



SUPREME COURT OF GEORGIA  
Case No. S20H0635

June 16, 2020

The Honorable Supreme Court met pursuant to  
adjournment.

The following order was passed.

ERIC BERNARD SCOTT v. ARTIS SINGLETON, WARDEN.

Upon consideration of the application for certificate of  
probable cause to appeal the denial of habeas corpus, it is ordered  
that it be hereby denied.

*All the Justices concur.*

Trial Court Case No. 2018-CV-129

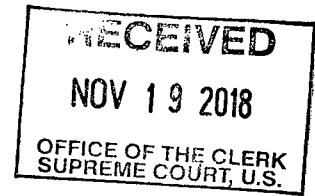
SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF GEORGIA  
Clerk's Office, Atlanta

I certify that the above is a true extract from the  
minutes of the Supreme Court of Georgia.

Witness my signature and the seal of said court hereto  
affixed the day and year last above written.

  
, Clerk

**THE SUPREME COURT  
OF GEORGIA  
INDEX TO RECORD**



**IN THE CASE OF:  
ERIC BERNARD SCOTT  
VS.  
ARTIS SINGLETON  
CASE NO. 2018-CV-129**

**ATTORNEY(S) FOR PLAINTIFF**

**ATTORNEY(S) FOR DEFENDANT**

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**ATLANTA, GA 30334**

**4046516927**

**GA. STATE BAR NUMBER 676295**

	<b>PAGES</b>
<b>NOTICE OF APPEAL</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>FILED ON DECEMBER 4, 2019</b>	
<b>GENERAL CIVIL CASE FILING INFORMATION FORM</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>FILED ON DECEMBER 20, 2018</b>	
<b>APPLICATION FOR WRIT OF HABEAS CORPUS</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>FILED ON DECEMBER 20, 2018</b>	
<b>REQUEST TO PROCEED IN FORMA PAUPERIS</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>FILED ON DECEMBER 20, 2018</b>	
<b>SUMMONS</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>FILED ON DECEMBER 20, 2018</b>	
<b>CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>FILED ON DECEMBER 20, 2018</b>	
<b>LETTER FROM ERIC BERNARD SCOTT</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>FILED ON JANUARY 7, 2019</b>	
<b>SERVICE PERFECTED CORPORATION RACHEL WOOTEN</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>FILED ON JANUARY 10, 2019</b>	
<b>ORDER HEARING SET FOR MAY 9, 2019</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>FILED ON JANUARY 29, 2019</b>	

<b>MOTION TO AMEND HABEAS CORPUS PETITION</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>FILED ON MARCH 28, 2019</b>	
<b>RETURN AND ANSWER</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>FILED ON APRIL 1, 2019</b>	
<b>MOTION TO DISMISS PETITION AS UNTIMELY AND/OR SUCCESSIVE</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>FILED ON APRIL 1, 2019</b>	
<b>COPY OF LETTER AND SUBPOENA'S TO FILE</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>FILED ON APRIL 15, 2019</b>	
<b>TRAVERSE TO RESPONDENTS RETURN AND ANSWER</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>FILED ON APRIL 26, 2019</b>	
<b>MOTION TO CONTINUE</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>FILED ON MAY 6, 2019</b>	
<b>HABEAS CORPUS HEARING, KATIE, JUDGE FACHINI</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>FILED ON MAY 9, 2019</b>	
<b>CONTINUATION HEARING, KATIE, FACHINI</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>FILED ON JUNE 14, 2019</b>	
<b>LETTER FROM ERIC B SCOTT</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>FILED ON JUNE 24, 2019</b>	

LETTER FROM ERIC SCOTT

68

FILED ON JULY 11, 2019

MOTION TO AMEND TRAVERSE

69

FILED ON AUGUST 22, 2019

LETTER FROM ERIC B SCOTT

72

FILED ON SEPTEMBER 20, 2019

FINAL ORDER GRANTING RESPONDENT'S MOTION TO DISMISS

73

FILED ON OCTOBER 28, 2019

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF WILCOX COUNTY  
STATE OF GEORGIA

ERIC BERNARD SCOTT,

v.

ARTIS SINGLETON, WARDEN

Defendant.

CASE NO:

2018-CV-129

COPY

PROCEEDING:

HABEAS CORPUS HEARING

JUDGE:

HONORABLE DENISE D. FACHINI

DATE:

AUGUST 8, 2019

LOCATION:

WILCOX STATE PRISON  
ABBEVILLE, GEORGIA

REPORTER:

STACEY FOLDS, CCR

On Behalf of the Attorney  
General:

MATTHEW M. YOUN, ESQ.  
Office of Attorney General  
40 Capitol Square, SW  
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

On Behalf of Defendant:

PRO SE



P R O C E E D I N G S

THE COURT: We are here on case number 2018-CV-129.  
You are Eric Bernard Scott; is that correct?

PETITIONER: Yes.

THE COURT: Mr. Scott, I am Denise Fachini, I am a  
Superior Court Judge. We're here for your habeas  
hearing, or a portion of that hearing. Are you  
represented by an attorney?

PETITIONER: No, ma'am.

THE COURT: Are you going to be representing  
yourself?

PETITIONER: Pro se; yes, ma'am.

THE COURT: Are you ready to proceed?

PETITIONER: All except that I requested the minutes  
of the grand jury and haven't gotten them yet.

THE COURT: There's rarely ever minutes to a grand  
jury. What county was it?

PETITIONER: Chatham County. Chatham did indict and  
I would need that to support my allegation that it's  
void.

THE COURT: Well, Mr. Youn is present and he  
represents the Warden in this case. Mr. Youn, are you  
ready to proceed?

MR. YOUN: We are, Your Honor, and I believe we  
would be ready to proceed on our motion to dismiss as

1 untimely, in which we are trying to assert in this case.

2 THE COURT: Okay. Well, I tell you what -- Mr.  
3 Youn, do you have any information regarding minutes from  
4 the Chatham County grand jury?

5 MR. YOUN: We do not, Your Honor. Our position  
6 would still be that, with our motion to dismiss as  
7 untimely, that would dismiss the case and that Mr. Scott  
8 hasn't produced any such minutes for a much older  
9 conviction.

10 THE COURT: All right. I tell you what, Mr. Scott,  
11 what I have is I've got your original habeas that you  
12 filed, that being on December 20th of 2018; then I have  
13 your amended motion that you filed in March of this year.  
14 I have an answer filed by the Attorney General on April  
15 1st, so ordinarily, your habeas and their answer would  
16 form the issue for me to hear, but they have also,  
17 subsequently, filed a motion to dismiss petition as  
18 untimely or successive and you've received that motion on  
19 your behalf as well?

20 PETITIONER: Yes, ma'am.

21 THE COURT: When that happens, what I do is I will -  
22 - because their motion means, Judge, you don't even need  
23 to hear the habeas because these things have happened,  
24 it's successive or it's untimely, and generally, what I  
25 do is I hear this motion to decide whether or not I need

1 to go forward and hear the habeas. So that gives you  
2 actually some more time, if you're still trying to pursue  
3 some additional documents. So what I'm going to do today  
4 is I'm going to go ahead and hear their motion to  
5 dismiss. You can respond to that because that doesn't  
6 deal with your minutes.

7 PETITIONER: Your Honor, can I say one thing?

8 THE COURT: I'll let you, let me finish explaining.  
9 So I'm going to go ahead and hear this motion on the  
10 issue of whether or not you have been untimely in your  
11 petition for habeas, or whether it's something that's  
12 already been heard before, those issues.

13 PETITIONER: Yes, ma'am.

14 THE COURT: Then I won't rule on that until I get  
15 the transcript from the hearing; okay?

16 PETITIONER: Yes, ma'am.

17 THE COURT: In the meantime, your habeas still  
18 remains pending.

19 PETITIONER: Yes, ma'am.

20 THE COURT: If you need to get additional  
21 documentation for that, you can certainly work on getting  
22 that done. Once I rule on this, I will either deny their  
23 motion and we'll go forward with your habeas, or I'll  
24 grant their motion and then you can appeal that, if you  
25 wish; okay?

1           PETITIONER: Yes, ma'am.

2           THE COURT: Go ahead, what did you want to say?

3           PETITIONER: All I want to say is that I filed a  
4 traverse --

5           THE COURT: You did. Let's see, that's the newest  
6 thing.

7           PETITIONER: I filed a traverse as to the motion to  
8 dismiss, attorney answer and the motion to dismiss.

9           THE COURT: You can make that argument now.

10          PETITIONER: Okay, I will, yes, ma'am. Your Honor,  
11 I want to say one more thing. I asked for my attorney,  
12 for my attorney to be here; right, my trial attorney and  
13 my appellate attorney, and --

14          THE COURT: Did you subpoena them?

15          PETITIONER: Yes, ma'am, I got a subpoena right  
16 here.

17          THE COURT: Who are they?

18          PETITIONER: My trial attorney was Charles Graham,  
19 Mr. Charles Graham, and my appellate attorney was Mr. C.  
20 Jackson Burch.

21          THE COURT: Okay. Well, since we're only hearing  
22 the motion to dismiss today, that shouldn't be a problem.  
23 I can't handle your subpoenas for you, that's on you.  
24 You just need to see -- do you have some outside help,  
25 family or somebody helping you?

1           PETITIONER: Yes.

2           THE COURT: You might want to get them to start  
3 making some phone calls and seeing what happened with  
4 your efforts to subpoena them.

5           PETITIONER: Yes, ma'am.

6           THE COURT: But I'll give you plenty of notice of  
7 when the next hearing will be, and then if you get an  
8 order from me where I've dismissed it, then you can  
9 appeal that order yourself; okay?

10          PETITIONER: Yes, ma'am.

11          THE COURT: Mr. Youn, are you ready to proceed?

12          MR. YOUN: Yes, Your Honor.

13          THE COURT: All right.

14          MR. YOUN: I guess, first, just to --

15          THE COURT: If you would, just give us a quick  
16 summation of where we are.

17          MR. YOUN: Yes, Your Honor. Quickly, to address the  
18 traverse by Mr. Scott, I would note that there is no  
19 default in habeas corpus for failure of Respondent to  
20 file an answer, and we reference Huddleston v. Ricketts,  
21 233 Ga. 112 for that. Then moving to the motion to  
22 dismiss as untimely, I should note we have not been able  
23 to interpret the successive argument; we were unable to  
24 obtain anything from Lowndes about the 1995 habeas  
25 petition. We believe that there might be some difficulty

1 with that in Lowndes and archives and the age of that  
2 habeas petition, but we would still -- without waiving  
3 the successive argument, we wanted to move forward with  
4 our motion to dismiss as untimely.

5 THE COURT: So you're actual conviction was in 1981?

6 PETITIONER: '91.

7 THE COURT: '91.

8 MR. YOUN: '91, Your Honor. Mr. Scott had a 1991  
9 jury trial, he received a life sentence for malice murder  
10 and also possession of a firearm by a convicted felon and  
11 possession of a firearm during the commission of a  
12 felony. This was affirmed on appeal in Scott v. State,  
13 263 Ga. 300 in 1993. I have a copy of the opinion, if  
14 you would like, Your Honor.

15 THE COURT: Yes.

16 MR. YOUN: I have Mr. Scott a copy as well. This is  
17 affirming the convictions. Afterward, he had a ninety-  
18 day period to file with the U.S. Supreme Court;

19 Petitioner did not file a cert. petition, thus his  
20 convictions were final on October 13, 1993. Because  
21 these convictions were final before July 1, 2004, he had  
22 until July 1, 2008 to file a timely habeas petition. His  
23 petition shows that he filed with Wilcox County on  
24 December 20th, 2018, over ten years too late, so we would  
25 submit that this is untimely.

1 THE COURT: And your abandoning the successive  
2 portion of your petition?

3 MR. YOUN: Yes, Your Honor.

4 THE COURT: Mr. Scott, would you like to respond?  
5 What I understand is that their argument is they filed a  
6 motion to dismiss as untimely and successive, but they're  
7 not going forward on the successive. Their motion is  
8 based on the untimeliness of your petition. So would you  
9 like to address that?

10 PETITIONER: Your Honor, Respondent had twenty days  
11 after the time of filing the petition to respond. They  
12 didn't do that.. They wanted seventy days and decided to  
13 file their answer and motion to dismiss and that's wrong.  
14 Based on that, I asked that it be dismissed, the answer  
15 be dismissed, based on failure to respond within a timely  
16 manner.

17 THE COURT: Okay, that's one argument, but go ahead  
18 and go forward and make an argument regarding the  
19 timeliness of your actual habeas petition. Give me  
20 something else.

21 PETITIONER: I don't understand.

22 THE COURT: Why did you wait so -- Why did you not  
23 file your habeas before now?

24 PETITIONER: For one, I didn't have the grand jury -  
25 - I mean, my lawyer filed for the records, the minutes of

1 the grand jury, we never got that, so that's one of the  
2 reasons.

3 THE COURT: You know, Mr. Scott, in my experience,  
4 there are no minutes for the grand jury. The grand jury  
5 is a closed proceeding. There's rarely ever -- I've  
6 never had experience where there was a court reporter or  
7 anyone taking notes of a grand jury proceeding. So I  
8 mean, I've heard a lot of inmates basing a habeas on not  
9 having had a transcript of what took place in a grand  
10 jury proceeding, and there's no -- there aren't any.  
11 Now, once a grand jury returns to open Court with an  
12 indictment, the Clerk will put that on the minutes of the  
13 Court. I mean, that would be a presentment filed with  
14 the Clerk, but that's usually just a report from the  
15 grand jury that we heard twenty cases and we returned  
16 fifteen true bills. It's that kind of note without a lot  
17 of specific information. Do you believe that there's a  
18 proceeding that the grand jury had where they heard

19 evidence and testimony and that was all transcribed and  
20 that's what you want?

21 PETITIONER: Yes, ma'am.

22 THE COURT: Okay. I don't know that that exists.

23 PETITIONER: It exists because the prosecutor told  
24 me that -- told my sister she would give them to me, but  
25 she was busy at the time. So it does exist.



1 THE COURT: Okay.

2 PETITIONER: Your Honor, I want to say something  
3 else. When I filed my traverse, Respondent, he had  
4 thirty days -- had thirty days to respond and they didn't  
5 do that. For him to come in now and raise that argument,  
6 that the petition was untimely filed, it's way beyond  
7 thirty days. I ask that the motion be dismissed on that  
8 ground as well.

9 THE COURT: Mr. Youn, would you like to be heard?

10 MR. YOUN: Yes, Your Honor. I would just maintain  
11 what I said earlier, and our argument would be that  
12 there's no default in habeas corpus for failure of  
13 Respondent to file an answer.

14 THE COURT: He has stated the law. There's no  
15 default. I'm not dismissing his motion based on that.

16 PETITIONER: Yes, ma'am. Your Honor, Respondent  
17 failed to comply with Uniform Superior Court Rule 6-2,  
18 which states that he has thirty days to respond.

19 THE COURT: It's discretionary with the Court. I'm  
20 not looking for y'all to -- I mean --

21 PETITIONER: Your Honor, if I've got to follow the  
22 rules, then -- I mean, the rules should apply to  
23 everyone. It states right here, pursuant to Uniform  
24 Superior Court Rule 6-2, Respondent had thirty days in  
25 which to file a response opposing Petitioner's motion.

1       However, Respondent's failure to file a response opposing  
2       the petition or raise the right to present evidence in  
3       opposition to the motion, that's the law. I mean,  
4       Respondent just can't come in here and just -- in my  
5       opinion, just can't come in here and just throw mine out  
6       when he's not following the rules and he's telling me I'm  
7       not following the rules. He ain't follow the rule in  
8       which to have my petition dismissed.

9       THE COURT: But there's no automatic default.  
10       There's no default on a habeas. Habeas is a different  
11       animal.

12       PETITIONER: Yes, ma'am. I'm not saying he's in  
13       default; I'm just saying -- I mean, it's the law under 6-  
14       2, Uniform Superior Court Rule 6-2.

15       THE COURT: All right. Do you have anything  
16       further?

17       PETITIONER: Yes, ma'am. I ask that his answer be  
18       dismissed based on that.

19       THE COURT: Okay. I'm denying your motion to  
20       dismiss his answer. There is no default in a habeas.

21       PETITIONER: Yes, ma'am. Your Honor, one more  
22       thing, doesn't he has [sic] thirty days -- twenty days in  
23       which to respond after the filing of the -- the docketing  
24       the petition? I ask that it be dismissed on that ground.

25       THE COURT: I'll consider your motion. Anything

1 further, Mr. Youn?

2 MR. YOUN: No, Your Honor.

3 THE COURT: Mr. Scott, what I'm going to do is  
4 consider these arguments --

5 PETITIONER: Yes, ma'am.

6 THE COURT: -- and the paperwork that you filed and  
7 I'll make a decision. You'll get a response of whether I  
8 grant or deny, and then you -- if I deny their motion,  
9 then we'll schedule your next habeas proceeding, meaning  
10 make sure you get your witnesses properly subpoenaed so  
11 you can go forward with your habeas, should I deny the  
12 motion to dismiss; okay?

13 PETITIONER: Yes, ma'am.

14 THE COURT: That concludes this hearing. Thank you.

15 (Proceedings concluded).  
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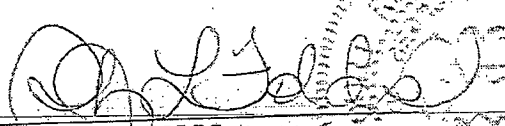
C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF GEORGIA

COUNTY OF LEE

I, Stacey L. Folds, Deposition Officer, being a Certified Court Reporter for the State of Georgia at large, hereby certify that the foregoing transcript is a true record of the proceedings held in the aforesaid matter on the date and time as specified; that I am neither a relative nor employee nor attorney nor counsel of any of the parties, nor an employee of such attorney or counsel, nor financially interested in the action.

WITNESS my hand and seal at Leesburg, Lee County, Georgia, this 31st day of August, 2019.

  
STACEY L. FOLDS  
CERTIFIED COURT REPORTER  
LICENSE NO: B-2242

