condition. Appendix at 7. The record actually indicates that Mr. Perez was sent to Eastern State Hospital for a competency evaluation in November 2015, which Mr. Perez submits reveals clear concern in the record for his mental health. 2RP 2-11; CP 5-6.

⁴ This Court reached the (unpreserved) merits in Blazina, in large part, due to significant concerns regarding equal justice and the need to reform the "broken" LFO system. 182 Wn.2d at 835-36; Tedder, 194 Wn. App. at 757.

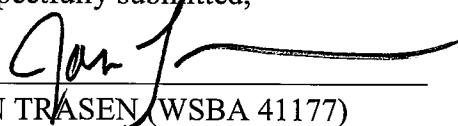
The “pernicious consequences” of unpaid LFOs are equally damaging for those who suffer from both mental and physical illness; therefore, this Court should grant review so that Mr. Perez’s individual circumstances can be properly considered. Tedder, 194 Wn. App. at 757. RAP 13.4(b)(4).

F. CONCLUSION

For the above reasons, the Court of Appeals decision should be reviewed, as it is in conflict with decisions of this Court, and with other decisions of the Court of Appeals. RAP 13.4(b)(1), (2), (4).

DATED this 5th day of September, 2018.

Respectfully submitted,



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Washington Appellate Project
Attorneys for Petitioner

APPENDIX

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IN THE COURT OF APPEALS OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON
DIVISION THREE

STATE OF WASHINGTON,)	No. 35043-6-III
)	
Respondent,)	
)	
v.)	UNPUBLISHED OPINION
)	
EDUARDO PEREZ,)	
)	
Appellant.)	

PENNELL, J. — A jury convicted Eduardo Perez of attempted residential burglary and third degree malicious mischief. In this appeal, Mr. Perez challenges the sufficiency of the facts submitted in support of his conviction as well as the imposition of legal financial obligations (LFOs) at sentencing. We affirm.

FACTS¹

On September 30, 2015, Mary Lou Ribail went to visit her sister, Ethel Porter. While the pair were in Ms. Porter’s home, they suddenly heard a loud bang outside that sounded like a gunshot. The sisters then heard several forceful kicks on the door to the house accompanied by the sound of someone shouting. They also heard the sounds of

¹ The recitation of facts is taken from the trial testimony and sentencing hearing. Because Mr. Perez challenges the sufficiency of the State’s evidence at trial, we present the facts in the light most favorable to the State. *State v. Salinas*, 119 Wn.2d 192, 201, 829 P.2d 1068 (1992).

various windows being broken. Ms. Ribail observed rocks thrown from outside smashing through and breaking the windows. Ms. Porter was able to look out one of windows and saw her neighbor, Eduardo Perez, standing outside.² She also recognized Mr. Perez's voice as the source of the shouting.³ Mr. Perez was shouting statements such as "I know you're in there," "I can see you," or "I can hear you." 2 Report of Proceedings (RP) (Jan. 11, 2017) at 58, 90-91. As more windows in the home were broken the sisters called 911 and sought refuge. The sisters later discovered that Ms. Ribail's car windows had also been smashed.

Law enforcement responded to the 911 call. One of the officers noticed Mr. Perez standing in front of his own residence pacing back and forth. The officer approached Mr. Perez and asked to speak with him. Mr. Perez started to walk over but stopped when he was about halfway to the officer. The officer asked what was going on. Mr. Perez then became agitated and said "it's the neighbor; it's the neighbor." 2 (RP) (Jan. 11, 2017) at 146. Mr. Perez said "let's go to the neighbor's," and proceeded toward Ms. Porter's residence. *Id.* at 147. The officer twice ordered Mr. Perez to stop, but he did not.

² Ms. Porter also identified Mr. Perez in photographs taken by security cameras around her property at the time of these events.

³ Ms. Porter testified she has known Mr. Perez for a number of years and is able to recognize his voice and appearance based on those interactions. She also testified about some issues that developed between her and Mr. Perez shortly before these events.

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The officer then grabbed Mr. Perez's arm, a struggle ensued, and Mr. Perez was arrested.

A jury ultimately convicted Mr. Perez of attempted residential burglary and malicious mischief. At sentencing, the trial court inquired about his ability to pay LFOs. Mr. Perez explained that a physical disability made it more difficult to work of late. He did not mention any other disabilities or ailments that would limit his working ability. The trial court then struck all but the mandatory LFOs. Mr. Perez appeals.

ANALYSIS

Sufficiency of the evidence—attempted residential burglary

Mr. Perez argues the evidence was insufficient to convict him of attempted residential burglary. He claims the State did not prove he took a substantial step toward entering Ms. Porter's home, nor did it prove he had the intent to commit a crime inside the home. We disagree with both these contentions.

Due process requires the State to prove all elements of the crime beyond a reasonable doubt. *State v. Washington*, 135 Wn. App. 42, 48, 143 P.3d 606 (2006). In a sufficiency challenge, the inquiry is "whether, after viewing the evidence in the light most favorable to the State, any rational trier of fact could have found guilt beyond a reasonable doubt." *State v. Salinas*, 119 Wn.2d 192, 201, 829 P.2d 1068 (1992). All reasonable inferences are drawn in the State's favor, and the evidence is interpreted most

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State v. Perez

strongly against the defendant. *Id.* This court's role is not to reweigh the evidence and substitute its judgment for that of the trier of fact. *State v. Green*, 94 Wn.2d 216, 221, 616 P.2d 628 (1980).

“A person is guilty of residential burglary if, with intent to commit a crime against a person or property therein, the person enters or remains unlawfully in a dwelling other than a vehicle.” RCW 9A.52.025(1). An attempt occurs if, with the intent to commit the principal crime, the defendant commits any act constituting a substantial step toward commission of the principal crime. RCW 9A.28.020(1). A person does not take a substantial step unless his conduct is “‘strongly corroborative of the actor's criminal purpose.’” *State v. Townsend*, 147 Wn.2d 666, 679, 57 P.3d 255 (2002) (quoting *State v. Aumick*, 126 Wn.2d 422, 427, 894 P.2d 1325 (1995)).

Mr. Perez first asserts there is insufficient evidence to show he took a substantial step toward entering Ms. Porter's home. We conclude there was. The evidence shows Mr. Perez kicked the door multiple times, and with enough force to make the whole house shake. He then systematically broke almost every window in the house and taunted Ms. Porter and Ms. Ribail as he did so. The fact that Mr. Perez was unsuccessful in breaking through the door and never actually climbed in any of the windows is what causes his offense to fall under the auspice of an attempt, instead of a completed crime. The incomplete nature of his conduct does not render the State's evidence insufficient.

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Viewing these facts in a light most favorable to the State, a rational trier of fact could find beyond a reasonable doubt Mr. Perez's actions were part of an unsuccessful effort to unlawfully force entry into Ms. Porter's home, and thus constitute a substantial step toward residential burglary.

Mr. Perez next asserts the evidence is insufficient to show he intended to commit a crime against a person or property within Ms. Porter's home. Mr. Perez's argument rests on *State v. Jackson*, 112 Wn.2d 867, 774 P.2d 1211 (1989), in which the Supreme Court held that instructing the jury regarding a permissive presumption of intent is inappropriate in an attempted burglary case. As explained by the court, the circumstances of attempted burglary raise more than one reasonable conclusion about the intent of the defendant's actions (i.e., the defendant may have intended either to commit burglary or simply an act of vandalism). Accordingly, a jury must not be instructed on a permissive presumption of intent, as contemplated by statute in the burglary context.⁴

The problem with Mr. Perez's reliance on *Jackson* is that *Jackson* only addressed

⁴ RCW 9A.52.040 states: "In any prosecution for burglary, any person who enters or remains unlawfully in a building may be inferred to have acted with intent to commit a crime against a person or property therein, unless such entering or remaining shall be explained by evidence satisfactory to the trier of fact to have been made without such criminal intent."

instructional error. The court did not engage in a sufficiency analysis. Because Mr. Perez does not allege instructional error, *Jackson*'s analysis is largely irrelevant to Mr. Perez's case.⁵

Rather than *Jackson*, Mr. Perez's case is controlled by *State v. Bencivenga*, 137 Wn.2d 703, 974 P.2d 832 (1999). *Bencivenga* held that the analysis in *Jackson* applies only to the propriety of a permissive inference instruction. *Bencivenga*, 137 Wn.2d at 708. *Jackson* does not apply to the question of whether sufficient evidence supports a jury's verdict. Unlike what is true in the instructional context, where judges are restricted from guiding jurors' assessments of the facts, "[n]othing forbids a jury . . . from logically inferring intent from proven facts, so long as it is satisfied the state has proved that intent beyond a reasonable doubt." *Id.* at 709. Although a jury should not reach an inference of guilt when there are equally reasonable conclusions that can follow from a set of circumstances, the reasonable doubt standard (not the sufficiency test) protects a defendant from conviction in such circumstances. In the end, "it is the province of the finder of fact to determine what conclusions reasonably follow from the particular evidence in a case." *Id.* at 711.

⁵ If anything, *Jackson* undercuts Mr. Perez's sufficiency challenge. *Jackson* reversed the defendant's conviction without prejudice. Had the evidence been insufficient to support an inference of intent, the reversal should have been with prejudice.

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The evidence here was sufficient to permit a jury finding that Mr. Perez intended to burglarize Ms. Porter's home. "Unmistakably," the State's evidence showed Mr. Perez "intended more than a social call." *State v. Bergeron*, 105 Wn.2d 1, 11, 711 P.2d 1000 (1985). The circumstantial evidence at trial tended to show that not only was Mr. Perez attempting to enter Ms. Porter's home, he did so with the intent to commit a crime therein. Such proof is all that is necessary to justify the jury's guilty verdict on appeal.

LFOs—mental health inquiry

For the first time on appeal, Mr. Perez challenges the imposition of LFOs based on RCW 9.94A.777. That statute requires the trial court to determine if a defendant who suffers from a mental health condition has the means to pay LFOs, other than the victim penalty assessment and restitution. RCW 9.94A.777(1). The statute further provides:

[A] defendant suffers from a mental health condition when the defendant has been diagnosed with a mental disorder that prevents the defendant from participating in gainful employment, as evidenced by a determination of mental disability as the basis for the defendant's enrollment in a public assistance program, a record of involuntary hospitalization, or by competent expert evaluation.

RCW 9.94A.777(2).

The record contains no such evidence that Mr. Perez suffers from a mental health condition. There was a competency evaluation, but Mr. Perez was found competent. Nothing in the record shows Mr. Perez suffers from a diagnosed mental health condition.

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State v. Perez

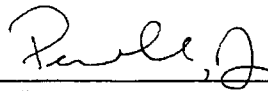
This record stands in stark contrast to the extensive evidence of mental health issues affecting the defendant in *State v. Tedder*, 194 Wn. App. 753, 754-55, 378 P.3d 246 (2016). Moreover, the trial court specifically inquired into Mr. Perez's ability to pay and asked him about employment limitations. The only limitation he disclosed was a physical disability. The trial court struck all discretionary LFOs due to this physical disability.

Because the record does not make apparent that the trial court violated the terms of RCW 9.94A.777(2) we decline to further address Mr. Perez's unpreserved claim of error. RAP 2.5(a).

CONCLUSION

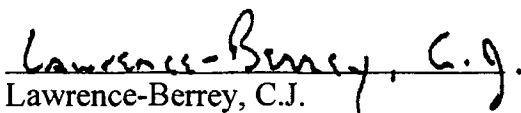
Mr. Perez's judgment and sentence is affirmed.

A majority of the panel has determined this opinion will not be printed in the Washington Appellate Reports, but it will be filed for public record pursuant to RCW 2.06.040.



Pennell, J.

WE CONCUR:



Lawrence-Berrey, C.J.



Korsmo, J.

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

STATE OF WASHINGTON,)
)
 Respondent,)
)
 v.) COA NO. 35043-6-III
)
 EDUARDO PEREZ,)
)
 Petitioner.)

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[X] EDUARDO PEREZ 6551 GAP RD OUTLOOK, WA 98938	(X) U.S. MAIL () HAND DELIVERY () _____

SIGNED IN SEATTLE, WASHINGTON THIS 5TH DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 2018.

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