

SUMMARY STATEMENT

State v. Smith

Dkt. No. 49461

In this appeal, Michangelo Smith challenged multiple evidentiary decisions made by the district court across two jury trials underlying his judgments of conviction. Smith also challenged the order of restitution entered against him after the second jury trial. During the first trial, the jury found Smith guilty of felony domestic battery, misdemeanor assault, and misdemeanor false imprisonment. However, the jury was unable to reach a decision on an attempted strangulation charge. The State re-tried Smith on that charge, and after a second trial, the jury found him guilty.

On appeal, the Idaho Supreme Court affirmed the judgments of conviction and the order of restitution. First, the Court explained that challenged evidence of a prior encounter between Smith and a State's witness was relevant to motive and the State's theory of the case. Second, the Court concluded that any error in admitting this prior encounter under Idaho Rules of Evidence 403 and 404(b) was harmless such that the district court did not err in refusing to grant Smith's motion for a mistrial. Third, the Court explained that the district court did not abuse its discretion by allowing the State to reopen its case after Smith proposed an untimely and nonstandard jury instruction. Fourth, the Court agreed with Smith that testimony regarding an incident where a female stranger propositioned Smith and the victim for a "three-way" was irrelevant. However, the Court concluded the error in admitting this testimony was harmless.

Fifth, the Court clarified how trial courts must draw the line between lay opinion testimony under Idaho Rule of Evidence 701 and expert opinion testimony under Rule 702. From this, the Court explained that the district court erred in allowing a lay witness to offer undisclosed expert opinions on the appearance of bruising on African American skin. However, because the opinions admitted in error were not the only opinions admitted on this topic, the district court's error was harmless. Finally, the Court declined to vacate a portion of the order of restitution after determining the basis for the challenged portion was supported by substantial evidence.

*****This summary constitutes no part of the opinion of the Court but has been prepared by court staff for the convenience of the public.*****