

# CENTER FOR APPELLATE LITIGATION

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## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Chief Defender & Colleague  
**From:** Bob Dean  
**Date:** July 15, 2018  
**Subject:** Attached

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Here is a list of significant criminal cases pending in the New York Court of Appeals and the issues presented. Cases that the Court has selected for SSM consideration are generally not included. Leave grants were to the defendant unless otherwise noted.

The Center does this update every two months for its own attorney staff. As a matter of professional courtesy, we also send it to Chief Defenders who do substantial appellate work. Feel free to distribute copies to any members of your staff. This update is also available on our web site ([www.appellate-litigation.org](http://www.appellate-litigation.org)).

Although every attempt has been made to ensure the accuracy of the summaries, no express or implied guarantees are made. If your office is handling one or more of these cases and wishes to share some insight not apparent from the intermediate appellate court decision or the Clerk's summary of issues, please feel free to contact me. Your input will be added to the next edition.

We offer a special feature to our online visitors. Our online "Eye on Eagle" section (NYCA link) includes pdf links to all decided cases, and, for selected cases, a short CAL blog flagging what we think is important or noteworthy about the cases.

Happy reading!

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**CRIMINAL CASES CURRENTLY PENDING IN  
THE NEW YORK COURT OF APPEALS**

**I. Cases Scheduled for Argument**

People v. Raymond Crespo

AD1 order dated November 10, 2016, reversing judgment of conviction. Decision below: 144 AD3d 461, 40 NYS3d 423. Stein, J., granted leave to People March 6, 2017. Argued February 8, 2018. Set down for reargument for September 12, 2018.

ISSUE PRESENTED: Whether the trial court erred in summarily denying the defendant's unequivocal requests to go pro se, just because they were made after the start of jury selection. (Assigned counsel for defendant: Ben Schatz and Robert S. Dean, Center for Appellate Litigation, 120 Wall Street, 28<sup>th</sup> Floor, NYC 10005.)

People v. Jakin Grimes

AD4 order dated March 24, 2017, denying writ of error coram nobis. Decision below: 148 AD3d 1724, 49 NYS3d 326. Wilson, J., granted leave August 17, 2017. To be argued September 13, 2018.

ISSUE PRESENTED: Whether an attorney's failure to file a criminal leave application to the New York Court of Appeals from an adverse decision of the intermediate appellate court constitutes ineffective assistance of counsel under the State constitution. (Assigned counsel on coram: Joseph C. Perry, C/O Baker Botts LLP, 30 Rockefeller Plaza, NYC 10122.)

People v. Steven Baisley

AT 9 & 10 order dated May 23, 2017, reversing justice court order dismissing the accusatory instrument. Decision below: 55 Misc. 3d 148(A), 58 NYS3d 875, 2017 WL 2380728. Stein, J., granted leave September 11, 2017. To be argued September 13, 2018.

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**ISSUE PRESENTED:** Whether the Family Court Act sections 156 and 411 are jurisdictional bars to the criminal prosecution of the charges of non-support of a child in the second degree (PL 260.05[2]) and criminal contempt in the second degree (PL 215.30[3]), where the lawful mandate of the court allegedly being resisted or disobeyed involves a Family Court order of child support. (Assigned counsel: Richard L. Herzfeld, 112 Madison Avenue, 8th Floor, NYC 10016)

**People v. Saylor Suazo**

AD1 order dated January 3, 2017, affirming judgment of conviction. Decision below: 146 AD3d 423, 45 NYS3d 31. DiFiore, Ch.J., granted leave June 15, 2017. To be argued October 10, 2018.

**ISSUE PRESENTED:** Whether defendant was entitled to jury trial, under the 6th Amendment and the New York State Constitution, even though charged with a Class B misdemeanor, since conviction would result in deportation, making the charge a “serious” one. (Assigned counsel: Mark Zeno and Robert S. Dean, Center for Appellate Litigation, 120 Wall Street, 28<sup>th</sup> Floor, NYC 10005.)

**People v. Rohan Manragh Jr.**

AD2 order dated May 3, 2017, affirming judgment of conviction. Decision below: 150 AD3d 762, 51 NYS3d 431. Fahey, J., granted leave August 23, 2017. To be argued October 11, 2018.

**ISSUE PRESENTED:** Whether, by pleading guilty, the defendant forfeited his claim on appeal that the prosecutor failed to inform the grand jury of defendant’s request to call a witness to testify. (Assigned counsel: Thomas E. Scott, 115 Broadhollow Road, Suite 250, Melville, NY 11747.)

**Matter of Gonzalez v. Annucci**

AD3 order dated March 23, 2017, reversing, in part, dismissal of Article 78 petition brought by sex offender kept in prison beyond his CR date, based on SARA restrictions. Decision below: 149 AD3d 256,

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50 NYS3d 597. Cross-appeals. Court of Appeals granted leave to petitioner June 22, 2017; appeal taken as of right by respondent Annucci, by virtue of two-judge dissent. To be argued October 16, 2018.

ISSUES PRESENTED: (1) Whether DOCCS has a responsibility to substantially assist inmate, prior to release to the community, in obtaining SARA-compliant RTF housing. (2) Whether the question was mooted out by inmate's ultimate release. (Assigned counsel for Gonzalez: Abigail Everett & Robert S. Dean, Center for Appellate Litigation, 120 Wall Street, 28<sup>th</sup> Floor, NYC 10005.)

People v. Damian Jones

AD1 order dated April 4, 2017, affirming judgment of conviction. Decision below: 149 AD3d 407, 52 NYS3d 83. Garcia, J., granted leave August 14, 2017. To be argued October 16, 2018.

ISSUE PRESENTED: Whether, under New York's enterprise corruption statute, a "criminal enterprise" must have a governing system of authority or leadership structure apart from the pattern of criminal activity (Penal Law Article 460). (Assigned counsel: Christina Swarns, Office of the Appellate Defender, 11 Park Place, Suite 1601, NYC 10007.)

People v. Rodney Watts

AD1 order dated March 23, 2017, affirming judgment of conviction. Decision below: 148 AD3d 678, 48 NYS3d 602. Wilson, J., granted leave October 6, 2017. To be argued October 17, 2018.

ISSUE PRESENTED: Scope of Penal Law §170.10(1). Whether a ticket to a concert or basketball game constitutes a "deed, will, codicil, contract, assignment, commercial instrument, credit card or other instrument which does or may evidence, create, transfer, terminate, or otherwise affect a legal right, interest, obligation, or status." The People argued below that such tickets were subsumed by the secondary "or other instrument," clause, and alternatively, that the tickets

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represented a contract. The Appellate Division adopted the former position in its decision, holding that event tickets are instruments which purport to “evidence, create, transfer, terminate, or otherwise affect a legal right, interest, obligation, or status.” (Assigned counsel: Arielle Reid & Robert S. Dean Center for Appellate Litigation, 120 Wall Street, 28<sup>th</sup> Floor, NYC 10005.)

**II. Cases Waiting to be Scheduled**

People v. Brian Hakes

AD3 order dated October 20, 2016, reversing probation revocation, and remanding. Decision below: 143 AD3d 1054, 39 NYS3d 299. DiFiore, Ch.J., granted leave to People April 21, 2017.

ISSUE PRESENTED: Whether County Court had the authority to require defendant to pay for an electronic monitoring program (SCRAM bracelet) as a condition of his probation. (Assigned counsel for defendant: Kathryn Friedman, C/O The Sage Law Firm Group, P.O. Box 200, 465 Grant Street, Buffalo, N.Y. 14213)

People v. Frederick Diaz

AD1 order dated April 13, 2017, reversing SORA level-three risk adjudication and annulling the sex-offender adjudication. Decision below: 150 AD3d 60, 50 NYS3d 388. Court of Appeals granted leave to People June 27, 2017.

ISSUES PRESENTED: Defendant had a 1989 Virginia murder conviction for killing his 13 year old sister, a crime for which there was no sexual component. After being paroled, he was required to register in Virginia under its “Sex Crimes & Crimes Against Minors Registry Act.” Upon his move to New York, where only sex offenders have to register, was he required to be adjudicated a sex offender? (Assigned counsel for defendant: Abigail Everett & Robert S. Dean, Center for Appellate Litigation, 120 Wall Street, 28<sup>th</sup> Floor, NYC 10005.)

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People v. Ali Cisse

AD1 order dated April 6, 2017, affirming judgment of conviction. Decision below: 149 AD3d 435, 53 NYS3d 614. Fahey, J., granted leave August 23, 2017.

ISSUES PRESENTED: (1) Should People v. Reyes, 83 N.Y.2d 945, which held that yelling “stop” is a mere Level-1 request for information, be overruled? (2) Rikers Island phone calls: Did the introduction of wiretapped Rikers calls violate state and federal wiretapping laws [18 USC 2511, PL 250.05] because (a) notice of wiretapping does not equal “consent” to wiretapping, and (b) a person does not “consent” to wiretapping if he is not informed that the calls will be turned over to the prosecutor. (3) Did the Rikers statement constitute “interrogation” since the defendant, isolated on the island, had only one communication option with family and friends - - a “tapped” call, or was it “involuntary” (CPL 60.45[2]) since his ability to make a choice whether to speak was undermined by lack of alternatives (4) Was the trial court allowed to accept a partial verdict absent a “declaration” from the jury that it had reached one (CPL 310.70 [1]). (Assigned counsel: Matthew Bova & Robert S. Dean, Center for Appellate Litigation, 120 Wall Street, 28<sup>th</sup> Floor, NYC 10005.)

People v. Emmanuel Diaz

AD2 order dated April 19, 2017, affirming judgment of conviction. Decision below 149 AD3d 974, 53 NYS3d 94. Hall, J. (AD dissenter), granted leave August 3, 2017.

ISSUES PRESENTED: (1) Rikers calls- Whether defendant’s calls from Rikers Island were improperly admitted into evidence in the absence of his consent to release the recordings to the prosecution. (2) IAC on the grounds that defense counsel failed to request the affirmative defense to first-degree robbery. (Assigned counsel: Dina Zloczower & Lynn W.L. Fahey, Appellate Advocates, 111 John St., 9<sup>th</sup> Floor, NYC 10038.)

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People v. Timothy Martin

AD1 order dated February 21, 2017, affirming judgment of conviction. Decision below: 147 AD3d 587, 48 NYS3d 54. Rivera, J., granted leave September 28, 2017.

ISSUE PRESENTED: Whether the defendant's admission to the police that he lived in the apartment that was the subject of a search warrant for drugs was admissible at trial under the pedigree exception to the Miranda requirement, even though it was the product of custodial interrogation that was likely to elicit an incriminating response. (Assigned counsel: Samuel Steinbock-Pratt & Robert S. Dean, Center for Appellate Litigation, 120 Wall Street, 28<sup>th</sup> Floor, NYC 10005.)

People v. Doran Allen

AD1 order dated July 6, 2017, reversing judgment of conviction. Decision below: 152 A.D.3d 401, 59 NYS3d 14. Kahn, J. (AD dissenter), granted leave to People December 21, 2017.

ISSUE PRESENTED: Whether defendant was prejudiced by People's improper submission of the case to a second grand jury without leave of the court, where the effect of the improper re-presentation was the addition of a count for which defendant was later acquitted. The majority determined that the acquitted count nonetheless "loomed" over the trial and influenced the ultimate guilty verdict on a lesser count. (Assigned counsel for defendant: Brittany Francis and Robert S. Dean, Center for Appellate Litigation, 120 Wall Street, 28th Floor, NYC 10005.)

People v. Michael Thomas

AD2 order dated August 23, 2017, affirming grant of CPL 440.20 motion. Decision below: 153 AD3d 860, 60 NYS3d 375. Rivera, J., granted leave to People December 18, 2017.

ISSUE PRESENTED: Whether a prior felony conviction may be used as a predicate felony conviction if the defendant is re-sentenced on the prior felony after the conviction on the instant felony. (Assigned counsel

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for defendant: Melissa S. Horlick and Paul Skip Laisure, Appellate Advocates, 111 John St., 9th Floor, NYC 10038.)

People v. Omar Alvarez

AD1 order dated September 28, 2017, denying writ of error coram nobis. Wilson, J., granted leave February 8, 2018.

ISSUE PRESENTED: Whether assigned appellate defense counsel was ineffective for, inter alia, failure to include in his Appellate Division brief an excessive sentence argument for a very young defendant who received a sentence of 66 2/3 years to life, after trial. And whether the analysis should be informed by the totality of the circumstances, i.e., that appellate counsel also (a) failed to communicate with his client, (b) filed a woefully substandard brief, and (c) failed to notify his client of the decision or seek leave to appeal to the Court of Appeals. (Assigned counsel on the coram: Christina A. Swarns, Office of the Appellate Defender, 11 Park Place, Suite 1601, NYC 10007.)

People v. Hassan Rkein

AD1 order dated July 13, 2017, affirming judgment of conviction. Decision below: 152 AD3d 434, 55 NYS3d 653. Rivera, J., granted leave February 22, 2018.

ISSUE PRESENTED: Whether the court erred in refusing the defense request for a justification charge as to second-degree assault: (1) Whether there was a reasonable view of the evidence that defendant used anything less than deadly physical force when he hit the victim in the head with a pint beer glass; (2) Whether defendant could be justified in using such force where the victim had merely pushed him. (Assigned counsel: Christina A. Swarns, Office of the Appellate Defender, 11 Park Place, Suite 1601, NYC 10007.)

People v. Fidel Vega

AD1 order dated November 14, 2017, affirming judgment of conviction. Decision below: 155 AD3d 462, 63 NYS3d 7. Rivera, J., granted leave April 10, 2018. Wilson, J., granted leave May 4, 2018.



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**ISSUE PRESENTED:** (1) Whether a non-deadly physical force in defense of a person charge is incompatible with a crime containing, as an element, the use of a dangerous instrument? Here, the trial court charged the jury that if it found that the defendant used a dangerous instrument, as required by the relevant assault statute, it had to apply the analysis for justification in the use of deadly force. Only if it did not find that element proven could it analyze the defendant's actions under the ordinary physical force standard. (2) Whether a defendant can be guilty of burglary for entering a locked bedroom, occupied by his grown daughter, in his own apartment. (3) Whether the trial court properly precluded defense counsel from cross-examining the assault complainant about her mental illness history for violent behavior. (Assigned counsel: Arielle Reid and Robert S. Dean, Center for Appellate Litigation, 120 Wall Street, 28<sup>th</sup> Floor, NYC 10005.)

People v. Agape A. Towns

AD4 order dated June 9, 2017, affirming judgment of conviction. Decision below: 151 AD3d 1638, 57 NYS3d 276. DiFiore, Ch.J., granted leave February 28, 2018.

**ISSUE PRESENTED:** (1) Whether the trial court deprived defendant of a fair trial by personally negotiating a cooperation agreement with a codefendant by promising to impose a lenient sentence in return for his testimony against the defendant; (2) Whether a witness's testimony should have been precluded as the fruit of the poisonous tree because the police learned of the witness's identity after violating the defendant's right to counsel (attenuation). (Assigned counsel: Timothy P. Donaher, Monroe County Public Defender, Monroe County Public Defender, 10 N. Fitzhugh St., Rochester, NY 14614.)

People v. Manuel Rodriguez

AD1 order dated October 24, 2017, affirming judgment of conviction. Decision below: 154 AD3d 594, 63 NYS3d 46. Rivera, J., granted leave April 10, 2018.

**ISSUE PRESENTED:** The sufficiency of the evidence to establish third-degree grand larceny of the proceeds of a stolen check, where defendant

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exercised dominion and control over the funds (deposited by someone into her bank account) but not the stolen check itself. (Assigned counsel: Christina A. Swarns, Office of the Appellate Defender, 11 Park Place, Suite 1601, NYC 10007.)

People v. Derrick Ulett

AD2 order dated August 30, 2017, affirming judgment of conviction and denial of CPL 440.10 motion. Decision below: 153 AD3d 945, 60 NYS3d 396. Feinman, J., granted leave April 26, 2018.

ISSUES PRESENTED: The prosecution suppressed Brady material, a grainy video surveillance tape of a murder. (1) Was there a “reasonable probability” that the verdict would have been different had the tape been turned over? (Although blurry, the video shows a series of events different from what the prosecution witnesses testified to.) (2) Whether the prosecutor’s deliberate misstatement on summation, that no such video existed, warrants a new trial. (Assigned counsel: Leila Hull and Paul Skip Laisure, Appellate Advocates, 111 John St., 9<sup>th</sup> Floor, NYC 10038.)

People v. Boris Brown

AD1 order dated November 21, 2017, affirming judgment of conviction and CPL 440.10 motion denial. Decision below: 155 AD3d 509, 65 NYS3d 36. Wilson, J., granted leave May 7, 2018.

ISSUES PRESENTED: (1) Whether a defendant in a murder trial can agree to be represented by an attorney paid for by a suspect in the murder while that attorney concurrently represents the suspect in other criminal matters or is that an unwaiveable conflict of interest barred by the ethical rules? (2) Whether a defendant waives that conflict of interest when he agrees to forgo having the attorney cross-examine the suspect in the unlikely event that suspect testifies but when the defendant is never advised that the conflict precludes the attorney from pointing the finger at the suspect, thereby foreclosing his best and only reasonable defense? (3) Whether a 440 court’s error in failing to make findings of fact or reach conclusions of law in contravention of C.P.L. § 440.30(7) requires the reviewing court to

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remand the matter for correction or can that error be excused on appeal because one claim advanced by the prosecution, but not the principal arguments, supported the 440 court's denial of the application? (Assigned counsel: David J. Klem and Robert S. Dean, Center for Appellate Litigation, 120 Wall Street, 28<sup>th</sup> Floor, NYC 10005.)

People v. Victor Thomas

AD1 order dated February 1, 2018, affirming judgment of conviction. Decision below: 158 AD3d 434, 70 NYS3d 190. Fahey, J., granted leave May 10, 2018.

ISSUES PRESENTED: (1) Whether the carelessly-executed appeal waiver validly forfeited the Huntley issue where (a) the defendant first learned of the waiver mid-way through the plea proceeding, after he had already allocuted, (b) the waiver, up to that point, had not been by discussed by the parties, (c) the court told appellant that the waiver covered any "challenge to this plea and this sentence," and (d) the written waiver's terms, requiring that the defendant forfeit the right to even file a notice of appeal, had been struck down as invalid and unconscionable over two months earlier by the Appellate Division. (2) Whether the police conducted the functional equivalent of interrogation of the un-Mirandized defendant by confronting him with a highly incriminating photograph and telling him, "You're here to speak about this." (Assigned counsel: Robert S. Dean, Center for Appellate Litigation, 120 Wall Street, 28<sup>th</sup> Floor, NYC 10005.)

**III. New Leave Grants**

People v. Darryl Brown

AD1 order dated February 20, 2018, reversing judgment of conviction, with dissents. Decision below: 160 AD3d 39, 71 NYS3d 422. Kahn, J. (AD dissenter), granted leave to People April 26, 2018.

ISSUE PRESENTED: Whether the trial court erred in denying the defense request for a justification charge. In the light most favorable

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to the defendant, did the evidence show that he reasonably could have feared for his life when he shot the deceased?

People v. Tamarkqua Garland

AD1 order dated November 28, 2017, affirming judgment of conviction. Decision below: 155 AD3d 527, 65 NYS3d 167. Manzanet-Daniels (dissenter), J., granted leave May 30, 2018. (SSM.)

ISSUE PRESENTED: The sufficiency of the evidence of “serious physical injury.” The victim suffered a bullet wound to the leg, with minimal lasting effects. (Assigned counsel: David Bernstein and Robert S. Dean, Center for Appellate Litigation, 120 Wall Street, 28<sup>th</sup> Floor, NYC 10005.)

People v. Jaime Lopez-Mendoza

AD1 order dated November 28, 2017, affirming judgment of conviction. Decision below: 155 AD3d 526, 65 NYS3d 519. Rivera, J., granted leave May 8, 2018.

ISSUES PRESENTED: (1) Whether defendant’s IAC claim is reviewable on direct appeal. (2) Whether the error in admission of DNA evidence was harmless. (3) The admissibility of the carpet fiber evidence. (Assigned counsel: Christina Swarns, Office of the Appellate Defender, 11 Park Place, Suite 1601, NYC 10007.)

People v. David Mendoza

AD2 order dated November 1, 2017, affirming judgment of conviction. Decision below: 155 AD3d 652, 64 NYS3d 54. DiFiore, Ch. J., granted leave May 16, 2018.

ISSUE PRESENTED: Whether defendant was deprived of IAC when his attorney advanced a “nullification” defense at trial. (Assigned counsel: Paul Skip Laisure, Appellate Advocates, 111 John St., 9th Floor, NYC 10038.)

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People v. John Giuca

AD2 order dated February 7, 2018, reversing denial of 440.10 motion and remanding for a new trial. Decision below: 158 AD3d 642, 71 NYS3d 111. Wilson, J., granted leave to the People June 28, 2018.

ISSUE PRESENTED: Whether there must be a new trial because the People failed to turn over Brady material, i.e., the prosecution witness's expectation of a benefit for his co-operation.