

TEXAS COURT OF CRIMINAL APPEALS

Ex parte Tenika Brooks

Ex parte Brooks · No. PD-1046-07 · Decided June 9, 2010

SUMMARY

This is a concurring opinion by Judge Meyers of the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals in Ex parte Tenika Brooks. The opinion addresses whether the indictment was facially barred by the statute of limitations and whether a pretrial habeas application was an appropriate vehicle for challenging the indictment, concluding that habeas relief should be granted.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Texas Court of Criminal Appeals
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Meyers, J.
JURISDICTION	Texas
DECIDED	June 9, 2010
DOCKET	PD-1046-07
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Appellant sought discretionary review of the Twelfth Court of Appeals' decision concerning the availability of pretrial habeas corpus relief based on the alleged untimeliness of the indictment.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published concurring opinion; the concurrence's reasoning is not independently binding.
PARTIES	Tenika Brooks

TOPICS

- habeas corpus
- criminal procedure
- statutory interpretation
- post-conviction relief
- appellate procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

- criminal procedure
- habeas corpus
- statutory interpretation
- appellate procedure

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the court of appeals misconstrued Brooks's challenge to the timeliness of the indictment as a challenge to an unpleaded tolling provision.

2. Whether an indictment is facially barred and subject to pretrial habeas corpus relief when the applicable limitations period has expired and the indictment does not plead a tolling circumstance based on a prior pending indictment.
3. Whether a subsequent indictment tolls the statute of limitations only when it alleges the same conduct, act, or transaction as the earlier indictment.

HOLDINGS

1. A pending-indictment tolling provision applies only when the subsequent indictment alleges the same conduct, same act, or same transaction.
2. If the State relies on the pendency of another indictment to toll the statute of limitations, it must plead that tolling basis in the indictment.
3. A facially invalid indictment that, if legally defective, would bar prosecution or conviction is a proper subject of a pretrial writ of habeas corpus.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“The problem with this reasoning is that it places Appellant's indictment in the wrong category; Appellant's indictment is facially barred, and is therefore a proper subject for a writ of habeas corpus.”

“Based on Appellant's indictment, it is clear that she was charged with an offense for which the statute of limitations had run. Therefore, I would conclude that Appellant is entitled to habeas corpus relief.”

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Brooks was charged with theft or aggregate theft arising from conduct occurring on or about April 1, 2000. The applicable five-year limitations period therefore expired on April 1, 2005, absent a valid tolling circumstance. The indictment did not include a tolling paragraph alleging that another indictment covering the same conduct, act, or transaction was pending.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The Twelfth Court of Appeals characterized Brooks's complaint as a challenge to an unpleaded tolling provision and held that the alleged defect was not a proper subject of a pretrial habeas application. The Texas Court of Criminal Appeals granted discretionary review. In this concurring opinion, Judge Meyers agreed that the court of appeals misconstrued the argument and stated that Brooks was entitled to habeas corpus relief; the supplied text does not state the majority's disposition.

DISPOSITION

other

REMAND INSTRUCTIONS

The concurrence stated that its analysis was intended to be instructive to the court of appeals upon remand and would grant Brooks habeas corpus relief. The supplied text does not provide the majority's operative remand instructions.

CASES CITED

- Hernandez v. State, 127 S.W.3d 768 (Tex. Crim. App. 2004)
- Ex parte Smith, 178 S.W.3d 797 (Tex. Crim. App. 2005)
- Ex parte Brooks, No. 12-06-00378-CR, 2007 Tex. App. LEXIS 4770, at *5 (Tex. App.—Tyler June 20, 2007, pet. granted)
- Tita v. State, 267 S.W.3d 33, 37-38 (Tex. Crim. App. 2008)

OPINION

PER CURIAM.

IN THE COURT OF CRIMINAL APPEALS OF TEXAS NO. PD-1046-07 EX PARTE TENIKA BROOKS, Appellant ON APPELLANT'S PETITION FOR DISCRETIONARY REVIEW FROM THE TWELFTH COURT OF APPEALS NACOGDOCHES COUNTY Meyers, J., filed a concurring opinion. CONCURRING OPINION The ground for review granted by this Court asked whether the court of appeals mischaracterized Appellant's issue as a challenge to an un-pled tolling provision rather than as a thorough challenge to the timeliness of the instant indictment.

I agree with the majority that the court of appeals misconstrued Appellant's argument. The issue is complex, and controlling case law has recently evolved on this subject. I hope that this concurrence is instructive to the court of appeals upon remand. A prosecution for theft or aggregate theft must be brought within five years from the date of the commission.

Code Crim. Proc. Ann. art. 12.01(4)(A). In Appellant's case, the statute of limitations ran from April 1, 2000, to April 1, 2005. A period of limitations may be tolled for two reasons; the limitation period will not include 1) the time that a defendant is absent from the state, or 2) the time that another indictment is pending. Code Crim. Proc. Ann. art. 12.05.

The second tolling circumstance—a pending indictment—will toll the statute of limitations only if the subsequent indictment alleges the same conduct, same act, or same transaction. (1) Hernandez v. State, 127 S.W.3d 768 (Tex. Crim. App. 2004). Using our opinion in Ex parte Smith, 178 S.W.3d 797 (Tex. Crim. App. 2005), the court of appeals concluded that "Appellant's complaint about the sufficiency of the anticipated tolling provision [was] not the proper subject of a pretrial application for habeas corpus."

Ex parte Brooks, No. 12-06-00378-CR, 2007 Tex. App. LEXIS 4770, at *5 (Tex. App.—Tyler June 20, 2007, pet. granted). The court of appeals explained that while facially barred indictments are a "proper subject of a pretrial application for habeas corpus," reparable indictments (such as Appellant's) are not. Id. The problem with this reasoning is that it places Appellant's indictment in

the wrong category; Appellant's indictment is facially barred, and is therefore a proper subject for a writ of habeas corpus.

In a case recently decided by this Court, we stated that if the State relies upon the pendency of an indictment to toll the statute of limitations, it must so plead. *Tita*, 267 S.W.3d at 37-38. We derived this requirement from Article 21.02(6) of the Code of Criminal Procedure, which states, "The time mentioned must be some date anterior to the presentment of the indictment, and not so remote that the prosecution of the offense is barred by limitation."

Code Crim. Proc. Ann. art. 21.02(6). Here, the absence of a tolling paragraph makes the indictment facially invalid. A claim that the indictment is facially invalid raises an issue that, if meritorious, would bar prosecution or conviction, and therefore a pretrial writ is proper in this situation. Based on Appellant's indictment, it is clear that she was charged with an offense for which the statute of limitations had run.

Therefore, I would conclude that Appellant is entitled to habeas corpus relief. *Meyers*, J. Filed: June 9, 2010 Publish 1. Appellant raised this as an issue to the court of appeals, arguing that because the indictments charged different offenses, "[t]he preceding indictment did not toll the limitations period for the separate offense and different conduct alleged in the instant indictment."

This Court's opinion in *Tita v. State*, 267 S.W.3d 33, 37-38 (Tex. Crim. App. 2008), offers another argument in Appellant's favor. Under *Tita*, Appellant could argue that the indictment violated Article 21.02(6) by not indicating on its face that the prosecution was not barred by the applicable statute of limitations. *Id.*