

25-6591

No. _____

IN THE

SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

ORIGINAL

LATEEF MAPLE — PETITIONER
(Your Name)

FILED

MAY 26 2025

OFFICE OF THE CLERK
SUPREME COURT, U.S.

vs.

STATE OF Maryland — RESPONDENT(S)

ON PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI TO

Supreme Court of Maryland
(NAME OF COURT THAT LAST RULED ON MERITS OF YOUR CASE)

PETITION FOR WRIT OF CERTIORARI

Lateef Maple # 29681CC
(Your Name)

N.B.C.I.
14100 McMullen Hwy., S.W.
(Address)

Cumberland, Md 21502
(City, State, Zip Code)

(Phone Number)

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OFFICE OF THE CLERK
SUPREME COURT, U.S.

QUESTION(S) PRESENTED

When The State's Multiple Links of Circumstantial Evidence Failed To Identify Mr. Brooks As The Shooter Was It Error For The Appellate Court To Conclude Those Links Was Sufficient To Convince A Rational Fact Finder To Infer Mr. Maple Was Mr. Brooks Accomplice And Conspired With Mr. Brooks To Commit First Degree Murder When Those Links Required The Jury To Engage In Speculation In Performing Its Broaden Duties?

LIST OF PARTIES

- ☒ All parties appear in the caption of the case on the cover page.
- ☐ All parties **do not** appear in the caption of the case on the cover page. A list of all parties to the proceeding in the court whose judgment is the subject of this petition is as follows:

RELATED CASES

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STATUTES AND RULES

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JURISDICTION

☐ For cases from **federal courts**:

The date on which the United States Court of Appeals decided my case was _____.

☐ No petition for rehearing was timely filed in my case.

☐ A timely petition for rehearing was denied by the United States Court of Appeals on the following date: _____, and a copy of the order denying rehearing appears at Appendix _____.

☐ An extension of time to file the petition for a writ of certiorari was granted to and including _____ (date) on _____ (date) in Application No. ____ A ____.

The jurisdiction of this Court is invoked under 28 U. S. C. § 1254(1).

☐ For cases from **state courts**:

The date on which the highest state court decided my case was Feb 26, 2025
A copy of that decision appears at Appendix 3.

☐ A timely petition for rehearing was thereafter denied on the following date: _____, and a copy of the order denying rehearing appears at Appendix _____.

☐ An extension of time to file the petition for a writ of certiorari was granted to and including _____ (date) on _____ (date) in Application No. ____ A ____.

The jurisdiction of this Court is invoked under 28 U. S. C. § 1257(a).

CONSTITUTIONAL AND STATUTORY PROVISIONS INVOLVED

Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution

STATEMENT OF THE CASE

Following the conclusion of a jury trial in the Circuit Court for Baltimore County, the Petitioner, Lateef Maple, was convicted of first degree murder and conspiracy to commit first degree murder. Mr. Maple argued three errors on appeal. First, that the evidence was legally insufficient to sustain a conviction of first degree murder and conspiracy to commit first degree murder. Next, he contends that the trial court erred in its regulation of closing arguments. Finally, Mr. Maple claimed that the trial court erred in admitting irrelevant evidence that depicted his location in the Kelbourne Road area of Baltimore County two days after the murder.

FACTUAL BACKGROUND NECESSARY TO ADDRESS CERTIORARI

On July 28, 2020, Trevor Hamlet ("Mr. Hamlet"), his brother Trent Alexander ("Mr. Alexander"), his girlfriend Vanesia Gaskins ("Ms. Gaskins"), and Casey Pulley ("Mr. Pulley"),¹ rented a room at the Four Seasons Hotel in Baltimore City to go swimming at the hotel pool. In the late afternoon, Mr. Hamlet's group drove to the Four Seasons in Mr. Hamlet's Black GMC Denali. At the hotel, Mr. Hamlet's group valeted the Denali, changed in their room, and went to drink alcohol by the pool around 4:00 or 5:00 p.m. A second group of three women and a light-skinned, tattooed man in plaid Burberry shorts,

¹ Mr. Hamlet, Mr. Alexander, Ms. Gaskins, and Mr. Pulley are referred to as "Mr. Hamlet's group" for brevity.

later identified as Donwin Brooks ("Mr. Brooks"), also gathered by the pool. Mr. Alexander testified that around 6:00 p.m., the women in the second group began arguing with Ms. Gaskins. Shortly after, one of the women came up behind Ms. Gaskins, pulled her hair throwing Ms. Gaskins to the ground and started a physical fight between the women. Mr. Alexander punched the woman in the face causing Mr. Hamlet, Mr. Pulley, Mr. Brooks, and the two other women to join the fight. During the course of the fight, Mr. Alexander also hit Mr. Brooks in the face giving him a black eye.

Four Seasons security broke up the fight after approximately fifteen to twenty minutes, allowed the groups to gather their belongings, and escorted both groups out of the building. Mr. Hamlet and Mr. Brooks' groups waited outside the hotel for the valet to bring their vehicles when both groups began verbally antagonizing each other. Mr. Brooks threatened to kill Mr. Hamlet's group and said they could find him at Gilmore Homes. Around 6:30 p.m., Mr. Hamlet's group left the Four Seasons and drove to 2019 Kelbourne Road in Baltimore County.

While Mr. Hamlet's group departed from the Four Seasons, Mr. Brooks saw his cousin and good friend,² Mr. Maple, parked across from the hotel. Around 6:29 p.m., Mr. Maple arrived at the Four Seasons in a silver Honda Accord coupe with dealership tags. Mr. Maple said he came to the Four Seasons to pick up food. However, Mr. Maple did not pick up his food. As Mr. Brooks approached Mr. Maple, he noticed Mr. Brooks had a

² Mr. Maple and Mr. Brooks are close friends and cousins by marriage. Mr. Maple refers to Mr. Brooks as "Cuz" or "cousin."

swollen black eye and said "well, shit, I'll give you a ride, man, fuck that fool" and took Mr. Brooks "where he got to go." Mr. Brooks entered Mr. Maple's Honda to follow the Denali, leaving his vehicle at the Four Seasons. Surveillance footage from the Four Seasons then shows Mr. Maple's Honda follow Mr. Hamlet's Denali around the front of the hotel.

Once Mr. Hamlet's group arrived at 2019 Kelbourne Road they decided to buy more alcohol at Charlie Brown Liquor's Discount Liquor Store on Hazelwood Avenue. While waiting for Mr. Hamlet outside the liquor store, Mr. Alexander realized he unknowingly grabbed Mr. Brooks' cell phone at the Four Seasons, stomped on the phone, and threw it into the woods behind the liquor store.

Mr. Alexander testified that the group returned to Kelbourne Road and exited Mr. Hamlet's Denali. They were walking toward his brother's house when Mr. Alexander heard gunshots ringing from behind him. Everyone other than Mr. Hamlet ran to take cover, Mr. Alexander said that Mr. Hamlet was "stuck." Mr. Alexander testified that he saw a man in all black, wearing a ski mask, stand behind his brother with a gun pointed to Mr. Hamlet's head, he heard a gunshot, and watched his brother drop. The man who shot Mr. Hamlet turned around and ran behind the apartment complex on Kelbourne Road. After the shooter ran, Mr. Alexander ran to Mr. Hamlet to check if his heart was beating but, instead, lost control and testified that he "started raging."

A few hours after the shooting, Mr. Alexander and Mr. Hamlet's mother provided statements at the police station. At the station, Mr. Alexander told the police that the person

who shot Mr. Hamlet was the man they fought at the Four Seasons pool and that Mr. Alexander knew it was him because Mr. Alexander "got him a couple of times." However, Mr. Alexander could not recall who the shooter was or what he told the police during his testimony at trial.

On July 28, Tyrane McKeever ("Ms. McKeever") was sitting outside near Flintshire Road.³ She watched a black Dodge Journey with tinted windows pull up through the apartment complex entrance on the corner of Flintshire Road and Kelbourne Road and make a U-turn towards the entrance it came from. Ms. McKeever watched a "white or light skinned man" of average size wearing green basketball shorts, a grey or black hoodie, and a mask covering his face get out from the passenger side of Dodge Journey and walk to the other side of the building on Kelbourne Road. Ms. McKeever then heard gun shots and watched the man run back to the Dodge Journey, jump into the passenger seat, and the vehicle peeled off. Surveillance footage from Hazelwood Body & Fender shows the Dodge Journey leaving the Kelbourne Road area at 7:12 p.m. After the Dodge Journey left, Ms. McKeever went to the area where she heard the gunshots. She saw a man lying on the ground with a crowd of people screaming around him.

Officer James Marsh received a call for the shooting at 2019 Kelbourne Road around 7:12 or 7:13 p.m. Officer Marsh arrived at the location by 7:18 p.m. and observed a Black male, later identified as Mr. Hamlet, lying on the ground with a gunshot wound to

³ The record indicates that Mr. Hamlet lived at an apartment complex on Kelbourne Road which intersects Flintshire Road.

the head and another male victim, Mr. Pulley, walking around with a gunshot wound to the elbow. A medical examiner testified that Mr. Hamlet suffered several gunshot wounds, one to the head and two to the lower chest. Officer Marsh secured the perimeter and confirmed that the gunman left the scene. Officer Marsh's body cam footage showed Mr. Hamlet lying on the ground while a bystander administered CPR. The body cam audio and a 911 call also depict Mr. Alexander screaming in the background. Mr. Hamlet was taken to the hospital and pronounced dead at 7:57 p.m.

FBI Special Agent Michael Fowler ("Agent Fowler") analyzed Mr. Maple's⁴ cell site location information ("CSLI") to determine where he traveled between 6:00 and 7:40 p.m. on July 28. Agent Fowler found that between 6:32 and 6:41 p.m., Mr. Maple headed northbound off I-83 to 695. During the drive, Mr. Maple received an incoming FaceTime call at 6:44 p.m.⁵ Mr. Maple then drove south into the Kelbourne Road area between 6:52 and 7:06 p.m. At 6:59 p.m., surveillance footage from Hazelwood Body & Fender shows Mr. Maple's car on Hazelwood Avenue, .2 miles from Kelbourne Road, headed towards a dead-end area. At 7:05 p.m., Hazelwood Body & Fender surveillance footage shows Mr. Maple's Honda driving behind Mr. Hamlet's Denali on Hazelwood Avenue. Mr. Maple's CSLI revealed that he remained in the Kelbourne Road area between 7:06 and 7:18 p.m. and returned to Baltimore City between 7:23 and 7:37 p.m. (T5 at 45-47)

⁴ Mr. Maple has two cell phones ending in 4575 and 9589. Agent Fowler used Mr. Maple's cell phone ending in 4575 to map his locations on July 28.

⁵ Detective Fisher reviewed Mr. Maple's cell phone and iCloud data during the investigation. Although Detective Fisher could not recover everything, he noticed an incoming call at 6:44 p.m. on Mr. Maple's iCloud data.

On July 30, two days after the shooting, a license plate reader recorded Mr. Brooks' vehicle driving through the Kelbourne Road area. The State also presented evidence showing that Mr. Maple's phone connected to a cell tower near Kelbourne Road at the same time Mr. Brooks' vehicle drove through the area. Although it is possible that Mr. Maple either drove in the Kelbourne Road area or down I-95, which runs near the Kelbourne Road neighborhood, defense counsel raised an objection based on the relevancy of this evidence at trial:

STATE: So, you have the Defendant, Donwin Brooks, there's a Co-Defendant, Donwin Brooks, vehicle going up Kelbourne Road and at that same time, you have Lateef Maple's phone hitting off a tower in that area [on July 30].

THE COURT: On the same day.

STATE: Same day, same time.

THE COURT: Okay.

[DEFENSE COUNSEL]: On the 30th, two days later?

STATE: On the 30th, yes.

THE COURT: Yes.

[DEFENSE COUNSEL]: The, the —

THE COURT: Because it's at Kelbourne I'm going to overrule the objection. I think it's relevant.

AGENT: That between 12:00, 12:07 is consistent with being up in the area of our red and purple pins. Again, the Hazelwood Avenue area of Baltimore County. And then by 12:12:29, 12:12:33 (inaudible).

STATE: All right. Now, you also testified you were given the latitude and longitude of a potential license plate reader, a possible license plate reader

hit for a vehicle. Are your findings consistent with a cell phone possibly being in that vehicle?

[DEFENSE COUNSEL]: Objection. Possibly, it can possibly?

THE COURT: Sustained.

STATE: Are your findings consistent with a cell phone being in that vehicle?

AGENT: It's --

[DEFENSE COUNSEL]: Objection. Same, exactly the same question.

THE COURT: Well, he said possibly before.

[DEFENSE COUNSEL]: Well, how could it be otherwise?

THE COURT: Well, --

[DEFENSE COUNSEL]: How, how could it possibly be, okay.

THE COURT: I'm going to overrule. I mean, it's a, it's a yes or no answer.

AGENT: Yeah, it's consistent with being in that general area. I cannot place a phone in a specific vehicle. I can say it's consistent with being in that general area where that vehicle is at the time that vehicle was there.

The State's Attorney opened closing arguments by saying "losing a loved one is hard" and that Mr. Hamlet's mother did not get to say goodbye to her son. Defense counsel objected to this statement arguing that it invited the jury's sympathy instead of asking it to look at the evidence. The trial judge overruled this objection but admonished the State's attorney that she was walking a fine line of prejudicial sympathy.

Additional facts will be provided as they become relevant.

WHEN THE STATE'S MULTIPLE LINKS OF CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE FAILED TO IDENTIFY MR. BROOKS AS THE SHOOTER WAS IT ERROR FOR THE APPELLATE COURT TO CONCLUDE THOSE LINKS WERE SUFFICIENT TO CONVINCE A RATIONAL FACT FINDER TO INFER MR. BROOKS WAS THE KILLER AND MR. MAPLE HIS ACCOMPLICE AND CONSPIRED WITH MR. BROOKS TO COMMIT FIRST DEGREE MURDER WHEN THOSE LINKS REQUIRED THE JURY TO ENGAGED IN SPECULATION IN PERFORMING ITS BROADER DUTIES?

On appeal, Mr. Maple argued was the successive links of circumstantial evidence legal sufficient to support his convictions for first-degree murder. Although the due process clause of the 14 amendment to the U.S. Constitution prohibits criminal convictions of any person except upon sufficient evidence of every element of the offense beyond a reasonable doubt. Jackson v. Virginia, 443 U.S. 307, 316 (1979).

Nevertheless, the appellate court opined if the prosecution present either a single strand of evidence, the circumstances must be inconsistent with any reasonable hypothesis of innocence to meet the standard for sufficiency. When however, if it involved multiple strands of circumstantial evidence, those circumstances must be considered collectively.

Analyzing those multiple strands of circumstantial evidence to determine if Mr. Maple's convictions of first degree murder and conspiracy to commit first degree murder rested entirely on circumstantial evidence that required the jury to speculate, Mr. Maple was guilty of being an accomplice to first degree murder and, conspired with Mr. Brooks to commit first degree murder.

The appellate court held since the prosecution must only produce circumstantial or direct evidence to support its theory that, Mr. Maple was an accomplice to murder and conspired with Mr. Brooks, from which the jury could infer the essential elements of the crime beyond a

reasonable doubt. It believed the evidence was sufficient to convince a rational trier of fact beyond a reasonable doubt that Mr. Maple aided, commanded, counseled, or encouraged Mr. Hamlet's murder.

Those conclusion were promise on the strands of circumstantial evidence involving Mr. Alexander's testimony and the surveillance footage that Mr. Brooks and Mr. Hamlet's groups fought at the Four Seasons, Mr.

Brooks threaten to kill Mr. Hamlet's group, Mr. Brooks and Mr. Maple drove behind Mr. Hamlet's vehicle near the Four Seasons and past Hazelwood Body & Fender-- 2 miles from 2019 Kelbourne Road, and Mr. Alexander witnessed the shooter walk up behind Mr. Hamlet with a gun pointed to his head, and shoot him on Kelbourne Road

The appellate court held because the surveillance footage showing Mr. Brooks enter Mr. Maple's car outside the Four Seasons, Agent Fowler testimony that Mr. Maple's CSLI revealed his location driving to Baltimore County, between 6:32 p.m. Mr. Alexander was in possession of Mr. Brooks phone at this time and Mr. Maple's iCloud data shows an incoming

FaceTime call at 6:44 p.m. Around 5:59, Hazelwood Body & Fender footage capture Mr. Maple's car following behind Mr. Hamlet's Danali Truck and moments later the Dodge Journey passed Mr. Maple's car in the same area. The Dodge Journey parked at the corner of Flinshire Road and Kelbourne Road where the shooter jumped out of the Dodge and ran to Mr. Hamlet's group, committed the murder, and fled in the Dodge Journey.

Mr. Maple admitted to Det. Fisher, he had no reason to be in Baltimore County July 28, admitted that he was in Baltimore City to pick up food but after Mr. Brooks approached him at the Four Seasons, he noticed Mr. Brooks swollen eye and said well, shit, I'll give you a ride, fucked that fool' and took Mr. Brooks "where he got to go. Officer Marshe received

a 911 call for the shooting at 7:12 p.m. and arrived at the scene by 7:18 p.m. Mr. Maple's CSLI confirmed that he remained in the Kelbourne Road area between 7:06 and 7:18 p.m.

Based on those links, the appellate court conclude Mr. Maple's effort to drive Mr. Brooks from Baltimore City to the Kelbourne Road area in Baltimore County, in addition to remaining in the area until either shots were fired, or the police responded to the shooting. The State admitted successive links of circumstantial evidence in which a jury could infer that Mr. Maple was Mr. Brooks accomplice and conspired with Mr. Brooks in the commission of Mr. Hamlet's murder.

Surely the appellate courts conclusions are wrong by virtue of the fact the States own links of circumstantial evidence revealed that someone other than Mr. Brooks murdered Mr. Hamlet, which is found the State's eyewitness of Tyrane McKeyer. Who was an eyewitness at the crime scene, who testified she had been sitting outside when she saw a black truck pull up and someone get out of the truck. (T3-74). She then heard gunshots, the person who had gotten out of the truck then ran back to the truck, got inside and the truck sped off. (T3-74). McKeever also testified that man who gotten out of the truck was white, of average size, wearing green shorts, hoodie and his face was covered. (T3-77).

The you have the testimony of State witness Alexander, the victim's younger brother, who testified that ~~when~~ the group got out of his brother's truck at his Kelbourne Road apartment, he heard gunshots ring out. (T4-67-68). Everyone including himself began to run. (T4-65), when he looked back he saw the shooter was wearing all black and a ski mask. (T4-67-68). Alexander admitted that he was intoxicated at the time, but he saw the shooter run behind the apartments. (T-69-70). Hours after the shooting, Alexander went to the police station for questioning. (T4-80). Not long thereafter

his mother arrived at the police station as well. (T4-72). At this point, Alexander told the police he knew the shooter was the dude we fought at the Four Seasons. (T4-72). However, at trial under cross-examination, Alexander admitted that he did not know who the shooter was, that he was a little intoxicated, it was still all a blur. It happened so fast. (T4-93).

There was 6:59 p.m. video the State admitted into evidence of or from the Haxelwood Body & Fender footage that captured a Dodge Journey passed by Mr. Maple's car in the same area. Then Dodge Journey then parked at the corner of Flinshire and Kelbourne Road, where the shooter jumped out, ran to the Mr. Hamlet's group, committed the murder, and fled in the Dodge Journey.

When considered with those precepts in mind, when viewing the multiple links of the State's circumstantial evidence collectively, it does not identify either Mr. Brooks or Mr. Maple with the Dodge Journey, or identify Mr. Brooks as being the person who jumped out of the Dodge Journey, and murdered Mr. Hamlet. In order to infer Mr. Maple was an accomplice to the murder, and conspired with Mr. Brooks in the commission of Mr. Hamlet's murder. To the contrary beyond Mr. Maple giving Mr. Brooks a ride from the Four Seasons to Baltimore County and, remaining in the area of two miles from crime scene until the police arrived. No reasonable fact finder would be convinced to infer from those links Mr. Brooks was the shooter, and Mr. Maple his accomplice to the murder, in light of the fact none of the links of circumstantial evidence reveals Mr. Brooks of having got out of Mr. Maple car either before the murder or just before the murder.

REASONS FOR GRANTING THE PETITION

The instant case present a situation of such gravity that this Honorable Court should grant review to determine whether a defendant may be convicted on links of circumstantial evidence as an accomplice, when none of the links identifies the murderer beyond a reasonable doubt. Which a necessary before a defendant can be identify as the murderer accomplice. Absence the links proof of the murderer beyond a reasonable doubt mere speculative circumstantial evidence of the murderer identity will not suffice as being sufficient to convince a rational finder to infer another defendant as being an accomplice to first degree murder without proof beyond a reasonable doubt of the murderer's identity. Instead of allowing juries to speculate upon circumstantial links that does not establish proof of the murderer, in order to identify the defendant as being the murderer's accomplice to the first degree murder and conspiracy.

In sum, the judgment should be reviewed and reversed.

CONCLUSION

The petition for a writ of certiorari should be granted.

Respectfully submitted,

_____

Date: 5-26-25