

No. 25-310

SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

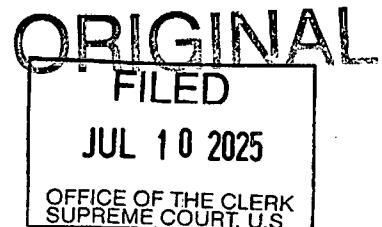
Kerlee Jilla,

Petitioner,

v.

Luzabelle Lucas-Jilla,

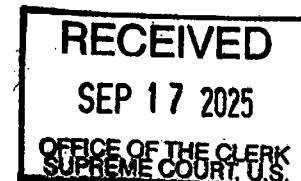
Respondent.



On Petition for a Writ of Certiorari
to the Supreme Court of Florida

PETITION FOR WRIT OF CERTIORARI

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Questions Presented for Review

1. Whether a state court's denial of meaningful appellate review, based on the absence of a transcript that the court itself suppressed or failed to provide, violates a litigant's right to due process under the Fourteenth Amendment.
2. Whether a pro se litigant who is also a sworn federal law enforcement officer is entitled to heightened judicial protection when asserting claims of judicial misconduct and suppression of constitutional rights under color of law.
3. Whether a state appellate court may affirm a lower court judgment while knowingly excluding critical portions of the trial record, thereby foreclosing meaningful review and access to justice.
4. Whether a pattern of judicial actions that obstruct access to the record, deny motions for supplementation, and affirm on incomplete records amounts to a conspiracy to deprive constitutional rights under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 and 18 U.S.C. §§ 241, 242.

Related Proceedings

Florida Supreme Court, Case No. SC2025-1234
Third District Court of Appeal, Case No. 3D23-5678
Lower Tribunal Case No. 2022-CA-999

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IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED
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v.

Luzabelle Lucas-Jilla,
Respondent.

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PETITION FOR WRIT OF CERTIORARI

Opinions Below

The opinion of the Florida Supreme Court denying discretionary review is unreported and was entered on April 22, 2025.

The decision of the Florida Third District Court of Appeal, entered on December 4, 2024, affirming the lower tribunal's judgment, is unreported. The denial of rehearing was entered on December 6, 2024.

The underlying trial court orders were issued by the Eleventh Judicial Circuit Court of Florida, but no transcript is available. The Clerk's office issued a notice stating that no record of the hearing could be produced.

Case Number:

- Florida Supreme Court
Kerlee Jilla v. Luzabelle Lucas-Jilla, Case No. SC2025-0069 (Fla. Apr. 22, 2025)
- Florida Third District Court of Appeal
Kerlee Jilla v. Luzabelle Lucas-Jilla, Case No. 3D23-1263 (Fla. 3d DCA Dec. 4, 2024)
- Eleventh Judicial Circuit Court of Florida
Kerlee Jilla v. Luzabelle Lucas-Jilla, Case No. 2018-023458- FC-04 (Eleventh Jud. Cir. Ct. 2023–2024)

I. Jurisdiction

Pursuant to Rule 13.1 of the Rules of the Supreme Court of the United States, Petitioner respectfully seeks review of a final order issued by the Supreme Court of Florida. That court entered its final disposition on 4/22/25, denying all further relief and barring rehearing or reinstatement. This petition is filed within the 90-day jurisdictional deadline. The jurisdiction of this Court is invoked under 28 U.S.C. §1257(a), which authorizes review of final judgments rendered by the highest court of a state in which a decision could be had. This case implicates core federal rights under the Fourteenth Amendment, 42 U.S.C. § 1983, and 18 U.S.C. §§ 241–242. Petitioner asserts denial of access to appellate review, suppression of the judicial record, and retaliation for asserting federal constitutional protections.

Constitutional and Statutory Provisions Involved

U.S. Constitution – Fourteenth Amendment, Section 1:

“...nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.”

U.S. Constitution – Supremacy Clause (Article VI, Clause 2):

“This Constitution, and the Laws of the United States which shall be made in Pursuance thereof... shall be the supreme Law of the Land...”

U.S. Constitution – First Amendment:

“Congress shall make no law... abridging the freedom of speech... or the right of the people... to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

5 U.S.C. § 2302 – Prohibited Personnel Practices:

Protects federal employees from reprisal for whistleblowing or engaging in protected activity, including the disclosure of abuse of authority, gross mismanagement, or violations of law.

Whistleblower Protection Act of 1989 (5 U.S.C. § 1213): Grants protections to federal employees who disclose information they reasonably believe evidence a violation of law, gross mismanagement, or a substantial and specific danger to public safety.

31 U.S.C. §§ 3729–3733 – False Claims Act:

Prohibits knowingly submitting false claims to the federal government and protects whistleblowers from retaliation.

18 U.S.C. § 1513 – Retaliating Against a Witness, Victim, or Informant:

Criminalizes retaliatory conduct against individuals who provide truthful information to law enforcement relating to the commission of a federal offense.

SUMMARY OF THE ARGUMENT

This case presents an urgent constitutional crisis: a state court system that suppressed critical trial transcripts, denied Petitioner meaningful appellate review, and insulated judicial misconduct from oversight through procedural barriers. Petitioner, a sworn federal law enforcement officer, was forced to trial without counsel under duress and subsequently deprived of a complete record necessary for appellate review. Despite attempts to supplement the record, the Florida appellate and supreme courts affirmed the judgment without addressing the missing materials, effectively foreclosing access to justice. Efforts to seek judicial accountability through the Florida Judicial Qualifications Commission were similarly obstructed, as Petitioner's formal complaint was returned unclaimed, refusing even administrative review. This evidences systemic failure at multiple levels of the Florida judiciary and oversight mechanisms. The Supreme Court has consistently emphasized that due process demands meaningful appellate review, and that state procedural rules must not be used to shield constitutional violations (*Griffin v. Illinois*, *Mayer v. City of Chicago*). Petitioners' case now poses not just questions of individual injustice but the survival of federal constitutional guarantees against institutional self-protection. Federal intervention is necessary because no adequate state remedy remains.

The constitutional issues presented affect the integrity of judicial review nationwide and require this Court's supervisory authority to restore the rule of law. Additionally, efforts to seek internal judicial oversight through the Florida Judicial Qualifications Commission were met with administrative refusal to accept formal complaints, further compounding the need for federal review.

III. Statement of the Case and Facts

Petitioner, a sworn **federal law enforcement officer**, initiated proceedings in the Florida state court system to challenge rulings that he asserts deprived him of fundamental constitutional rights. The lower tribunal issued a judgment following proceedings that included:

- The sudden and unannounced **withdrawal of Petitioner's attorney** at the commencement of trial,
- The denial of reasonable time to secure replacement counsel,
- The court's directive to proceed pro se under duress, and
- The subsequent issuance of judgment without clear record or procedural regularity.

¹Petitioner repeatedly requested access to critical transcripts, including the record of a key hearing held

¹ See Fla. R. App. P. 9.200(f) (permitting supplementation of record where portions are missing or incomplete)

on **June 22, 2023**, which would confirm the sequence of judicial and legal errors. Despite a granted motion to supplement the record by the Florida Third District Court of Appeal, the transcript was not provided, and the appellate court **affirmed without addressing the absence of the record**. *See App. C & E.* Petitioner then sought review by the Florida Supreme Court, raising issues of due process violations, judicial bias, deprivation of rights under color of law, and obstruction of justice through record suppression. The Florida Supreme Court **denied review and barred any rehearing or further filings**, without addressing the constitutional merits. *See App. G.* Petitioner has submitted **multiple notices and filings to state and federal authorities**, raising claims under 18 U.S.C. §§ 241, 242, and 42 U.S.C. § 1983, outlining a pattern of **institutional retaliation and systemic misconduct** involving judges, opposing attorneys, and procedural manipulation. *See App. J.*

Petitioner contends that this case raises **federal questions of exceptional importance**, including:

- Whether a litigant sworn to uphold the Constitution may be denied access to meaningful appellate review through manipulated omissions of the record;
- Whether state courts may circumvent constitutional due process rights by imposing finality over unresolved judicial misconduct;
- And whether suppression of legal records in a case involving a federal law enforcement officer

violates the principles of fairness, transparency, and access to justice.

The case implicates profound questions of **federalism, judicial accountability, and the rights of pro se litigants**, especially those serving in roles of public constitutional trust.

This Petition is not brought in anger, nor in opposition to the judiciary as an institution. Rather, it is submitted in deep respect for the rule of law — and from an abiding belief that justice must not only be done but be seen to be done. The issues raised herein do not challenge judicial authority but instead defend its constitutional limits. The purpose of this filing is not to weaken public confidence in the courts, but to restore it, by addressing a rare but critical systemic failure that denied due process, access to appeal, and meaningful judicial oversight. When appellate review is foreclosed by transcript suppression, when constitutional protections are sidestepped through silence or collusion, and when judicial oversight bodies refuse even to acknowledge complaints — the need for federal intervention is not only appropriate, but necessary. This case is about the Constitution — not personalities. It is about ensuring that no individual, regardless of title or robe, is above the law. It is offered not in hostility to the courts, but as an act of loyalty to the foundational principles they were created to uphold. Let this Petition not be viewed as an indictment of the judiciary, but as a call for its renewal, through transparency, accountability, and lawful correction.

**Kerlee Jilla
Petitioner Pro Se**

REASONS FOR GRANTING THE WRIT

I. This Case Raises Exceptional Federal Questions of Due Process and Judicial Accountability

This petition presents a pressing constitutional issue: whether a state court can effectively deny appellate review by withholding critical portions of the trial record—particularly when the absence of that record is not attributable to the litigant, but to judicial actions themselves. The Supreme Court has long held that the right to meaningful appellate review is a fundamental aspect of due process. See *Griffin v. Illinois*, 351 U.S. 12 (1956); *Mayer v. City of Chicago*, 404 U.S. 189 (1971). Petitioner's appeal was foreclosed not by lack of merit, but by lack of access—engineered by those who were supposed to uphold justice.

II. Petitioner Acknowledges Institutional Constraints, Yet This Case Warrants an Exception

Petitioner respectfully acknowledges this Court's high threshold for certiorari and the statistical improbability of review for pro se filings. Yet this case merits an exception. It does not merely allege individual harm but reveals a structural defect: a judiciary that controls both the creation and suppression of the appellate record. Moreover, Petitioner is not a lay litigant unfamiliar with legal norms, but a sworn federal law enforcement officer

asserting violations of constitutional duties under color of law. This Court has previously intervened in exceptional pro se cases implicating institutional integrity and foundational rights. See *Bounds v. Smith*, 430 U.S. 817 (1977); *Faretta v. California*, 422 U.S. 806 (1975).

III. The Case Reveals a Judicial Blueprint for Evading Constitutional Review

Petitioner's experience presents a cautionary model of systemic failure:

1. A litigant is forced to trial without counsel due to court-imposed constraints;
2. The record of proceedings—essential for appellate review—is never produced;
3. The appeal is denied for lack of a record, despite the state's own failure to provide it; *See App. C.*
4. The highest state court refuses to consider the denial of due process or correct the procedural deficiency. *See App. G*

This sequence creates a closed-loop system where courts insulate their own errors and eliminate accountability. If permitted to stand, this framework could be replicated to deny future litigants—particularly pro se individuals—their rights through procedural manipulation.

IV. Reasons for Granting the Writ

A. Conflict Among Courts: Transcript Omissions and Due Process Protections

Federal courts have consistently held that the absence of trial transcripts due to no fault of the appellant violates due process and may warrant reversal or remand. In *Mayer v. City of Chicago*, 404 U.S. 189 (1971), and *Griffin v. Illinois*, 351 U.S. 12 (1956), the Court ruled that indigent litigants are constitutionally entitled to a trial transcript or suitable substitute to facilitate appellate review. Additional federal circuit rulings, including *United States v. Renton*, 700 F.2d 154 (5th Cir. 1983), confirm that missing records, when not the fault of the appellant, require remand. By contrast, the Florida courts have created a presumption that the trial court's judgment is correct in the absence of a complete record, even when the missing record resulted from state court action or omission. This directly conflicts with the federal rule of law and creates a dangerous precedent allowing courts to insulate constitutional violations through record suppression.

B. Systemic Judicial Silence and the Erosion of Institutional Integrity

Petitioner does not suggest that every judicial actor intended harm. Rather, the record now reflects a pattern of coordinated omission — where trial-level misconduct was never remedied, appellate review was summarily denied without reasoning, and judicial oversight mechanisms failed to even

acknowledge receipt of complaint. This cumulative institutional silence in the face of documented constitutional violations, particularly involving a sworn federal officer, undermines not only Petitioner's rights but public confidence in the judiciary itself. Where multiple branches of the state court system refuse to correct, investigate, or even respond to clear due process violations, the appearance of institutional shielding becomes unavoidable. This Court's intervention is therefore not only appropriate — it is necessary to reaffirm that constitutional rights do not end at the courtroom door, and that the rule of law cannot be subordinated to structural silence.

C. Exceptional Federal Importance and Public Impact

This case involves a sworn **federal law enforcement officer** whose constitutional rights were allegedly suppressed, not only by the trial court but by an appellate system that refused to rectify or acknowledge the procedural injustice. The implications are profound:

- **Judicial integrity** is at stake when courts knowingly proceed without critical records.
- **Public trust in the legal system** is undermined if state courts can suppress evidence and retaliate against those who challenge judicial authority.
- **Federal oversight** becomes necessary when state courts systematically reject review, deny

rehearing's, and conceal the misconduct of their own officers.

Moreover, this case raises broader constitutional questions about the **right of self-represented litigants** to a fair and meaningful opportunity to be heard — particularly when they have the **training, oath, and legal obligation** to uphold constitutional principles.

The Court should grant review not only to resolve these substantial questions but to reaffirm that justice in the United States does not depend on procedural gamesmanship or judicial shielding, but on transparency, accountability, and fidelity to the Constitution.

D. Judicial Silence in the Face of Constitutional Allegations as Denial of Redress

Following the filing of Petitioner's Motion for Rehearing and to Vacate Judgment — which formally alleged constitutional violations and cited exposure under 18 U.S.C. §§ 241, 242, and 1983 — the appellate court remained unresponsive for an extended period. After nearly a month of inaction, the court issued a summary denial on February 11, 2025, without written explanation, legal reasoning, or acknowledgment of the federal issues raised. This judicial silence, when paired with the refusal of Florida's Judicial Qualifications Commission to accept Petitioner's sworn oversight complaint, reflects more than delay or discretion. It constitutes a systemic procedural vacuum that foreclosed correction of error and deprived Petitioner of access to

justice. The constitutional harm is not limited to initial trial defects but now includes appellate abandonment — where formal channels of redress have functionally collapsed. Such silence, under the totality of these circumstances, constitutes a failure of due process and mandates review by this Court to restore the structural integrity of state and federal judicial accountability.

E. Constructive Conflict Between State Court Conduct and Federal Constitutional Precedent

While this case does not arise from a formal circuit split between federal courts of appeals, it presents a constructive and urgent conflict between how Florida state courts applied fundamental constitutional protections — and how this Court has long held those rights must be enforced under federal law.

1. Transcript Suppression and Denial of Meaningful Appellate Review

²The state court record lacks a critical transcript (June 22, 2023), which Petitioner has consistently identified as essential to demonstrate constitutional violations including involuntary pro se trial, judicial bias, and coerced proceedings. This directly contradicts this Court's precedents in:

- *Griffin v. Illinois*, 351 U.S. 12 (1956),
- *Draper v. Washington*, 372 U.S. 487 (1963), and

² See Fla. R. App. P. 9.200(f) (permitting supplementation of record where portions are missing or incomplete)

- *Mayer v. City of Chicago*, 404 U.S. 189 (1971),

which hold that denial of transcripts or obstruction of meaningful appellate review violates the Due Process and Equal Protection Clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment.

Florida's refusal to address or remedy this transcript issue — even after formal notice — diverges sharply from these federal standards.

2. Involuntary Pro Se Status and Denial of Right to Counsel

On June 22, 2023, Petitioner's attorney withdrew at the start of the proceeding, over objection, and the trial court compelled Petitioner to proceed pro se — despite lack of preparation and explicit objection.

This contradicts this Court's rulings in:

- *Faretta v. California*, 422 U.S. 806 (1975),
- *Indiana v. Edwards*, 554 U.S. 164 (2008), and
- *Gideon v. Wainwright*, 372 U.S. 335 (1963),

all of which establish that the right to self-representation must be voluntary, and that denial of counsel in adversarial proceedings undermines the very foundation of due process.

3. Systemic Denial of Judicial Review Contradicts Federal Norms

After identifying judicial misconduct, Petitioner:

- Filed rehearing motions in the trial and appellate courts,
- Filed judicial complaints with oversight agencies,
- Alerted federal authorities including the FBI, DOJ, and Congress,
- And petitioned for review at the Florida Supreme Court — all without acknowledgment of the constitutional substance of the claims raised.

This pattern reflects not judicial discretion — but institutional silence and evasion in the face of serious federal rights violations. Such silence stands in direct contrast to the standards of procedural justice established by this Court in:

- *Evitts v. Lucey*, 469 U.S. 387 (1985),
- *Bounds v. Smith*, 430 U.S. 817 (1977), and
- *Mapp v. Ohio*, 367 U.S. 643 (1961),

all of which reaffirm the judiciary's obligation to protect constitutional rights even — and especially — when other state institutions fail to do so.

This Court's review is needed to resolve these conflicts and reaffirm that the U.S. Constitution governs state courts as rigorously as it governs the federal system — particularly when due process, judicial integrity, and federal oversight are at stake.

V. This Case Presents the Court with Its Constitutional Safety Valve Role

Petitioner has no further recourse. The Florida Supreme Court denied review and barred rehearing. Claims under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 and 18 U.S.C. §§ 241, 242 have been filed with federal agencies but remain outside judicial resolution. Only this Court can restore constitutional order.

This case is not about special treatment; it is about protecting the rule of law from becoming a rule of silence. If courts may suppress the record and punish the litigant for the resulting absence, then the right to appeal becomes a fiction—and due process a casualty of convenience. The petition, therefore, presents not only a compelling constitutional question but a moral one: whether justice may be denied by the very institution sworn to uphold it.

VI. The Underlying Misconduct May Constitute Criminal Violations Under Federal Law

This case does not merely raise civil or procedural concerns. The actions of the courts and opposing counsel, as documented in filings and public record, may constitute violations of federal criminal statutes designed to protect constitutional rights. Petitioner has alleged, and presented evidence to state and federal oversight bodies, that these acts fall under:

- 42 U.S.C. § 1983, for deprivation of constitutional rights under color of law;
- 18 U.S.C. § 241, for conspiracy to interfere with civil rights;

- 18 U.S.C. § 242, for deprivation of rights under color of law.

The refusal to provide a trial transcript, the enforced pro se trial under duress, the denial of motions to supplement the record, and the procedural sealing of all state appellate relief—all raise the specter of institutional retaliation against a federal officer for asserting his rights. While this Court does not prosecute criminal violations, it serves as the final constitutional backstop against state actors who would undermine federal guarantees. When the judiciary is alleged to be the source of rights violations, there exists no higher duty than for this Court to review and restore constitutional order.

VII. Congressional and Executive Oversight Highlight the Broader Constitutional Implications

Petitioner has also submitted documentation to congressional oversight bodies regarding alleged suppression of the appellate record, constitutional violations under color of law, and judicial actions potentially violating 18 U.S.C. §§ 241 and 242. Legislative awareness of these claims reflects the broader institutional implications and the need for judicial transparency and review at the highest level.

Additionally, formal filings have been made with executive agencies including the Department of Justice and other federal oversight offices. The existence of federal awareness underscores the national scope of the issues presented and the

systemic risk posed by judicial impunity at the state level.

This case has now triggered concern across all three branches of government, highlighting the urgent need for this Court to act as a constitutional safety valve. In light of the judiciary's self-insulation, the executive's civil rights interest, and the legislature's oversight authority, this petition stands not merely as a personal appeal, but as a constitutional crossroads.

VIII. The Breakdown of State Judicial Oversight Requires Federal Intervention

Following the violations detailed herein, Petitioner lawfully submitted a formal complaint to the Florida Judicial Qualifications Commission (JQC), the state body constitutionally tasked with investigating judicial misconduct under Article V, Section 12 of the Florida Constitution. Despite proper mailing through the United States Postal Service and compliance with all filing requirements, the JQC failed to claim or accept the complaint. The filing was returned to Petitioner as Unclaimed. *See App. J.* This refusal to accept oversight jurisdiction over judicial misconduct constitutes a further denial of Petitioner's rights to due process and access to redress under both the Florida and United States Constitutions. It demonstrates not merely judicial error at the trial and appellate levels but a systemic institutional failure reaching the very agencies designed to provide accountability. Such refusal further implicates the federal interests protected by 18 U.S.C. §§ 241 and 242, where officials, acting under color of law, conspire to obstruct or deprive constitutional rights.

The totality of these circumstances — judicial suppression of the record, appellate insulation of procedural misconduct, and now administrative refusal to process oversight complaints — leaves no state-level remedy available. Federal intervention is not merely appropriate; it is constitutionally compelled to preserve the integrity of the judiciary and the rule of law itself.

IX. Constructive Conflict and Circuit Split Justifying Review

This case illustrates a critical and unresolved tension between federal and state approaches to missing trial transcripts and appellate review. Under federal law, missing transcripts are grounds for automatic remand or reversal where they inhibit meaningful review of constitutional claims. For example:

- In **United States v. Branson**, 21 F.3d 113 (6th Cir. 1994), the Sixth Circuit reversed and remanded because the unavailability of trial transcripts undermined the right to appeal.
- Similarly, in **Hardy v. United States**, 375 U.S. 277 (1964), the U.S. Supreme Court held that indigent defendants must be provided full trial records, and failure to do so violated due process.

In contrast, Florida courts apply a presumption of correctness even where critical transcripts are missing, placing the burden on the appellant to prove harm without access to the record itself. This direct divergence in how courts treat the same

constitutional issue—access to the record for appellate purposes—creates a constructive conflict. Under this Court’s precedent, such divergence constitutes a de facto circuit split, particularly when state procedure conflicts with federally protected rights.

Florida’s procedural posture under Appellate Rule 9.200(f) governing record supplementation only exacerbates this conflict. Despite timely and repeated efforts to supplement the record, Petitioner was denied a complete appellate review—contrary to both Florida’s own rules and binding federal precedent. This petition therefore satisfies the important federal question standard under Rule 10 of this Court by exposing both systemic due process denial and a jurisdictional split in handling constitutional appeals.

Notice of Constitutional Duty and Institutional Respect

The petitioner respectfully submits this notice to clarify the nature and intent of this filing. This Petition is not submitted in opposition to the judiciary, the State of Florida, or any branch of government. Nor is it intended to expose or critique any federal agency or institution. Rather, it arises solely from Petitioner’s constitutional obligation — as a sworn federal law enforcement officer and citizen — to pursue lawful remedies in response to violations of federal rights, due process, and access to justice.

Petitioners’ sole objective is the restoration of constitutional integrity and institutional accountability where procedural breakdowns have occurred. Every filing, motion, and escalation in this

matter has been conducted within the proper channels, without public protest, media involvement, or personal commentary. This approach reflects Petitioner's continued loyalty to the rule of law, and a deep respect for the integrity of the courts. Petitioner acknowledges the gravity of this matter, the potential institutional implications, and the unusual nature of a pro se litigant reaching this stage of review. However, the facts presented herein — including the suppression of a critical hearing transcript, the denial of counsel, and the unavailability of state oversight — demand redress not to harm institutions, but to preserve them.

Petitioner respectfully affirms that this action is taken not in defiance, but in duty — in the hope that lawful correction will strengthen public trust and institutional integrity at all levels.

X. Conclusion and Relief Sought

This petition presents not only a profound failure of the judicial process but a broader crisis in constitutional accountability. When a state judiciary suppresses trial transcripts, forces pro se litigation under duress, and procedurally forecloses review of its own misconduct, it places itself above the very Constitution it is sworn to uphold. The fact that such actions were directed against a federal law enforcement officer amplifies the institutional implications.

Petitioner respectfully asks this Court to grant a writ of certiorari to:

1. Review the Florida courts' denial of due process and appellate access.
2. Address the broader constitutional question of whether state courts may use procedural mechanisms to insulate violations under color of law.
3. Clarify the duties of state appellate courts to ensure meaningful review where lower court records are absent or suppressed.
4. Reinforce the necessity of judicial transparency and accountability across all levels of the judiciary.

In doing so, this Court will reaffirm its vital role as the constitutional backstop—where justice is not denied by procedural artifice, and where the rights of all, including those who serve the law, are equally protected. This Petition satisfies the criteria under Rule 10 of this Court's Rules: it presents important federal questions not settled by this Court and reveals a conflict between a state court's approach to record preservation and the standards required by federal appellate jurisprudence.

Respectfully submitted



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