

SUPREME COURT OF OHIO

State v. Williams

129 Ohio St. 3d 19, 2011-Ohio-232 (Ohio 2011) · No. 2010-0849 · Decided January 26, 2011

SUMMARY

The Supreme Court of Ohio affirmed the denial of Andre Williams's application to reopen his direct appeal under Ohio Appellate Rule 26(B). The court held that the application, filed more than ten years after the appellate judgment, was untimely and that Williams had not shown good cause for the delay.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Supreme Court of Ohio
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Per Curiam; O'Connor, C.J.; Lundberg Stratton, J.; O'Donnell, J.; Lanzinger, J.; Cupp, J.; McGee Brown, J.; Pfeifer, J.
JURISDICTION	Ohio
DECIDED	January 26, 2011
DOCKET	2010-0849
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Andre Williams appealed the Court of Appeals for Trumbull County's denial of his application to reopen his direct appeal under Ohio Appellate Rule 26(B).
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The Supreme Court reviewed the denial of the App.R. 26(B) reopening application for compliance with the rule's timeliness and good-cause requirements.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	published precedential opinion
PARTIES	Andre Williams v. State of Ohio

TOPICS

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QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Williams's application to reopen his direct appeal under App.R. 26(B) was timely filed or whether he established good cause for filing more than ninety days after journalization of the appellate judgment.
2. Whether Williams's alleged intellectual disability, lack of counsel, or discovery of appellate errors constituted good cause for his untimely App.R. 26(B) application.
3. Whether the court could reach Williams's additional propositions of law despite the application's untimeliness.

HOLDINGS

1. An application to reopen a direct appeal must be filed within ninety days after journalization of the appellate judgment unless the applicant demonstrates good cause for the delay; Williams's application, filed more than ten years late, was untimely.
2. Williams's asserted intellectual disability did not establish good cause for his late filing because a prior judicial determination had found that he was not intellectually disabled.
3. The absence of counsel did not constitute good cause for Williams's untimely App.R. 26(B) application because there is no right to counsel for an application to reopen and postconviction counsel could have raised the alleged appellate errors.
4. Because the application to reopen was untimely, the court could not consider Williams's three additional propositions of law.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“We affirm the judgment of the court of appeals.” (¶ 6)

“Moreover, there is no right to counsel on an application to reopen.” (¶ 8)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

In 1988, George and Katherine Melnick were attacked in their Warren, Ohio, home, and Williams was convicted of aggravated murder and sentenced to death for George Melnick's murder. His convictions and sentence were affirmed after direct review, and later postconviction proceedings—including a successive petition asserting intellectual disability—were unsuccessful. Williams then sought to reopen his direct appeal under App.R. 26(B), alleging ineffective assistance of appellate counsel, but he filed the application more than ten years after the appellate judgment.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Williams was convicted of aggravated murder and sentenced to death. After multiple unsuccessful direct-appeal and postconviction proceedings, he filed an application to reopen his initial appeal more than ten years after the appellate judgment. The court of appeals denied the application as untimely, and the Supreme Court of Ohio affirmed.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- State v. Williams (Mar. 24, 1995), Trumbull App. No. 89-T-4210, 1995 WL 237092, *50
- State v. Williams, 74 Ohio St. 3d 569, 660 N.E.2d 724 (1996)
- Williams v. Ohio, 519 U.S. 835, 117 S. Ct. 109, 136 L. Ed. 2d 62 (1996)
- State v. Williams (Oct. 16, 1998), Trumbull App. No. 97-T-0153
- State v. Williams, 85 Ohio St. 3d 1406, 706 N.E.2d 788 (1999)
- Atkins v. Virginia, 536 U.S. 304, 122 S. Ct. 2242, 153 L. Ed. 2d 335 (2002)
- State v. Lott, 97 Ohio St. 3d 303, 2002-Ohio-6625, 779 N.E.2d 1011
- State v. Williams, 2008-Ohio-3257, ¶¶ 17, 38, 44
- State v. Williams, 120 Ohio St. 3d 1453, 2008-Ohio-6813, 898 N.E.2d 968 (2008)
- Morgan v. Eads, 104 Ohio St. 3d 142, 2004-Ohio-6110, 818 N.E.2d 1157, ¶¶ 21-22
- State v. Hancock, 108 Ohio St. 3d 194, 2006-Ohio-658, 842 N.E.2d 497, ¶ 9
- State v. Twyford, 106 Ohio St. 3d 176, 2005-Ohio-4380, 833 N.E.2d 289, ¶ 8

OPINION

PER CURIAM.

[Cite as State v. Williams, 129 Ohio St. 3d 19, 2011-Ohio-232.] THE STATE OF OHIO, APPELLEE, v. WILLIAMS, APPELLANT. [Cite as State v. Williams, 129 Ohio St. 3d 19, 2011-Ohio-232.] Criminal law — Untimely application to reopen direct appeal — No good cause found — Judgment affirmed. (No. 2010-0849 — Submitted January 19, 2011 — Decided January 26, 2011.) APPEAL from the Court of Appeals for Trumbull County, No. 89-T-4210. _____ Per Curiam. {¶ 1} Appellant, Andre Williams, challenges the denial of his application to reopen his direct appeal pursuant to App.R.

26(B). {¶ 2} In August 1988, George and Katherine Melnick were attacked in their home in Warren, Ohio. Appellant was convicted of, and sentenced to death for, the aggravated murder of George Melnick. The court of appeals affirmed his convictions and death sentence but reversed that portion of the conviction that was based on the underlying felony of attempted rape.

State v. Williams (Mar. 24, 1995), Trumbull App. No. 89-T-4210, 1995 WL 237092, *50. We reversed the judgment of the court of appeals in part but affirmed the appellant's convictions and sentence. State v. Williams (1996), 74 Ohio St. 3d 569, 660 N.E.2d 724, certiorari denied, Williams v. Ohio (1996), 519 U.S. 835, 117 S. Ct. 109, 136 L. Ed. 2d 62.

On his appeal to the court of appeals and subsequently to this court, appellant was represented by Thomas E. Zena and Gary L. Van Brocklin. {¶ 3} In September 1996, appellant filed his first

petition for postconviction relief.

The trial court denied his petition, and the court of appeals affirmed. *State v. Williams* (Oct. 16, 1998), Trumbull App. No. 97-T-0153. We declined to accept jurisdiction of his appeal. *State v. Williams* (1999), 85 Ohio SUPREME COURT OF OHIO St.3d 1406, 706 N.E.2d 788. Appellant was represented by John B. Juhasz during those appeals. {¶ 4} In June 2003, appellant filed a successive petition for postconviction relief and asserted that his death sentence was void or voidable because he is mentally retarded pursuant to *Atkins v. Virginia* (2002), 536 U.S. 304, 122 S. Ct.

2242, 153 L. Ed. 2d 335, and *State v. Lott*, 97 Ohio St. 3d 303, 2002- Ohio-6625, 779 N.E.2d 1011. On September 11, 2007, the trial court granted the state's motion for summary judgment, and the court of appeals affirmed. *State v. Williams*, 2008-Ohio-3257, ¶ 17, 44.

On December 31, 2008, this court declined to accept jurisdiction of his appeal. *State v. Williams*, Trumbull App. No. 2007-T- 0105, 120 Ohio St. 3d 1453, 2008-Ohio-6813, 898 N.E.2d 968. Appellant was also represented by Juhasz during that appeal. {¶ 5} Following our decision, appellant – now represented by the office of the Federal Public Defender – filed an application with the court of appeals to reopen his initial appeal pursuant to App.R.

26(B). App.R. 26(B)(5) requires that the applicant show a “genuine issue as to whether the applicant was deprived of the effective assistance of counsel on appeal.” Appellant claimed that he had been denied effective assistance by reason of his appellate counsel's failure to raise certain issues.

The court of appeals denied appellant's application for reopening as untimely. *State v. Williams* (Mar. 29, 2010), Trumbull App. No. 89- T-4210. He now appeals from that denial. {¶ 6} We affirm the judgment of the court of appeals. Appellant did not comply with App.R. 26(B)(1), which requires that an application for reopening be filed “within ninety days from journalization of the appellate judgment unless the applicant shows good cause for filing at a later time.” Appellant waited more than ten years to file his application. {¶ 7} Appellant argues that he had good cause for missing the 90-day deadline set by the rule, because he is mentally retarded and was unable to 2 January Term, 2011 prepare and present the application for reopening pro se.

However, we reject this argument in light of the judicial determination that the appellant is not mentally retarded. *Williams*, 2008-Ohio-3257, ¶ 38, 44. {¶ 8} Appellant also argues that he had good cause because he had no counsel to call on to file his application for reopening. He asserts that his existing counsel's discovery of errors was the first opportunity he had to raise the appellate issues that his counsel failed to raise on direct appeal.

However, appellant's postconviction counsel could have also raised those errors. Moreover, there is no right to counsel on an application to reopen. *Morgan v. Eads*, 104 Ohio St. 3d 142, 2004-

Ohio-6110, 818 N.E.2d 1157, ¶ 21-22.

Thus, lack of counsel cannot be accepted as good cause for the late filing of Williams's application. See *State v. Hancock*, 108 Ohio St. 3d 194, 2006-Ohio-658, 842 N.E.2d 497, ¶ 9; *State v. Twyford*, 106 Ohio St. 3d 176, 2005-Ohio-4380, 833 N.E.2d 289, ¶ 8. {¶ 9} Appellant raises three other propositions of law in his brief, but because his application was untimely, those issues cannot be considered.

Judgment affirmed. O'CONNOR, C.J., and LUNDBERG STRATTON, O'DONNELL, LANZINGER, CUPP, and MCGEE BROWN, JJ., concur. PFEIFER, J., dissents and would reverse the judgment of the court of appeals. _____ Dennis Watkins, Trumbull County Prosecuting Attorney, and LuWayne Annos, Assistant Prosecuting Attorney, for appellee. Alan C. Rossman and Jillian S. Davis, Office of the Federal Public Defender, for appellant.