

SUPREME COURT OF ARKANSAS

No. CR-19-82

ERIC BURGIE

APPELLANT

v.

STATE OF ARKANSAS

APPELLEE

Opinion Delivered June 6, 2019

MOTION FOR RULE ON CLERK
TO EXTEND BRIEF TIME
[GARLAND COUNTY CIRCUIT
COURT, NO. 26CR-00-366]

APPEAL DISMISSED; MOTION
MOOT.

KAREN R. BAKER , Associate Justice

Appellant Eric Burgie appeals from the denial of his pro se petition to correct an illegal sentence pursuant to Arkansas Code Annotated section 16-90-111 (Repl. 2016). Pending before this court is Burgie's motion for rule on clerk wherein he asks this court for an extension of time to file his brief-in-chief. Therefore, Burgie's motion for rule on clerk is treated as a motion for an extension of time to file his brief-in-chief.

In 2001, Burgie was convicted of capital murder and aggravated robbery and was sentenced to life imprisonment. We affirmed. *Burgie v. State*, CR-02-90 (Ark. Feb. 20, 2003) (unpublished per curiam). In his petition to correct an illegal sentence, Burgie alleged that he was eighteen when he committed the crimes for which he had been convicted and that his mandatory sentence of life imprisonment should be set aside pursuant to the United States Supreme Court's holdings in *Miller v. Alabama*, 567 U.S. 460 (2012), and *Graham v. Florida*, 560 U.S. 48 (2010). Burgie argues that *Graham* should apply to his conviction

Appendix A

because his murder charge was not based on an actual intent to murder the victim but rather on an intent to aid in the commission of an aggravated robbery.

An appeal from an order that denied a petition for postconviction relief, including a petition under section 16-90-111, will not be permitted to go forward when it is clear that there is no merit to the appeal. *Jackson v. State*, 2018 Ark. 291, 558 S.W.3d 383. The trial court's decision-to-denry relief under section 16-90-111 will not be overturned unless that decision is clearly erroneous. *Id.* Here, it is apparent from the record that the denial of relief was not clearly erroneous and that Burgie cannot prevail on appeal. Therefore, the appeal is dismissed, which renders Burgie's motion moot.

Section 16-90-111 provides authority to a trial court to correct an illegal sentence at any time. *Redus v. State*, 2019 Ark. 44, 566 S.W.3d 469. An illegal sentence is one that is illegal on its face. *Id.* Sentencing is entirely a matter of statute in Arkansas, and a sentence is illegal when it exceeds the statutory maximum, as set out by statute, for the offense for which the defendant was convicted. *Id.* Burgie contends that his sentence is illegal on its face because he was eighteen when he committed the crimes of capital murder and aggravated robbery.

In *Miller*, 567 U.S. 460, the United States Supreme Court concluded that mandatory life-without-parole sentences for juveniles under the age of eighteen violate the Eighth Amendment. Likewise, in *Graham*, 560 U.S. 48, the Court concluded that a life sentence for a juvenile under the age of eighteen who commits a nonhomicide offense violates the Eighth Amendment.

The United States Supreme Court has not extended its holdings to offenders that were eighteen when the crime was committed, and federal courts that have addressed this issue have soundly rejected the application of the reasoning in *Miller* and *Graham* to claims raised by petitioners who were eighteen or older when their crimes were committed.¹ See *Wright v. United States*, 902 F.3d 868 (8th Cir. 2018) (relief from the imposition of a life sentence denied to a petitioner whose conspiratorial conduct began as a juvenile but extended into his adult years); *Ong Vue v. Henke*, 746 F. App'x 780 (10th Cir. 2018) (The constitutional protections established in *Miller* and *Graham* have never been extended to persons who were at least eighteen when the crimes were committed.). In general, society has drawn a line between a juvenile and an adult at the age of eighteen, which the United States Supreme Court has relied on for sentencing purposes.

Under Arkansas law, capital murder carries two possible sentences—death or life without parole. Ark. Code Ann. § 5-10-101(c) (Repl. 1997). Because Burgie was an adult when he committed capital murder, the sentence of life imprisonment was not illegal. *Redus*, 2019 Ark. 44, 566 S.W.3d 469.

Appeal dismissed; motion moot.

HART, J., dissents.

¹A Connecticut Federal District Court appears to be the only court to extend the holding in *Miller* to an offender who was eighteen when the crime was committed. See *Cruz v. United States*, Civil Action No. 11-CV-787, 2018 WL 1541989 (JCH) (D. Conn. Mar. 29, 2018).

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DISSENTING OPINION.

JOSEPHINE LINKER HART, Justice

Until the briefing is complete, all this court has pending before it is Mr. Burgie's motion for an extension of time to file his brief. Because he has not yet filed his brief, his appeal is not perfected, and we do not have jurisdiction to decide his appeal on the merits.

I note further that while Mr. Burgie's argument would require an extension of the holding in *Miller v. Alabama*, 567 U.S. 460 (2012), the law in this area is by no means so settled as to make such an argument frivolous. Recall that this court rejected the very argument that carried the day in *Miller* in *Jackson v. Norris*, 2011 Ark. 49, 378 S.W.3d 103, *cert. granted*, 565 U.S. 1013 (2011). This court's summary rejection of Mr. Jackson's argument resulted in his case becoming a companion case to *Miller*.

I respectfully dissent.

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF GARLAND COUNTY, ARKANSAS
CRIMINAL DIVISION

STATE OF ARKANSAS

PLAINTIFF

VS.

CR-2000-366-I

ERIC C. BURGIE

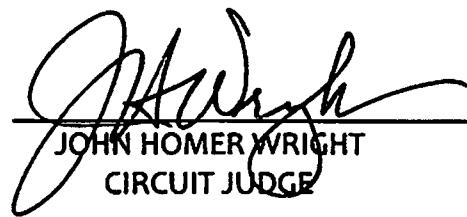
DEFENDANT

ORDER DENYING PETITION TO CORRECT ILLEGAL SENTENCE

On this day comes on to be heard the Petition to Correct Illegal Sentence, and the Court being well and sufficiently advised does find that:

1. The Petition is not timely filed.
2. The Petition has been previously filed and denied.
3. The Petition is without merit.

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED that the Defendant's Petition to Correct Illegal Sentence is denied.


JOHN HOMER WRIGHT
CIRCUIT JUDGE

DATE 10/22/2018

FORMAL ORDER

STATE OF ARKANSAS,)
)
)
 SUPREME COURT)

BE IT REMEMBERED, THAT A SESSION OF THE SUPREME COURT
BEGUN AND HELD IN THE CITY OF LITTLE ROCK, ON AUGUST 1, 2019,
AMONGST OTHERS WERE THE FOLLOWING PROCEEDINGS, TO-WIT:

SUPREME COURT CASE NO. CR-19-82

ERIC BURGIE APPELLANT

V. APPEAL FROM GARLAND COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT - 26CR-00-366

STATE OF ARKANSAS APPELLEE

APPELLANT'S PRO SE PETITION FOR REHEARING IS DENIED. HART, J., WOULD GRANT.

IN TESTIMONY, THAT THE ABOVE IS A TRUE COPY OF THE ORDER OF SAID SUPREME COURT, RENDERED IN THE CASE HEREIN STATED, I, STACEY PECTOL, CLERK OF SAID SUPREME COURT, HEREBY UNTO SET MY HAND AND AFFIX THE SEAL OF SAID SUPREME COURT, AT MY OFFICE IN THE CITY OF LITTLE ROCK, THIS 1ST DAY OF AUGUST, 2019.

Stacy Pector

CLERK

BY: _____

DEPUTY CLERK

ORIGINAL TO CLERK

CC: ERIC BURGIE
DARNISA EVANS JOHNSON, DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL
HON. JOHN HOMER WRIGHT, CIRCUIT JUDGE

Appendix C

**Additional material
from this filing is
available in the
Clerk's Office.**