

SUPREME COURT OF GUAM

People of Guam v. William Robert Reyes

2025 Guam 8 · No. CRA24-013 · Decided December 4, 2025

SUMMARY

The Supreme Court of Guam held that the trial court abused its discretion by denying William Robert Reyes’s motion for a mistrial after permitting cross-examination about prior arrests and an indictment under an inapplicable evidence rule. The court found the error prejudicial, vacated Reyes’s convictions for first- and second-degree criminal sexual conduct, and remanded for a new trial. It nevertheless held that the evidence was sufficient to support the first-degree criminal sexual conduct charge.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Supreme Court of Guam
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Robert J. Torres, Chief Justice; F. Philip Carbullido, Associate Justice; Katherine A. Maraman, Associate Justice
JURISDICTION	Supreme Court of Guam
DECIDED	December 4, 2025
DOCKET	CRA24-013
DISPOSITION	reversed_and_remanded
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Reyes appealed his convictions for first-degree and second-degree criminal sexual conduct after the Superior Court of Guam denied his motion for a mistrial and his motion for a judgment of acquittal on the first-degree charge.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Denial of a motion for mistrial is reviewed for abuse of discretion, with nonconstitutional error reviewed for harmlessness. Denial of a motion for judgment of acquittal based on insufficiency of the evidence is reviewed de novo, viewing the evidence in the light most favorable to the prosecution and asking whether any rational trier of fact could have found the essential elements beyond a reasonable doubt. Unpreserved prosecutorial-misconduct claims are reviewed for plain error.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published precedential opinion of the Supreme Court of Guam
PARTIES	William Robert Reyes v. People of Guam

TOPICS

criminal procedure

evidence

harmless error

appellate procedure

preservation of error

PRACTICE AREAS

criminal procedure

evidence

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QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the Superior Court abused its discretion by denying Reyes's motion for a mistrial after permitting cross-examination about prior arrests and an indictment for alleged crimes that did not result in convictions.
2. Whether the error in allowing the prejudicial cross-examination was harmless.
3. Whether the evidence was sufficient to establish sexual penetration for first-degree criminal sexual conduct.
4. Whether the prosecution improperly used leading questions and argued facts not in evidence during closing argument.

HOLDINGS

1. The trial court abused its discretion by allowing the prosecution to question Reyes about prior arrests and an indictment under Guam Rule of Evidence 609, which applies only to prior convictions, and by denying the mistrial motion without analyzing other relevant evidentiary rules or taking corrective measures to address the risk of unfair prejudice.
2. The error was not harmless and required reversal of the convictions because it was more probable than not that the extensive and repeatedly emphasized prior-arrest and indictment evidence materially affected the verdicts.
3. The evidence was sufficient because a rational jury could infer sexual penetration from testimony that Reyes's fingertips passed the labia majora, slightly intruded into the vaginal opening, moved in a circular motion, and caused severe pain.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Convictions and indictments are not interchangeable.” (at 13)

“The court’s decision denying Reyes’s motion for a mistrial failed to examine any relevant evidentiary rule, namely, GRE 403, 404, and 608.” (at 22)

“We further conclude the error was not harmless. We VACATE the judgment and REMAND for a new trial.” (at 22)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

J.S. testified that when she was an elementary-school student, Reyes took her to his home and touched her vagina with his fingers. She disclosed the incident to her mother years later and testified that she experienced

severe pain afterward. Reyes denied touching J.S. and denied having significant contact with her. During cross-examination, the prosecution questioned him about a 2002 arrest and indictment concerning alleged crimes against three girls, none of which resulted in a conviction, and later used the allegations to attack his credibility in closing argument.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The People charged Reyes with first-degree and second-degree criminal sexual conduct. During trial, the Superior Court allowed the prosecution to cross-examine Reyes about a decades-old arrest and indictment involving alleged crimes against three girls, denied his mistrial motion, and denied his motion for judgment of acquittal based on insufficient evidence of sexual penetration. The jury convicted him on both charges, and he timely appealed. The Supreme Court of Guam held that the denial of the mistrial motion was an abuse of discretion and that the error was not harmless, while rejecting the sufficiency challenge.

DISPOSITION

reversed_and_remanded

REMAND INSTRUCTIONS

The judgment is vacated and the case is remanded to the Superior Court of Guam for a new trial.

CASES CITED

- People v. Aguon, 2020 Guam 24 ¶¶ 12, 22, 31
- People v. Palisoc, 2002 Guam 9 ¶ 7
- People v. Gutierrez, 2005 Guam 19 ¶ 13 (per curiam)
- People v. Tuncap, 1998 Guam 13 ¶ 12
- People v. Patrick, 2016 Guam 2 ¶¶ 9, 22
- United States v. Gann, 732 F.2d 714, 725 (9th Cir. 1984)
- People v. Bosi, 2022 Guam 15 ¶¶ 56-59
- People v. Flores, 2009 Guam 22 ¶¶ 87, 112
- People v. Pugh, 2018 Guam 14 ¶¶ 26, 29
- People v. Cepeda, 2021 Guam 9 ¶ 23
- People v. Asprer, 2019 Guam 19 ¶¶ 21-22
- People v. Roten, 2012 Guam 3 ¶ 41
- People v. Tedtaotao, 2016 Guam 9 ¶¶ 50-51
- People v. Belga, 2016 Guam 1 ¶¶ 42, 53
- People v. Anastacio, 2010 Guam 18 ¶ 16
- People v. Hosei, 2023 Guam 22 ¶¶ 21, 45-47
- People v. Song, 2012 Guam 21 ¶ 28
- People v. Jesus, 2009 Guam 2 ¶¶ 19, 47, 54, 59, 62

- People v. Pinaula, 2023 Guam 2 ¶ 60
- People v. Kotto, 2020 Guam 4 ¶ 29
- People v. Enriquez, 2014 Guam 11 ¶¶ 15, 19-21
- People v. Mendiola, 2014 Guam 17 ¶¶ 18, 21
- People v. Riosen, 2023 Guam 23 ¶ 30
- Coleman v. Johnson, 566 U.S. 650, 655 (2012) (per curiam)
- United States v. Nevils, 598 F.3d 1158, 1164 (9th Cir. 2010)
- State v. Lynch, 432 S.E.2d 349 (N.C. 1993)
- United States v. Osazuwa, 564 F.3d 1169 (9th Cir. 2009)
- McGuire v. State, 232 S.E.2d 243, 245 (Ga. 1977)
- United States v. Heckman, 479 F.2d 726, 730 (3d Cir. 1973)
- People v. Reyes, 2020 Guam 33 ¶ 16
- People v. Lessard, 2019 Guam 10 ¶ 7
- People v. Rachulap, 2022 Guam 9 ¶¶ 41, 45
- People v. Nathan, 2018 Guam 13 ¶ 9
- People v. Manila, 2015 Guam 40 ¶ 43
- People v. Perez, 2015 Guam 10 ¶ 36