

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF IOWA

STATE OF IOWA

Plaintiff-Appellee,

v.

WAYLON JAMES BROWN,

Defendant-Appellant.

Supreme Court No. 22-0324

APPEAL FROM THE IOWA DISTRICT COURT
FOR WOODBURY COUNTY
HONORABLE JAMES N. DAANE
HONORABLE TOD J. DECK

APPLICANT'S APPLICATION FOR FURTHER REVIEW
OF THE DECISION OF THE IOWA COURT OF APPEALS
FILED FEBRUARY 8, 2023

MARTHA J. LUCEY
State Appellate Defender

ASHLEY STEWART
Assistant Appellate Defender
astewart@spd.state.ia.us
appellatedefender@spd.state.ia.us

STATE APPELLATE DEFENDER'S OFFICE
Fourth Floor Lucas Building
Des Moines, Iowa 50319
(515) 281-8841 / (515) 281-7281 FAX
ATTORNEYS FOR DEFENDANT-APPELLANT

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

On the 27th day of February, 2023, the undersigned certifies that a true copy of the foregoing instrument was served upon Defendant-Appellant by placing one copy thereof in the United States mail, proper postage attached, addressed to Waylon Brown, No. 6288391, Anamosa State Penitentiary. 406 North High Street, Anamosa, Iowa 52205.

APPELLATE DEFENDER'S OFFICE



ASHLEY STEWART
Assistant Appellate Defender
Appellate Defender Office
Lucas Bldg., 4th Floor
321 E. 12th Street
Des Moines, IA 50319
(515) 281-8841
astewart@spd.state.ia.us
appellatedefender@spd.state.ia.us

AS/sm/8/22
AS/lb/10/22
AS/sm/2/23

QUESTIONS PRESENTED FOR REVIEW

I. WHETHER THERE WAS INSUFFICIENT EVIDENCE TO PROVE THAT BROWN WAS THE PRINCIPLE OR AIDED AND ABETTED IN THE COMMISSION OF EITHER FIRST OR SECOND-DEGREE ROBBERY?

II. WHETHER THE DISTRICT COURT IMPOSED AN ILLEGAL AND UNCONSTITUTIONAL SENTENCE BY FAILING TO MERGE BROWN'S CONVICTION FOR ROBBERY IN THE FIRST-DEGREE AND WILLFUL INJURY CAUSING SERIOUS INJURY?

III. WHETHER THE DISTRICT COURT ERRED BY FAILING TO GRANT BROWN'S MOTION FOR A MISTRIAL AND FORCING BROWN TO CHOOSE BETWEEN A WEEK AND A HALF DELAY OR WAIVING HIS RIGHT TO A 12-PERSON JURY PANEL?

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STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF FURTHER REVIEW

With the reoccurring impact of COVID-19 on pending cases and future, the Supreme Court's guidance is necessary to aid the district court in determining what would warrant a reasonable delay in criminal proceedings, where the defendant has a right to a fair trial and a 12-person jury.

In this case, the Court of Appeals abused its discretion when deciding that a 9-day delay was reasonable. The Court of Appeals also erred when it forced Brown to choose between the delay or a 12-person jury. The jury deliberation delay was caused by several juror absences including those related a COVID-19 illness and there has been no law in Iowa that has discussed the impact on COVID-19 delays and jury deliberations. In its decision, the Court of Appeals heavily relied on federal case law from another jurisdiction to determine that Brown's jury delay was unreasonable¹. However, that case law does not constitute controlling legal

1. United States v. Frazier, __ F.3d __, __. 2022 WL 40743339 at *1 (M.D. Tenn. 2022).

authority. Brown requests the Iowa Supreme Court grant further review in this case because it raises an issue that involves a substantial issue of first impression and constitutional law, and it is of broad public importance. Iowa R. App. P. 6.903(2)(d) and 6.1101(1)(b)(2), (4) (2021).

Brown also argues that the Court of Appeals erred in determining that there was sufficient evidence to convict him of first-degree robbery and the that his robbery and willful injury conviction should not have merged.

FACTS

The Court of Appeals' statement of the background facts is essentially correct. Any additional relevant facts will be discussed below.

ARGUMENT

I. THERE WAS INSUFFICIENT EVIDENCE TO PROVE THAT BROWN WAS THE PRINCIPLE OR AIDED AND ABETTED IN THE COMMISSION OF EITHER FIRST OR SECOND-DEGREE ROBBERY.

Error Preservation: During the trial, at the close of the State's evidence, Brown moved for an acquittal of robbery in the first degree. (Trial Vol. I, p. 75, L14-p. 76, L2; p. 75, L22-p. 76, L2). The defendant argued that the State did not prove all elements of robbery in the first degree. The Court denied the motion. (Trial Vol. I, p. 76, L5-19). Error was preserved. If the Court finds that Brown did not adequately preserve his sufficiency argument recently, the Iowa Supreme Court, in State v. Crawford, held that "a defendant's trial and imposition of sentence following a guilty verdict are sufficient to preserve error with respect to any challenge to the sufficiency of

evidence raised on direct appeal. 972 N.W.2d 189, 195-202 (Iowa 2022).

Standard of Review: The Court reviews sufficiency of the evidence claims for correction of errors of law. State v. Kelso-Christy, 911 N.W.2d 663, 666 (Iowa 2018). When evaluating the sufficiency of the evidence, the court considers “whether, taken in the light most favorable to the State, the finding of guilt is supported by substantial evidence in the record.” Id (quoting State v. Meyers, 799 N.W.2d 132, 138 (Iowa 2011)). There is substantial evidence , if the evidence “would convince a rational fact finder the defendant is guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.” Id. The Court will draw all legitimate legal references in support of the verdict. State v. Taylor, 689 N.W.2d 116, 1314 (Iowa 2004). However, “[e]vidence which merely raises suspicion, speculation, or conjecture is insufficient.” State v. Casady, 491 N.W.2d 782, 787 (Iowa 1992) (en banc). The evidence must at least raise a fair inference of guilt as to each essential elements of the

crime. State v. LaPointe, 418 N.W.2d 49, 51 (Iowa 1988).

Discussion: Brown argues that the State failed to provide sufficient evidence that he committed robbery in the first or second degree either as the principle or as an aider or abettor.

a. Robbery in the First-Degree

The Iowa Code defines aiding and abetting as:

All persons concerned in the commission of a public offense, whether they directly commit the act constituting the offense or aid and abet its commission, shall be charged, tried, and punished as principals. The guilt of a person who aids and abets the commission of a crime must be determined upon the facts which show the part the person had in it, and does not depend upon the degree of the person's guilt.

Iowa Code § 703.1 (2021).

In order to establish a conviction under the aiding and abetting theory, “the evidence to support a conviction under a theory of aiding and abetting exists if there is “substantial evidence that the accused assented to or lent countenance and approval to the criminal act by either actively participating or encouraging it prior to or at the time of its commission.”

State v. Hearn, 797 N.W.2d 577, 580 (Iowa 2011) (quoting State v. Ramirez, 616 N.W.2d 587, 591-92 (Iowa 2000) (en banc), *overruled on other grounds* by State v. Reeves, 636 N.W.2d 22, 25-25 (Iowa 2001). Knowledge of the crime is essential; “however neither knowledge nor presence at the scene of the crime is sufficient to prove aiding and abetting.” State v. Barnes, 204 N.W.2d 827, 828 (Iowa 1972). “[A]n Aiding and abetting conviction requires more than just facilitating one or another element, but also a state of mind extending to the entire crime.” Rosemond v. United States, 572 U.S. 65, 75-76, 134 S. Ct. 1240 (2014). “Aiding and abetting may be proven by direct or circumstantial evidence. Direct and circumstantial evidence are equally probative.” State v. Huser, 849 N.W.2d 472, 491 (Iowa 2017) (citation omitted).

“[I]n the context of a first-degree robbery prosecution under the dangerous weapon alternative, the State must prove the alleged aider and abettor had knowledge that a dangerous

weapon would be or was being used. State v. Henderson, 908 N.W.2d 868, 876 (Iowa 2018). “Otherwise, the aider and abettor may have knowledge of the intent to commit a robbery, but not first-degree robbery. Id.

A person who “purposefully inflicts or attempts to inflict serious injury or is armed with a dangerous weapon” during a robbery commits first-degree robbery; all other robberies are second-degree robbery.

Iowa Code §§ 711.2 and 711.3.

In this case, the State failed to prove that Brown had the intent to rob Jensen or that Brown knew White would be armed with a dangerous weapon, to wit, a baseball bat. The jury in Brown’s case was instructed on both robbery in the first-degree as follows:.

1. On or about October 21, 2021, in Woodbury County, Iowa, the defendant:
 - a. had the specific intent to commit a theft and/or
 - b. aided and abetted Thomas White, who had the specific intent to commit a theft, and the defendant aided and abetted Thomas White, with the knowledge that Thomas White had such specific intent.

2. To carry out his intention or to assist him in escaping from the scene, with or without the stolen property, the defendant aided and abetted Thomas White who committed an assault upon Jeremiah Jensen as defined in instruction 31.

3. The defendant aided and abetted Thomas White who was armed with a dangerous weapon.

If the State has proved all elements, the defendant is guilty of Robbery in the First Degree. If the State has failed to prove any one of elements, the defendant is not guilty of Robbery in the First Degree...

(Jury Instruction No. 17)(App. p. 14).

In order to establish aiding and abetting robbery in the first degree, the State relied upon video evidence, which displayed a small portion of the incident. (State's Ex 30 Video). However, the video does provide any proof that Brown had prior knowledge that White would have the bat or intend to use the bat. The video is a relatively short clip that displays White coming on the scene after Brown with a bat close to his side. As Brown testified, because White was behind him he never saw the bat and was unaware of its existence. The video does not ever show Brown holding the

baseball bat. There is no testimony that Brown used the bat on Jensen. Further, the State did not present any proof that Brown supplied White with the baseball bat with the specific intent to rob Jensen. Additionally, White submitted an affidavit in which he stated that Brown was not involved in the robbery in any capacity. (Def. Ex. 104) (App. p. 13; Trial Vol. II, p. 7, L7). The video does not show that Brown had knowledge or the intent to use a dangerous weapon and there was no other evidence presented that Brown was aware of the intent by White to use baseball bat.

The State failed to prove that Brown aided and abetted robbery in the first-degree and therefore the conviction should be vacated and remanded for dismissal.

b. Robbery in the Second Degree

The State also failed to present sufficient evidence that Brown possessed the specific intent for robbery in the second degree or that aided or abetted White in the commission of the crime.

The jury in Brown's case was instructed on both robbery in the second-degree as follows:

1. On or about October 21, 2021, in Woodbury County, Iowa, the defendant:
 - a. had the specific intent to commit a theft and/or
 - b. aided and abetted Thomas White, who had the specific intent to commit a theft, and the defendant aided and abetted Thomas White, with the knowledge that Thomas White had such specific intent.

2. To carry out his intention or to assist him in escaping from the scene, with or without the stolen property, the defendant aided and abetted Thomas White who committed an assault upon Jeremiah Jensen as defined in instruction 31.

If the State has proved all elements, the defendant is guilty of Robbery in the First Degree. If the State has failed to prove any one of elements, the defendant is not guilty of Robbery in the First Degree...

(Jury Instruction No. 21)(App. p. 16).

Specific intent can seldom be proved by direct evidence. See State v. Olson, 373 N.W.2d 135, 136 (Iowa 1985). Proof of intent usually arises from circumstantial evidence. Id. Evidence of the defendant's " 'presence, companionship, and conduct before or after the offense is committed' may be

enough from which to infer a defendant's participation in the crime." State v. Lewis, 514 N.W.2d 63, 66 (Iowa 1994) (quoting State v. Miles, 346 N.W.2d 517, 520 (1984)).

The State did not introduce any evidence any interaction or communication between White and Brown prior to the incident with Jensen. There was no evidence that the two planned or even discussed a robbery of Jensen. In contrast, the defense introduced evidence, from White, in the form of a signed affidavit. In the affidavit, White stated that Brown was not involved in the robbery, in any capacity. (Def. Ex. 104) (App. p. 13). The State also failed to introduce evidence of White and Brown interacting immediately after the incident.

Without any evidence that White and Brown planned the robbery or that Brown was supposed to participate, the State failed to prove that Brown aided and abetted Thomas.

II. THE DISTRICT COURT IMPOSED AN ILLEGAL AND UNCONSTITUTIONAL SENTENCE BY FAILING TO MERGE BROWN’S CONVICTION FOR ROBBERY IN THE FIRST-DEGREE AND WILLFUL INJURY CAUSING SERIOUS INJURY.

Error Preservation: A sentence that is contrary to Iowa Code § 701.9 is void and therefore the court’s error in imposing the sentence is not subject to normal rules of error preservation and waiver. State v. Hickman, 623 N.W.2d 847, 849 (Iowa 2001).

Standard of Review: Review of an illegal sentence due to merger is for correction of errors at law. State v. Anderson, 565 N.W.2d 340, 342 (Iowa 1997). However,...”insofar as an unconstitutional sentence is alleged...review is de novo.” State v. Zarate, 908 N.W.2d 831, 840 (Iowa 2018).

Discussion: The district court submitted a robbery in the first-degree, second-degree, and willful injury causing serious injury to the jury, as three standalone jury instructions. (Jury Instruction Nos. 17, 21, 26) (App. pp. 14-, 16-17). The jury found Brown guilty of both robbery in the

first-degree and willful injury causing serious injury. Brown contends that robbery in the first-degree and willful injury causing serious injury should merge. He also contends that because robbery in the second degree was included as a lesser-offense, it would also merge with willful injury causing serious injury.

Both the United States and Iowa Constitution prohibit multiple punishments for the same offense. U.S. Const. amend. V; Iowa Const. art. I, § 12; see also State v. Taft, 506 N.W.2d 757, 760 (Iowa 1993).

Iowa Code § 701.9 (2021), instructs courts to enter judgment only for the greater offense, when the defendant is “convicted of a public offense which is necessarily included in another public offense of which the defendant is convicted.” State v. Caquelin, 702 N.W.2d 510, 511 (Iowa Ct. App. 2005). Similarly, Iowa Rule of Criminal Procedure 2.6(2) states: “upon prosecution for a public offense, the defendant may be convicted of either the public offense charged, or included, but

not both.” Iowa R. Crim. P. 2.6 (2)(2021).

In order to determine what constitutes a “necessarily included offense”, the courts must apply a two-step approach.” See State v. Johnson, 950 N.W.2d 21, 24-25 (Iowa 2020).

First, the court employs a legal elements test “to determine whether it is possible to commit the greater offense without also committing the lesser offense.” Id. at 24 (quoting State v. Halliburton, 539 N.W.2d 339, 340 (Iowa 1995); See also State v. Coffin, 504 N.W.2d 893, 894 (Iowa 1993). The court dubbed this test the “impossibility test and is [t]he paramount consideration in determining the submissibility of the lesser included offenses.” State v. Turecek, 456 N.W.2d 219, 223 (Iowa 1990).

“The typical method to ascertain whether it is possible to commit the greater offense without committing the lesser is to strictly compare the elements of the two crimes – something we [Iowa Courts] have called the ‘strict statutory elements approach.’” State v. Jeffries, 430 N.W.2d 728 (Iowa 1988).

Under this approach, if the elements of the proffered lesser included offense are found in the putative greater offense (and the greater offense contains at least one additional element), then it will be legally impossible to commit the greater offense without simultaneously committing the lesser offense.” Id. at 730-31. See also State v. Halliburton, 539 N.W.2d 339, 3440 (Iowa 1995).

Since Jeffries, the Court has cautioned against applying the elements approach *overly restrictively* and to the exclusion of the broader impossibility inquiry. State v. McNitt, 451 N.W.2d 824, 824-825 (Iowa 1990) (emphasis added). “[T]he comparison of the elements of the greater and lesser crimes, sometimes referred to as the ‘elements test’ is only resorted to as an aid in applying the impossibility test and is fully subsumed therein.” State v. Turecek, 456 N.W.2d 219, 223 (Iowa 1990).

The court pointed out that “[i]t is not essential that elements of the lesser offense be described in the statutes in

the same manner as the elements of the greater offense.” Id. at 223. Therefore, a particular element of the lesser offense does not need to be identical in meaning with a particular element of the greater offenses so long as the meanings of the two elements overlap so that the element of the greater offense cannot be satisfied without also satisfying the element of the lesser offense. Id.

The second step to the necessarily-included offense analysis is “[w]hether the legislature intended multiple punishments for both offenses. See State v. Johnson, 950 N.W.2d 21, 24-25 (Iowa 2020) (quoting State v. Halliburton, 539 N.W.2d 339, 340 (Iowa 1995)).

a. The impossibility test dictates that the offenses should merge.

In this case, in order to establish Robbery in the First-Degree, the State had to prove three elements:

1. On or about October 21, 2021, in Woodbury County, Iowa, the defendant:
 - a. had the specific intent to commit a theft and/or

b. aided and abetted Thomas White, who had the specific intent to commit a theft, and the defendant aided and abetted Thomas White, with the knowledge that Thomas White had such specific intent.

2. To carry out his intention or to assist him in escaping from the scene, with or without the stolen property, the defendant aided and abetted Thomas White who committed an assault upon Jeremiah Jensen as defined in instruction 31.

3. The defendant aided and abetted Thomas White who was armed with a dangerous weapon.

If the State has proved all elements, the defendant is guilty of Robbery in the First Degree. If the State has failed to prove any one of elements, the defendant is not guilty of Robbery in the First Degree.

(Jury Instruction No. 17)(App. p. 14).

In order to establish that Brown committed Willful Injury

Causing Serious Injury the State had to prove:

1. On or about the 10th day of October 2021, the defendant aided and abetted Thomas White who hit Jeremiah Jensen in the head with a baseball bat.

2. The defendant aided and abetted Thomas White, who specifically intended to cause serious injury to Jeremiah Jensen.

3. The defendant aided and abetted Thomas White whose acts caused a serious injury to Jeremiah Jensen as

defined in Instruction No. 36.

If the State has proved all elements, the defendant is guilty of Willful Injury Causing Serious Injury...

(Jury Instruction No. 26) (App. p. 17).

In comparing the jury instructions and elements for Robbery in the First-Degree and Willful Injury Causing Serious Injury, Brown reasons that the two charges should merge, even if the elements are, on the surface, not identical. Brown argues that the Court should look beyond the “statutory elements test” and determine that “impossibility test” makes it impossible for the elements of the robbery in the first-degree to be satisfied without the elements of willful injury. State v. Turecek, 456 N.W.2d 219, 223 (Iowa 1990).

Here, Brown maintains that the assault language used in the robbery in the first-degree instruction refers to the same act that created the willful injury causing serious injury.

In order for the court to determine if the two elements share the identity, the court should look at the “manner in which the State sought to prove those elements.” State v.

Coffin, 504 N.W.2d 893 (Iowa 1993) (quoting State v. Turecek, 456 N.W.2d 219, 223 (Iowa 1990)). “[I]f the robbery and assault charges are predicated on a single assault, the two crimes should merge. State v. Nyomah 922 N.W.2d 106 (Iowa Ct. App. 2018) (citing State v. Wilson, 523 N.W.2d 440, 441 (Iowa 1994)).

In the State’s closing arguments, it argued that the robbery in the first-degree was proven when “Thomas comes up from behind and swings the bat several times, hitting Jeremiah Jensen in the head.” (Trial Vol. III, p. 7, L13-15).

In relation to the Willful Injury Causing Serious Injury, the State argued, “...photographs clearly show the wound to the top of his [Jensen’s] head.” (Trial Vol. III, p. 9, L25, p. 10, L2). The head wound to which the State was referring was the wound caused by Thomas White striking Jensen with a bat on his head.

Here, the impossibility test is satisfied because only one act occurred which could constitute the assault for the

robbery in the first-degree and the underlying assault for the willful injury: the singular incident striking Jensen with the baseball bat. The State did not argue that there were multiple assaults that constituted separate acts by the Brown or White. Additionally, in this case, the instructions developed by the parties and approved by the district court did not ask the jury to engage in the fact-finding necessary to support separate acts of assault. See State v. Velez, 829 N.W.2d 572, 576-77 (Iowa 2013). There was no instruction asking the jury to determine whether there was a sufficient “break in the action” necessary to support a finding of multiple assaults under Velez. Id. at 582-583. Therefore, the findings for the robbery in the first-degree, robbery in the second-degree, and the willful injury were all predicated on the single assault.

b. The legislature did not intend for multiple punishments

Under some circumstances, the legislature may expressly permit multiple punishments for the same offense, negating the requirement to merge a lesser included offense into a

greater. State v. Lewis, 514 N.W. 2d 63, 69 (Iowa 1994).

Iowa Courts have found no legislative intent to impose multiple punishments upon defendants convicted of both robbery and the lesser included assault charges. State v. Hickman, 623 N.W.2d 847, 849 (Iowa 2001) (holding that willful injury merges with first-degree robbery); State v. Rufin-Fones, 834 N.W.2d 873 (Iowa Ct. App. 2013) (holding assault while participating in a felony merges with first-degree robbery); State v. Suljevic, 821 N.W.2d 286 (Iowa Ct. App 2012) (holding: “we find no evidence from the language that of the statutes to demonstrate such legislative intent” to preclude merger of assault while participating in a felony and first-degree robbery); State v. Negrete-Ramirez 759 N.W.2d 3 (Iowa Ct. App. 2008)(holding that assault causing serious injury merges with first-degree robbery).

In this case, willful injury is a lesser include offense of robbery in the first degree and second degree, there was no evidence to support that multiple assaults occurred, and the

legislature did not intend for multiple punishments for defendants who are convicted of both robbery in the first-degree and its lesser included offenses. The district court improperly failed to merge the convictions.

III. THE DISTRICT COURT ERRED BY FAILING TO GRANT BROWN'S MOTION FOR A MISTRIAL AND FORCING BROWN TO CHOOSE BETWEEN A WEEK AND A HALF DELAY OR WAIVING HIS RIGHT TO A 12-PERSON JURY PANEL.

Error Preservation: Error was preserved when Brown moved for a mistrial on four different occasions due to several juror absences. (Trial Vol. III, p. 3, L16-p.4, L14; p. 21, L9-p. 22, L2; Vol. IV, p. 3, L25-p. 4, L13; Vol. IV, p. 15, L18-19). The court denied Brown's motion at each instance. (Trial Vol. III, p. 5, L23- p. 6, L22; p. 22, L23-p. 24, L5; Vol. IV, p. 7, L2-9; p. 15, L20-p. 16, L7).

Standard of Review: The appellate court reviews motion for a mistrial for abuse of discretion. However, if it involves a constitutional right, the review is de novo. State v. Choudry, 569 N.W.2d 618, 620 (Iowa Ct. App. 1997).

Discussion: On Wednesday, January 20, 2022, at 9:24 a.m., during the second day of trial, at the conclusion of all evidence, a juror did not report for jury duty. (Trial. Vol. III, p. 2, L23-p. 3, L2). The district court attempted to contact the juror and was unsuccessful. The district court then decided to recess the trial until either 1 p.m. that afternoon or 9 a.m. the following morning.

With the absence of the juror, Brown moved for a mistrial arguing that the integrity of the juror might be compromised. (Trial Vol. III, p. 3, L16-p.4, L14).

The State resisted the motion for a mistrial and requested the court allow more time to locate the juror. (Trial Vol. III, p. 4, L18-p.5, L3). The Court agreed and allowed more time to locate the missing juror. Court was recessed until 1:30 p.m. (Trial Vol. III, p. 5, L23- p. 6, L22).

Later, at 9:54 a.m., the district court , the defense attorney, and State reopened the record and discussed whether Brown was willing to waive his right to a 12-person

jury panel. (Trial Vol. III, p. 8, L7-17). Brown's attorney contended that more time was needed to discuss the options with her client. The defense requested an additional recess to discuss Brown's decision before informing the court. (Trial Vol. III, p. 8, L18-21). The district court indicated that an answer should be provided immediately. (Trial Vol. III, p. 8, L22 – 25). The courtroom was cleared until 9:55 a.m. (Trial Vol. III, p. 9, L1-11). Brown decided not to waive his right to a 12-person jury panel. (Trial Vol. III, p. 9, L13-22). The court took another recess, while attempting to find the missing juror. (Trial Vol. III, p. 9, L23- p. 10, L4).

At 10:04 a.m., the court reconvened with the jury present, minus the missing juror. (Trial Vol. III, p. 10, L10-11). The court informed the jury that a juror was missing and that they would be "let go" as the court attempted to locate the missing juror. (Trial Vol. III, p, 10, L16-18). The district court then inquired to determine if any of the remaining jurors had conflicts in their availability for the following day (Friday,

January 21, 2022). Two jurors (Metzger and Schenkelberg) answered affirmatively. (Trial Vol. III, p. 10, L19-p. 11, L3). The district court decided to recess the trial for the afternoon and Friday (January 21, 2022). The jurors were ordered to return on the following Monday morning (Trial Vol. III, p. 11, L12-20; p. 12, L18-23).

Brown's defense attorney reiterated her motion and the reasons why the delay of the trial would be detrimental to Brown, including a speedy trial violation and the integrity of the jurors. (Trial Vol. III, p. 13, L19-20).

At 11 a.m., the district court reopened the record. The missing juror, Murphy, had been located and was present in the courtroom. (Trial Vol. III, p. 13, L22- p. 14, L6). The juror informed the court that he had overslept. (Trial Vol. III, p. 14, L11-14; p.15, L1-4).

After voir dire with the juror, Brown moved for a mistrial again. The defense argued that Murphy's absence, even if unintentional, was prejudicial to Brown. (Trial Vol. III, p. 21,

L9-p. 22, L2). The State resisted the motion. (Trial Vol. III, p. 22, L8-22). The district court denied the motion. (Trial Vol. III, p. 22, L23-p. 24, L5).

Court reconvened on the morning of Monday, January 24, 2022. (Trial Vol. IV, p. 2, L1-2). At that time, the court was informed that another juror was absent. Juror Byers had contracted “the flu on Friday afternoon.” The court spoke with Byers and asked the juror to take a COVID-19 test, out of caution, and provide the court with the results before 4:30 p.m., if possible. (Trial Vol. IV, p. 2, L9-21; L22-24). Court continued to be in recess.

At this time, Brown, again moved for a mistrial. (Trial Vol. IV, p. 3, L25-p. 4, L13). The district court once again denied the motion. (Trial Vol. IV, p. 7, L2-9).

The district court informed the jury about Juror Byers and the possibility of COVID. The district court dismissed the jury for the day and recessed court until the following morning, Tuesday, January 25, 2022. (Trial Vol. IV, p. 7,

L15-p. 10, L22).

The court reconvened at 10:47 am, and informed Brown and the State that Juror Byers tested positive for COVID-19. The Court informed the attorneys Brown and both attorneys, that court would be in recess for five days, following CDC guidelines. Juror Byers would be allowed to quarantine for five days before returning to continue the trial. (Trial Vol. IV, p. 11, L14-23). Brown again renewed his motion for a mistrial. (Trial Vol. IV, p. 15, L18-19). The court denied the motion. (Trial Vol. p. 15, L20-p. 16, L7). After a 9-day delay, after the close of evidence, court reconvened on January 28, 2022. (Trial Vol. V. p. 1, L1-2).

In this case, Brown was entitled to a mistrial, at every instance in which he moved for one, but most especially before the five-day COVID-19 quarantine of Juror Byers. Brown should not have had to choose between waiting 9 days for a full 12-jury panel or waiving his right to a 12-jury panel, instead the best and only option was a mistrial. The denial of

the mistrial harmed Brown and violated his right to fair trial.

While there is no case that aligns directly with the case at bar, there are cases that can be compared and distinguished.

In State v. Miller, 825 N.W.2d 327 (2012), which can be compared to this case, the defendant appealed his conviction arguing that the district's court allowance of a juror's absence during deliberations placed the defendant in an "untenable" position of deciding to wait a week for the juror to return or replacing that juror with an alternate.

The Court ruled that the district's court's reliance on the availability of the alternate juror to offer Miller an alternative to waiting until the released juror returned from his week-long hiatus was error. Id. at *6.

Following Miller, the Iowa Court of Appeals took the issue up in State v. Dietrich and arrived at a different outcome. In that case, the court ruled that the jury's mere entrance into the jury room did not mean substantial deliberations had begun before the Court substituted a juror with an alternate

juror and without deliberations, the juror could have been replaced. 825 N.W.2d 327 (Iowa Ct. App. 2012).

Even though similar to Dietrich, the jury was not in deliberation, the better compassion is to Miller is still valid. The fundamental fact in this case, and the one that makes Miller the most equivalent, here is that Brown did not have alternates, either before or during deliberations. The court forced Brown to choose between an over week-long hiatus or waiving his right to a full jury panel. The choice held even higher stakes for Brown than that imposed in Miller because here there were no alternate jurors to choose from, even outside of deliberations, to replace the absent jurors. Instead of forcing Brown to choose from two bad options, the court should have granted the mistrial. Without granting the mistrial, Brown was forced to conclude his case with a jury that was likely prejudiced against him.

The denial of the motion for mistrial was prejudicial to Brown. Unfair prejudice arises when the evidence would cause the jury to base its decision on something other than proven facts and applicable law, such as sympathy for one party or desire to punish a party. State v. Rodriguez, 636 N.W.2d 234, 240 (Iowa 2001).

First, the jury had a 9-day delay between the conclusion of evidence and the submission of the case to the jury. During the delay, the jurors were exposed to outside influences, life circumstances, work, family, and other obligations. The extended jury absence could have easily affected the memory of the jurors. It is plausible, that pieces of pertinent evidence could have been forgotten during the 9-day lapse and any forgetfulness likely adversely impacted Brown and resulted in a biased result.

Second, the jury was told that the trial was likely going to be a two-day trial. (Trial Vol. IV p. 12, L20-23). With this information, the jury probably began making plans for the

conclusion of the two-day trial, including work plans, family plans, and school plans. In this case, suddenly, after two days of evidence, the case transformed into a nearly two-week trial. It is very conceivable that the jury returned and rushed through deliberations in an effort to conclude the trial and move on with their life plans. This circumstance would have undesirably impacted Brown and made his trial unfair.

Third, the jury was also subjected to deliberate with a juror who could expose them to a serious virus, COVID-19. The fear of being exposed to COVID-19 by being forced to share deliberation space with someone who could still be contagious would have affected the jury, and quite possibly made them rush through deliberations without thoroughly examining the evidence. This circumstance would also have damaged Brown and rendered his trial unfair.

The district court committed reversible error and abused its discretion when it did not grant Brown's motion for a mistrial. Therefore, a new trial should be granted.

CONCLUSION

For all the above reasons, the defendant requests this court reverse and remand his conviction and sentence.

ATTORNEY'S COST CERTIFICATE

The undersigned, hereby certifies that the true cost of producing the necessary copies of the foregoing Application for Further Review was \$4.73, and that amount has been paid in full by the Office of the Appellate Defender.

**CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE WITH TYPEFACE
REQUIREMENTS AND TYPE-VOLUME LIMITATION
FOR FURTHER REVIEWS**

This application complies with the typeface and type-volume requirements of Iowa R. App. P. 6.1103(4) because:

[X] this application has been prepared in a proportionally spaced typeface using Bookman Old Style, font 14 point and contains 5,371 words, excluding the parts of the application exempted by Iowa R. App. P. 6.1103(4)(a).

/s/ Ashley Stewart

Dated: 2/27/23

ASHLEY STEWART

Assistant Appellate Defender

Appellate Defender Office

Lucas Bldg., 4th Floor

321 E. 12th Street

Des Moines, IA 50319

(515) 281-8841

astewart@spd.state.ia.us

appellatedefender@spd.state.ia.us