

**SIGNIFICANT DECISIONS
UNITED STATES SUPREME COURT AND
THE COURT OF CRIMINAL APPEALS
FROM SEPTEMBER 2022 TO APRIL 2023**

HON. DAVID C. NEWELL
JUDGE, PLACE 9
Court of Criminal Appeals

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Acknowledgement

This paper was largely drafted by my law clerk, Peyton Maddox, and my staff attorney, Tiffany Talamantez. Every year poor intrepid souls agree to come work for me after they graduate from law school only to be hit with having to summarize every published majority opinion from the Court of Criminal Appeals. And if that wasn't bad enough, they also have to summarize every significant decision from the United States Supreme Court. And I can see it on their faces when I tell them. They hate me. Make no mistake. To Peyton's credit, she's done an admirable job befitting her stellar service in my employ. So, I hope you enjoy this gift of Peyton's time and intellect. I would be remiss, however, if I did not mention the hard work of my staff attorney, Tiffany Talamantez. When Peyton was offered a dream job in March, Tiffany took over the summarization duty. On top of everything else she does for me. And I think she did a fine job, if I do say so myself. Which I apparently just did. As for my part, I have reviewed all the summaries, added nuances and details where necessary and some pretentious pontification (sometimes with alliteration) as commentary. And poor grammar. If you see it, that's my fault. Don't blame Peyton or Tiffany. They've had to deal with enough already. I do hope they get something out of it, though. Just as I hope that you all find something helpful in this paper.

Table of Contents

I.	INTRODUCTION	1
II.	MOTIONS TO SUPPRESS.....	1
A.	INVESTIGATIVE DETENTIONS.....	1
1.	<i>Consensual encounter escalated to investigative detention when officers physically touched an individual while telling him to show his hands.....</i>	<i>1</i>
2.	<i>Briefly and safely driving on the dividing line between the center and right lane of traffic with a U-Haul's right rear tire does not give rise to reasonable suspicion for a traffic stop without additional facts.</i>	<i>2</i>
3.	<i>Warrantless seizure of methamphetamine off the ground in a public area either a) did not violate the Fourth Amendment or b) was the result of an illegal Terry pat-down that was later attenuated by the suspect's resisting a search.</i>	<i>4</i>
B.	PROBABLE CAUSE – PARKING VEHICLE WITH THE ENGINE RUNNING IN A BUMPER-TO-BUMPER SCHOOL PICK-UP LINE OF VEHICLES PROVIDED PROBABLE CAUSE FOR WARRANTLESS ARREST.....	5
C.	SEARCH WARRANTS - ARTICLE 18.01(B) OF THE TEXAS CODE OF CRIMINAL PROCEDURE PERMITS ANTICIPATORY SEARCH WARRANTS.....	5
D.	EXIGENT CIRCUMSTANCES - THE ABSENCE OF AFFIRMATIVE CONDUCT BY THE SUSPECT DOES NOT FORECLOSE AN EXIGENT CIRCUMSTANCES DETERMINATION BECAUSE IT IS ONLY ONE CIRCUMSTANCE IN THE TOTALITY OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES TEST THAT MAY SHOW POTENTIAL DESTRUCTION OF EVIDENCE WAS IMMINENT.....	6
E.	FINDINGS OF FACTS – WAITING A YEAR TO CHALLENGE A TRIAL COURT'S FAILURE TO MAKE REQUESTED FINDINGS OF FACT FORFEITS ABILITY TO REQUIRE TRIAL COURT TO MAKE FINDINGS OF FACT AFTER A RULING ON A MOTION TO SUPPRESS.....	7
III.	TRIAL PROCEDURE	9
A.	JURISDICTION AND AUTHORITY	9
1.	<i>Attorney General still lacks authority to independently prosecute criminal cases in trial courts; Election Code § 273.021, which purported to grant the Attorney General the unilateral power to prosecute election-law violations, still violates the separation of powers clause.</i>	<i>9</i>
2.	<i>Applicant was not estopped from challenging the jurisdiction of the trial court to revoke his community supervision despite accepting benefits under a plea agreement where Applicant lacked knowledge of material facts; trial court did not have jurisdiction to revoke Applicant's community supervision after the period of time for community supervision allowed by statute had expired.</i>	<i>9</i>
B.	PLEA BARGAINS	10
1.	<i>Texas Supreme Court's "Seventeenth Emergency Order Regarding the COVID-19 State of Disaster" did not authorize a trial court to conduct a plea proceeding via videoconference despite the lack of a defendant's written consent.....</i>	<i>10</i>
2.	<i>Agreement to dismiss or not re-file a case was a not an immunity agreement due to absence of facts agreeing a grant of immunity in exchange information or testimony.</i>	<i>11</i>
C.	WAIVER OF JURY TRIAL - THE RIGHT TO A TRIAL BY JURY IS A WAIVABLE-ONLY RIGHT, AND WAIVER WILL NOT BE INFERRED FROM A SPARSE RECORD.....	12
D.	PRE-TRIAL DISCOVERY - A TRIAL COURT IN A CRIMINAL PROCEEDING DOES NOT HAVE AUTHORITY TO HOLD AN <i>EX PARTE</i> HEARING AND ENTER AN <i>EX PARTE</i> ORDER COMPELLING A THIRD PARTY TO PRODUCE DOCUMENTS WITHOUT NOTICE TO THE PROSECUTOR REPRESENTING THE STATE.	13
E.	COLLATERAL ESTOPPEL DID NOT PRECLUDE THE STATE FROM INDICTING A DEFENDANT FOR THE AGGRAVATED ASSAULT OF ONE VICTIM AFTER A JURY ACQUITTED HIM OF CAPITAL MURDER, MURDER, AND AGGRAVATED ROBBERY OF A DIFFERENT VICTIM OCCURRING DURING THE SAME SERIES OF EVENTS, BUT AT TWO SEPARATE LOCATIONS.....	14
F.	SIXTH AMENDMENT RIGHT TO A PUBLIC TRIAL – VIRTUAL INCLUSION (VIA VIDEO FEED) OF A FAMILY MEMBER WHO HAD BEEN PHYSICALLY EXCLUDED FROM THE COURTROOM DURING THE TESTIMONY OF ONE WITNESS DID NOT INFRINGE ON VALUES SERVED BY SIXTH AMENDMENT RIGHT TO A PUBLIC TRIAL.	15
IV.	EVIDENCE.....	17

A.	STIPULATIONS - THE STATE IS NOT REQUIRED TO ACCEPT A DEFENDANT’S STIPULATION OF EVIDENCE REGARDING AN UNADJUDICATED EXTRANEOUS OFFENSE OFFERED FOR NON-CHARACTER CONFORMITY PURPOSES RATHER THAN INTRODUCE TESTIMONY REGARDING THE COMMISSION OF THAT OFFENSE.....	17
B.	OFFICER’S OPINION ON THE CREDIBILITY OF A CHILD VICTIM WAS INADMISSIBLE, BUT ULTIMATELY HARMLESS IN LIGHT OF REST OF THE RECORD.	18
C.	EXPERT TESTIMONY REGARDING THE MEANING OF A SLANG PHRASE “PULL A CARLOS” USED IN A RECORDED JAIL PHONE CALL WAS ADMISSIBLE AND DID NOT IMPLICATE THE CONFRONTATION CLAUSE, BUT EVEN IF IT DID, THE ADMISSION WAS HARMLESS.....	19
V.	OFFENSES	19
A.	INJURY TO A CHILD – EVIDENCE WAS INSUFFICIENT TO ESTABLISH RECKLESS INJURY TO A CHILD BY ALLOWING BABY TO INGEST COCAINE THROUGH BREASTFEEDING EVEN THOUGH EVIDENCE ESTABLISHED THAT THE CHILD HAD ENOUGH COCAINE IN HER SYSTEM TO MAKE HER ADDICTED.	19
B.	AGGRAVATED ASSAULT - EVIDENCE WAS SUFFICIENT TO SUPPORT THE JURY’S FINDING THAT THE VICTIM FACED A SUBSTANTIAL RISK OF DEATH AS A RESULT OF HER INJURIES FROM TWO GUNSHOTS DESPITE NEITHER BULLET HITTING A VITAL ORGAN.....	20
C.	DECEPTIVE BUSINESS PRACTICES - TEXAS PENAL CODE § 32.42(B) DOES NOT REQUIRE JURY UNANIMITY ON THE SAME SPECIFIC ACT OF DECEPTION TO CONVICT BECAUSE THE MANNER AND MEANS IS NOT AN “ESSENTIAL ELEMENT” OF THE OFFENSE.....	21
D.	UNLAWFUL POSSESSION OF A FIREARM BY A FELON - IF A FELON UNLAWFULLY POSSESSES TWO FIREARMS, HE HAS COMMITTED ONLY ONE OFFENSE UNDER THE STATUTE FOR UNLAWFUL POSSESSION OF A FIREARM.	23
VI.	JURY INSTRUCTIONS	23
A.	DEFENSIVE INSTRUCTIONS.....	23
1.	<i>Defendant was not entitled to a concurrent causation charge where her omission caused serious bodily injury to her child, despite not being the person to injure the child.....</i>	23
2.	<i>Factual disputes were material for purposes of Article 38.23 instructions when the issues were affirmatively contested at trial by discrepancies between testimony and police officer dash camera footage.....</i>	24
B.	LESSER-INCLUDED INSTRUCTIONS.....	25
1.	<i>Art. 37.08 of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure instructs that a jury must be unanimous because “a conviction on a lesser included offense would necessarily be a verdict of acquittal on the greater offense, not simply a situation where the jury could not agree on the greater offense.</i>	25
2.	<i>Lesser-included jury instructions for kidnapping and felony murder were not warranted in a capital murder trial where there was no affirmative evidence that raised the lesser-included offenses and rebutted or negated evidence establishing the greater offense.....</i>	26
C.	EGREGIOUS HARM - DEFENDANT WAS NOT EGREGIOUSLY HARMED BY THE TRIAL COURT’S FAILURE TO TAILOR THE DEFINITION OF “INTENTIONALLY” TO THE RESULT OF APPELLANT’S CONDUCT.	27
VII.	SENTENCING.....	27
A.	WHERE A FINE IS PART OF THE LAWFULLY-ASSESSED PUNISHMENT, IT MUST BE INCLUDED IN THE WRITTEN JUDGMENT, AND A COURT LACKS AUTHORITY TO DELETE SUCH PUNISHMENT ABSENT SOME ILLEGALITY.	27
VIII.	APPEALS.....	28
A.	MANDAMUS.....	28
1.	<i>The Court of Criminal Appeals will not entertain an application for mandamus relief unless the Relator has first sought relief from an intermediate court of appeals, absent a compelling reason.....</i>	28
2.	<i>Motion for leave to file writ of mandamus to prohibit a Texas citizen from being subpoenaed for a Georgia Special Purpose Grand Jury was moot after the subpoena date passed.....</i>	29
B.	MOTIONS FOR NEW TRIALS - WHEN THE TRIAL COURT GRANTS A MOTION FOR NEW TRIAL BASED ONLY ON THE BARE RECITATION THAT “THE VERDICT IS CONTRARY TO THE LAW AND EVIDENCE,” THE ACCUSED MAY NOT BE TRIED AGAIN FOR THE SAME OFFENSE WITHOUT VIOLATING PRINCIPLES OF DOUBLE JEOPARDY.	29

C.	APPELLANT WAS JUDICIALLY ESTOPPED FROM COMPLAINING ABOUT JURY CHARGE ERROR ON APPEAL WHERE TRIAL COUNSEL ACQUIESCED AND AGREED TO THE CHARGE DURING THE CHARGE CONFERENCE.	30
D.	DELETION OF AN ILLEGAL CUMULATION ORDER WAS PROPER RELIEF WHERE BOTH TRIAL AND APPELLATE COUNSEL WERE INEFFECTIVE IN FAILING TO OBJECT AND FAILING TO RAISE THE ILLEGAL CUMULATION ORDER ON APPEAL, RESPECTIVELY. ...	31
IX.	INEFFECTIVE ASSISTANCE OF COUNSEL	32
A.	COUNSEL’S FAILURE TO OBJECT TO THE STATE ADDING NEW OFFENSES TO AN INDICTMENT WITHOUT TAKING THE NEW COUNTS TO THE GRAND JURY AMOUNTS TO INEFFECTIVE ASSISTANCE OF COUNSEL.	32
B.	ALLOWING THE ADMISSION OF EVIDENCE RELATING TO DEFENDANT’S REFUSAL TO ANSWER A QUESTION DURING A NON-CUSTODIAL POLICE INTERVIEW DID NOT AMOUNT TO INEFFECTIVE ASSISTANCE OF COUNSEL BECAUSE THE LAW WAS UNCLEAR AT THE TIME OF THE TRIAL.	32
C.	COUNSEL COULD NOT BE FOUND INEFFECTIVE FOR REJECTING A SUDDEN PASSION JURY INSTRUCTION WHERE THE RECORD ON DIRECT APPEAL WAS SILENT AS TO COUNSEL’S EXPLANATION FOR HIS ACTIONS, WHICH COULD HAVE INCLUDED A PLAUSIBLE STRATEGIC REASON.....	34
X.	HABEAS CORPUS	35
A.	A DEFENDANT WHO IS CONVICTED OF MULTIPLE CHARGES OF INDECENCY WITH A CHILD BY EXPOSURE IN THE SAME PROCEEDING HAS RECEIVED ONE REPORTABLE CONVICTION OR ADJUDICATION “BEFORE OR AFTER” ANOTHER UNDER ARTICLE 62.101(A)(4) OF THE CODE OF CRIMINAL PROCEDURE AND IS THUS REQUIRED TO REGISTER AS A SEX OFFENDER FOR LIFE.....	35
B.	HABEAS APPLICANT WAS ABLE TO SATISFY SECOND COTY PRONG AND SHOW STATE ACTOR COMMITTED MULTIPLE INSTANCES OF INTENTIONAL MISCONDUCT.	36
C.	HABEAS APPLICANT WAS NOT ENTITLED TO RELIEF FOR INEFFECTIVE ASSISTANCE OF COUNSEL BECAUSE HIS CLAIMS LACKED MERIT OR WERE NOT PROPERLY PRESERVED.....	36
D.	IF A DEFENDANT FILES HIS APPLICATION FOR POST-CONVICTION HABEAS CORPUS RELIEF ALLEGING THAT HE IS PHYSICALLY CONFINED PURSUANT TO HIS CONVICTION, HE NEED NOT FURTHER ALLEGE COLLATERAL CONSEQUENCES THAT FLOW FROM HIS CONVICTION.	37
E.	POST-CONVICTION DNA TESTING - APPELLANT DID NOT SATISFY HIS TEXAS CODE OF CRIMINAL PROCEDURE ARTICLE 64.04 BURDEN BECAUSE HE DID NOT SHOW THAT IT WAS REASONABLY PROBABLE THAT HE WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN CONVICTED HAD CERTAIN TEST RESULTS BEEN AVAILABLE DURING HIS CAPITAL MURDER TRIAL.	37
F.	FEDERAL HABEAS - UNITED STATES SUPREME COURT OPINION REVERSING ARIZONA SUPREME COURT PRECEDENT WAS A SIGNIFICANT CHANGE ARIZONA LAW REGARDING POST-CONVICTION RELIEF; ARIZONA SUPREME COURT HOLDING OTHERWISE WAS SUCH A NOVEL AND UNFORESEEABLE INTERPRETATION SO AS NOT TO FORECLOSE FEDERAL REVIEW.	38
XI.	FIRST AMENDMENT CASES	39
A.	CASE INVOLVING HARASSMENT VIA ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS UNDER TEXAS PENAL CODE § 42.07(A)(7) IS TO BE CONSIDERED BY COURT OF APPEALS WITH GUIDANCE FROM THE COURT’S RECENT OPINIONS IN <i>EX PARTE BARTON</i> AND <i>EX PARTE SANDERS</i>	39
B.	CASE INVOLVING HARASSMENT VIA ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS UNDER TEXAS PENAL CODE § 42.07(A)(7) IS TO BE CONSIDERED BY COURT OF APPEALS WITH GUIDANCE FROM THE COURT’S RECENT OPINIONS IN <i>EX PARTE BARTON</i> AND <i>EX PARTE SANDERS</i>	39
XII. § 1983 AND OTHER FEDERAL SUITS.....		40
A.	THE STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS ON A § 1983 PROCEDURAL DUE PROCESS CLAIM BEGINS TO RUN WHEN STATE LITIGATION ENDS, WHICH IN THIS CASE WAS WHEN THE TEXAS COURT OF CRIMINAL APPEALS DENIED MOTION FOR REHEARING FOLLOWING APPEAL FROM THE TRIAL COURT’S DENIAL OF MOTION FOR DNA TESTING.	40

SCOTUS/CCA Update

Significant Decisions from August 2022 to March 2023

I. INTRODUCTION

This paper covers the published opinions issued by the Court of Criminal Appeals between August 1, 2022, and April 30, 2023. It also includes the significant criminal cases from the United States Supreme Court that have broad applicability, issued between October 1, 2022 and April 30, 2023. If you feel that a particular case was overlooked, please email me through Nichole Reedy at nichole.reedy@txcourts.gov and we'll do our best to accommodate you. More importantly, we update the paper throughout the year, so don't lose that email if you would like a copy of the most updated paper. But you will have to wait until July 2023 for that.

Oh, and one more thing. I tried little something new last year and it seems to have been well received. At least, I haven't had any complaints. As with last year, if it doesn't work, then you aren't in any different position than you were reading a regular version of the paper so don't worry. But I have included hyperlinks to the related opinions online. So, if you click on a case citation in this paper, hopefully, Google Chrome will pull up a link to the related opinions. Cases from the CCA and SCOTX have separate PDF files for majority and side opinions, so for those summaries I have tried to incorporate separate hyperlinks for corresponding opinions. United States Supreme Court opinions consist of only one file that has all opinions on it so there was no way for me to separate them out. For those cases you just get one hyperlink if you are interested. Of course, I can't guarantee that the version of the paper you receive at whatever CLE you choose to attend will have working functionality on this point. So, if you get a copy of this paper and it looks like there's a hyperlink, but it doesn't work when you click it, I'm sorry. I do not take any responsibility for link rot.

Of course, my sorrow does not translate into a license to email me or Nichole to ask how to make it work. I'm not volunteering to be your personal IT

person and neither is Nichole. Nevertheless, if you want a copy of our PDF version of the paper so you can see if that does work, you can reach out to us and we will send our master PDF copy to you. I know, master PDF sounds so serious. I just mean the original PDF we send out to be included in CLE material. It's not that serious. In any event, I wish you way more than luck.

II. MOTIONS TO SUPPRESS

A. Investigative Detentions

1. **Consensual encounter escalated to investigative detention when officers physically touched an individual while telling him to show his hands.** Tairon Jose Monjaras Monjaras was walking around an apartment complex when police officers saw Monjaras and believed it was "not normal" that Monjaras was carrying a backpack and that Monjaras was "overdressed for the weather." The officers announced in their body-worn camera recording that they were beginning a consensual encounter "to see where [Monjaras] was going, or what was going on." The officers got out of the police vehicle and began speaking with Monjaras. Both officers had their service pistols visible but holstered. They asked him for basic information including his name, where he lived, and if he had identification. Monjaras appeared to understand the questions but replied in broken English. One officer asked Monjaras if he had anything illegal on him. Monjaras shook his head no but began emptying his pockets. One officer then said, "Hold on, hold on, hold on. May I search you?" while placing his hand on Monjaras's arm. Monjaras reached into his pocket again while the other officer put his hand around Monjaras's elbow and said, "It's a question. Hold on. Talk to me." Monjaras continued to remove items from his pocket and said, "But I-I-I know. You said—you said you wanted to search me." With his hand on Monjaras's back, the officer responded, "No, no, no, you're not understanding what I'm saying. The second officer then took two steps forward, extended both hands outwards with his palms facedown and instructed Monjaras "manos, manos."

The first officer then, more insistently, repeated, "May I search you? May I go into your pockets and search you?" Neither officer informed Monjaras that he did not have to consent. After pausing, Monjaras

responded, “Yeah.” The officer then instructed, “Okay, slide your hands on the car for me, please.” Upon searching Monjaras, the officers found a pistol under Monjaras’s groin.

Monjaras pleaded guilty to unlawful possession of a firearm by a felon after the trial court denied his motion to suppress evidence where he argued that his interaction with law enforcement was an investigative detention without reasonable suspicion rather than a consensual encounter. On appeal, Monjaras argued that the trial court erred in denying his motion to suppress. The court of appeals affirmed the trial court and found that the interaction was a consensual encounter.

The Court of Criminal Appeals reversed. [Monjaras v. State, --- S.W.3d ---, 2022 WL 17170923 \(Tex. Crim. App. Nov. 23, 2022\) \(5:0:4\).](#) Writing for the Court, Judge Walker explained that an encounter is consensual only if the citizen is free to leave and terminate the interaction at any time. The Court agreed with the court of appeals that Monjaras’s initial interaction with the officers was a consensual encounter. The Court noted that the two officers approached Monjaras around midday in a public location using a tone that was not overtly hostile. Besides a brief handshake, the officers did not initially touch or speak to him in a way indicating that compliance was required.

However, the Court disagreed with the court of appeals’s conclusion that the encounter did not escalate to an investigative detention. The Court stated that the court of appeals undertook “a piecemeal or ‘divide and conquer’ approach” instead of viewing the totality of the circumstances. Further, the court of appeals focused on the initial encounter and the subjective intent of the officers rather than the perspective of an objectively reasonable person in the same circumstances. The Court concluded that when the officer moved closer to Monjaras with his hands extended and said “manos, manos” while the other officer had his hand on Monjaras’s body, a reasonable person in his shoes would no longer feel free to disregard the officers’ requests in light of the officers’ show of authority.

Presiding Judge Keller dissented without an opinion along with Judges Hervey, Keel, and Slaughter.

[**Commentary:** This is an exceedingly close and fact-bound case. Beware of trying to broaden this holding beyond the facts of this case. Note as well, that all the Court determined in this case is whether an investigative detention occurred. The case was remanded back for the court of appeals to determine whether that detention was based upon reasonable suspicion.]

2. Briefly and safely driving on the dividing line between the center and right lane of traffic with a U-Haul’s right rear tire does not give rise to reasonable suspicion for a traffic stop without additional facts. Late at night, Sheila Jo Hardin drove her rented U-Haul truck on the highway. A police officer saw her U-Haul and followed her because he had received a “Be on the Lookout” (BOLO) regarding a U-Haul that was suspected of being involved in multiple burglaries drove in the middle lane of a three-lane highway with no other cars around her. As the officer followed Hardin, she did not drive erratically, speed, or come close to hitting anything with the U-Haul. When he saw the right rear tire of the U-Haul touch and drive on the striped line marking the right side of the center lane he stopped her for committing the offense of “failing to maintain a single marked lane of traffic.” Nothing in the record showed that Hardin’s driving behavior was unsafe. The officer listed in his offense report that he did not stop her based upon the BOLO. Based upon evidence collected pursuant to a search of Hardin’s vehicle after the traffic stop, the State charged Hardin with fraudulent possession of identifying information and forgery of a government instrument. The trial court granted Hardin’s motion to suppress evidence obtained after the warrantless traffic stop. The trial court held that the stop was not justified by the BOLO alert, which the State did not challenge. The State appealed, however, on the issue of whether Hardin’s conduct amounted to a violation of the offense of “failure to maintain a single marked lane” even though Hardin’s driving was not shown to be unsafe. The court of appeals affirmed.

The Court of Criminal Appeals affirmed. [State v. Hardin, --- S.W.3d ---, 2022 WL 16635303 \(Tex.](#)

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