1	IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES
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3	JAMES WALKER, WARDEN, ET AL., :
4	Petitioners : No. 09-996
5	v. :
6	CHARLES W. MARTIN :
7	x
8	Washington, D.C.
9	Monday, November 29, 2010
10	
11	The above-entitled matter came on for oral
12	argument before the Supreme Court of the United States
13	at 11:03 a.m.
14	APPEARANCES:
15	TODD MARSHALL, ESQ., Deputy Attorney General,
16	Sacramento, California; on behalf of
17	Petitioners.
18	MICHAEL R. BIGELOW, ESQ., Sacramento, California;
19	appointed by this Court, on behalf of Respondent.
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1	PROCEEDINGS
2	(11:03 a.m.)
3	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: We'll hear argument
4	next this morning in Case 09-996, Walker v. Martin.
5	Mr. Marshall.
6	ORAL ARGUMENT OF TODD MARSHALL
7	ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONERS
8	MR. MARSHALL: Mr. Chief Justice, and may it
9	please the Court:
10	Charles Martin never adequately explained
11	why he waited more than 5 years to present additional
12	claims to the California Supreme Court. As such, it was
13	no surprise that these claims were rejected as untimely.
14	California employs a habeas corpus timeliness rule that
15	merely requires reasonable diligence and disclosure.
16	The rule is adequate under this Court's longstanding
17	precedents, and the Ninth Circuit's decision to the
18	contrary should be reversed.
19	JUSTICE GINSBURG: Well, what about the
20	charge that, yes, we can agree with you that in general
21	5 years seems like a long time, but we have a brief from
22	the Habeas Corpus Resource Center that says that in the
23	5- to 6-year delay category, 62 percent are dismissed on
24	the merits, and that you can't tell; sometimes they do
25	it on the merits, sometimes they do it as time-barred,

- 1 and there's no rationale to when they do one or the
- 2 other.
- 3 MR. MARSHALL: Three brief responses, Your
- 4 Honor. The first is that to measure summary denials,
- 5 you can't tell from a summary denial ruling what the
- 6 court was thinking about the time of delay.
- 7 The second point is that delay in California
- 8 is only half the equation. In California, there is the
- 9 substantial delay and then there's also the
- 10 justification portion. So persons who operate under
- 11 substantial delay still have an opportunity to justify
- 12 that delay and gain the desired review.
- 13 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: What was the third?
- 14 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Would they have to --
- 15 would they have to justify the delay first? I thought
- 16 there was something about, well, if the time question is
- 17 more difficult and the merits are easy, there's no
- 18 merit, so we just decide this.
- 19 MR. MARSHALL: California's policy is to
- 20 take a first look at a habeas petition and determine
- 21 whether it is -- has a prima facie case or whether
- 22 procedural bars are apparent. A court that's denying a
- 23 case on the merits isn't necessarily saying the matter
- 24 was timely, and courts should be permitted to reach
- 25 whatever is the most judicially efficient method of

- 1 resolving such a question without it being held against
- 2 them.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So basically you're
- 4 taking the position or you're conceding that the
- 5 California courts are not consistent in their
- 6 application of the timeliness rule?
- 7 MR. MARSHALL: No --
- 8 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Your brief doesn't even
- 9 try to defend that position. Are you conceding that
- 10 there is inconsistent application of the rule?
- MR. MARSHALL: No, Your Honor.
- The point that we're making is that when you
- 13 look at a rule, whether you apply it or not -- or
- 14 whether you impose it or not doesn't mean you're not
- 15 applying the rule. For example, when trial courts
- 16 review matters under the Fourth Amendment, a decision
- 17 not to exclude the evidence doesn't mean they didn't
- 18 apply the Fourth Amendment.
- In this case, if the trial court -- or if
- 20 the reviewing court looks at the length of delay, and
- 21 then they may look at the justification to determine
- 22 that the delay was justified.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Well -- I might be
- 24 speaking for her, but I thought that the Habeas Corpus
- 25 Resource Center brief showed that the court, the

- 1 California court, did reach some cases where an
- 2 explanation had not been proffered. And so it can't be
- 3 just a simple rule, that if you don't proffer an
- 4 explanation, you won't get heard. So what's the next
- 5 step in that? Why do they reach some and not others?
- 6 MR. MARSHALL: The California Supreme Court,
- 7 if a case is patently meritless and perhaps the
- 8 procedural question of timeliness is more complex --
- 9 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: How could it be complex
- 10 when there's no justification offered?
- 11 MR. MARSHALL: The question of how long it
- 12 was --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Well, they pointed to a
- 14 certain number of cases that were 5 years or above in
- 15 delay where no justification was offered, and in some
- 16 they reached the merits and in others they applied a
- 17 procedural bar. So how is that consistent?
- 18 MR. MARSHALL: Well, the State court has
- 19 discretion to determine on the -- on procedural grounds
- 20 or on the merits --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Is there some Federal rule
- that says you have to apply a procedural ground before
- 23 you decide the merits?
- 24 MR. MARSHALL: There is not. There's a --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: So it's up to California

- 1 which of the two it wants to use.
- MR. MARSHALL: That's correct.
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: And in California, if it
- 4 just says "denied," then the presumption is it's denied
- 5 on the merits; is that it?
- 6 MR. MARSHALL: That's correct, a lack of a
- 7 prima facie case.
- 8 JUSTICE GINSBURG: And -- and if -- so if
- 9 it's going to be denied on time bar grounds, there has
- 10 to be something to indicate that it's for that reason?
- 11 Otherwise we assume it's on the merits?
- 12 MR. MARSHALL: That's correct. Typically,
- 13 the citation is to Clark and Robbins, just as it was in
- 14 this case.
- 15 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So how do we know that
- 16 the California court just thinks that the Federal
- 17 question is too hard and it doesn't want to reach it?
- 18 It may be meritorious. How do we know they're not
- 19 applying the decision to reach the merits on an
- 20 arbitrary and capricious basis or one that seeks to
- 21 avoid hard Federal questions?
- 22 MR. MARSHALL: First is this Court has never
- 23 taken the position, when measuring adequacy, of assuming
- 24 that the rule is inadequate. The starting position that
- 25 this Court has always taken when looking at the adequacy

- 1 of a State rule is to look for evidence to see that --
- 2 if it can be shown to be inadequate. And I posit that
- 3 there's no evidence in this case that has been presented
- 4 to show that the State court is using their rules as a
- 5 pretext of any kind.
- 6 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Is it arbitrary and
- 7 capricious for a court to take the ground of least
- 8 resistance, to decide the case on the easiest issue
- 9 that's presented? Is that arbitrary and capricious?
- 10 MR. MARSHALL: I posit that it's not. This
- 11 Court endorsed in Lambrix that it's all right for courts
- 12 to address procedural default after Teague if that's a
- 13 more judicially efficient method of handling the matter.
- 14 Strickland cases permit addressing either prong,
- 15 whichever is easier under the circumstances.
- 16 And so the State courts ought to be
- 17 permitted to address habeas corpuses on whatever the
- 18 easiest, most judicially efficient basis is without
- 19 being forced to answer a timeliness question if a case
- 20 is patently meritless. And there should be no finding
- 21 of inconsistency about that.
- 22 And, more importantly, summary denials, as
- 23 we're discussing here, don't afford any notice to
- 24 litigants of what the State's procedures are or what
- 25 they're thin king, because you have to guess. You have

- 1 to guess at how long the delay was, you have to guess at
- 2 whether there was any justification offered. So summary
- 3 denials do not assist the inquiry. And this Court has
- 4 never endorsed using summary denials in its adequacy
- 5 measure. This Court has always looked to published
- 6 State cases that explicate the rule.
- 7 This Court is looking to see whether the
- 8 rule has been pronounced by the State for a certain
- 9 amount of time, and then all of a sudden the litigant
- 10 that's receiving the imposition of the rule receives a
- 11 rule that was unexpected, either because the rule was
- 12 changed or because the rule was novel. Nothing like
- 13 that has happened here.
- 14 JUSTICE KENNEDY: The phrase is "substantial"
- 15 delay." Are there factors other than temporal factors
- 16 that go into whether or not the delay is substantial;
- 17 that is to say, the prisoner had difficulty contacting
- 18 his counsel and so forth? Is that what the court looks
- 19 at --
- MR. MARSHALL: Those are --
- 21 JUSTICE KENNEDY: -- when it looks at
- 22 "substantial"? And is there -- are there California
- 23 cases that tell us what the -- how do we define
- 24 "substantial"?
- MR. MARSHALL: Yes, Your Honor, to both.

- The kind of circumstances you're describing
- 2 are exactly the kind of circumstances which makes
- 3 California's rule fair, because it considers how long it
- 4 takes a litigant to find his claim, get it prepared, and
- 5 get it into court.
- And there are, in fact, concrete examples.
- 7 The Robbins case specifically provided that a 5-month
- 8 window from the discovery of triggering facts to the
- 9 presentation of the -- of the claim was a reasonable
- 10 amount of time. By contrast, the Stankewitz case
- 11 provided that 18 months of delay from the discovery of a
- 12 declaration was substantial and had to be justified.
- 13 JUSTICE KAGAN: When does the State think
- that Mr. Martin's claim became untimely?
- 15 MR. MARSHALL: Certainly he hasn't given any
- 16 reason why he didn't present his additional claims at
- 17 the time of his earlier habeas corpus challenges.
- 18 Mr. Martin went through a full round of superior court,
- 19 court of appeal, and supreme court challenges, and then
- 20 waited some additional years and has never explained why
- 21 he didn't include these additional claims in those
- 22 earlier challenges.
- JUSTICE KAGAN: So you think it --
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: It's supposed to be filed
- 25 within 60 days. I don't -- this is along the same lines

- 1 as Justice Kagan's question. Suppose there's the first
- 2 round of habeas, and then he waits 60 days and files the
- 3 new claim. Would that be substantial?
- 4 Because you're indicating that failure to
- 5 include it in the first review is a factor to be weighed
- 6 against him. And I think that's what the Justice is
- 7 inquiring about.
- 8 MR. MARSHALL: Yes, it does -- it does weigh
- 9 against. And it's a rule of reasonableness, and it's a
- 10 discretion-based rule. And he would have to offer,
- 11 well, why didn't he include those claims earlier? And
- 12 if he had a good --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Yes, and what -- isn't that
- 14 a separate rule? I mean, no matter how soon, if he does
- it a week after, doesn't California have a rule that you
- 16 can't come back with another habeas with material that
- 17 you could have produced in the -- in the former habeas?
- 18 MR. MARSHALL: That's correct, Your Honor.
- 19 JUSTICE SCALIA: So time -- time has nothing
- 20 to do with that. It's just a separate -- a separate
- 21 bar.
- 22 MR. MARSHALL: California has articulated
- 23 that successive petitions are a type of delayed
- 24 petition. But you're right, there is a difference in
- 25 California between successive petitions and delayed

- 1 petitions, and the ruling here is that he was delayed
- 2 substantially.
- I was just addressing the point about when
- 4 they might have been timely had they been presented
- 5 earlier, and it appears that in the earlier -- he didn't
- 6 get a timeliness ruling in his earlier challenges. So
- 7 it appears that he could have raised them then and did
- 8 not.
- JUSTICE KAGAN: But if we can take out the
- 10 second and successive aspect of this and just focus on
- 11 the timeliness, when does the State think that this --
- 12 that these claims were -- became untimely?
- MR. MARSHALL: It's a rule of reasonableness
- 14 and diligence that's circumstantially based, and --
- JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, you have the
- 16 circumstances here, so -- so under those circumstances,
- when did the claims become untimely?
- 18 MR. MARSHALL: In the Robbins case, it
- 19 explains that you have -- a 5-month span from discovery
- 20 of the claims to presentation of the claims would be
- 21 reasonable.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: The claims here --
- JUSTICE KAGAN: The 5 months would be
- 24 reasonable. So is a year unreasonable? Is 5 months the
- outer bounds, you know, assuming you don't have a good

- 1 reason? I understand that if you have a good reason,
- 2 that can lengthen it. But suppose you don't have a good
- 3 reason. When does the State think, okay, that's too
- 4 late?
- 5 MR. MARSHALL: There isn't -- there isn't a
- 6 defined time line. But our position is that a defined
- 7 time line is not a necessity for adequacy. This Court
- 8 has endorsed reasons of -- rules of reasonableness and
- 9 diligence. For example, in the Federal prisoner context
- 10 in Johnson v. United States, this Court said diligence
- in discovery, while it isn't exact, is good enough.
- JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, I'm -- I'm trying to
- 13 get to even around, not -- not exact. My standard is
- 14 not exact. It's just around. Around what? Around 6
- months, around 3 years, around someplace in the middle?
- 16 MR. MARSHALL: The position of the State is
- 17 that Robbins has indicated that 5 months is reasonable,
- 18 18 months is definitely too long, and that there is a
- 19 discretion-based determination in the middle.
- 20 JUSTICE ALITO: What if it's filed within 6
- 21 months and it's -- it's rejected as untimely, and the
- 22 petitioner wants to try to demonstrate that this
- 23 represents a grave departure from the way these are
- 24 normally handled by the California Supreme Court? Is
- 25 there any way for the petitioner to do that?

- 1 MR. MARSHALL: He would point to the
- 2 published authority and argue that his case was outside
- 3 of the parameters of what the State had done in the
- 4 past. However, our position is that, since California's
- 5 ruling is adequate, that there would be no evidence of
- 6 such available to this particular litigant. A
- 7 hypothetical litigant might be able to proffer that
- 8 prior cases had treated claims differently.
- 9 And the other problem with California is
- 10 that it would require two exact same litigants, and it's
- 11 very rare for two exact same litigants to have the exact
- 12 same claims, the exact same bases for their delay, filed
- in exactly the same amount of delay. So true comparison
- 14 is difficult.
- 15 JUSTICE SCALIA: You think 5 years is too
- 16 long, though?
- MR. MARSHALL: Yes.
- 18 JUSTICE SCALIA: Yes.
- 19 JUSTICE GINSBURG: There -- this was taken
- 20 over by California from capital cases, but in the
- 21 capital case context, there -- they have a 90-day
- 22 presumption of timeliness. And when they extended the
- 23 capital framework to non-capital cases, they left out
- 24 the presumption that within 90 days is timely. Was
- 25 there reason for that?

- 1 MR. MARSHALL: Respectfully, I must
- 2 disagree. It actually is the other way around. The
- 3 capital case policies took the timeliness rule -- took
- 4 the general timeliness rule for themselves and added the
- 5 presumption.
- 6 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Was there reason for and
- 7 then saying, well, in the capital context, we're going
- 8 to make it clear that 90 days -- 90 days is timely. Why
- 9 didn't they add that to the original rule?
- 10 MR. MARSHALL: To the other litigant rule?
- 11 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Yes.
- 12 MR. MARSHALL: They, I think, felt that the
- 13 rule was adequate the way it was, that a
- 14 circumstantially based rule, a reasonableness-based
- 15 rule, was sufficient to guide the conduct of litigants
- 16 to tell them what they needed to do to present their
- 17 case.
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: Well, why would it be
- 19 different in the capital context? What was the reason
- 20 for adding the 90 days there?
- 21 MR. MARSHALL: Capital cases are
- 22 significantly more complex, the punishments are -- are
- 23 more significant, and so additional scrutiny might be
- 24 warranted in those contexts.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I'm -- I'm a little bit

- 1 confused by your response to Justice Scalia. I thought
- 2 from your brief that you were positing that there was no
- 3 claim of inconsistent application of a rule that could
- 4 ever survive.
- 5 Let's assume for the sake of argument the
- 6 following hypothetical, and probably not far off the
- 7 mark. Litigants who don't know the law, who claim
- 8 they're not educated in it, say that they have just
- 9 learned about a new California case that gives them a
- 10 ground to challenge their prior sentence. And the
- 11 litigants learn about the case anywhere between 3 and 6
- 12 months of the issuance of the case by the supreme court.
- 13 A dozen litigants apply for this discretionary review,
- 14 and half of them are granted review and half are not.
- 15 Half of them get a correction of the sentence and half
- 16 of them don't. There is no difference between them
- 17 that's discernible. They each just claim ignorance.
- 18 Is that a case where someone would be out of
- 19 luck, and why, for a claim of inconsistent application?
- 20 MR. MARSHALL: I didn't follow the
- 21 hypothetical. Was -- were some of the hypothetical
- 22 individuals getting time-barred?
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Getting time-barred.
- 24 Some are time-barred; some --
- MR. MARSHALL: And some of the individuals

- were getting relief?
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Exactly.
- 3 MR. MARSHALL: And is there yet a third set
- 4 of people who are getting --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: No. Some -- all of them
- 6 are within that small framework of 3 to 6 months from
- 7 the time the supreme court decision was issued. They
- 8 all claimed they just learned of it and filed
- 9 immediately, and some are getting relief and some are
- 10 not.
- Is that an inconsistent application that
- 12 would be cognizable under your view of the rule as it
- 13 should be?
- 14 MR. MARSHALL: That sounds inconsistent to
- 15 me, Your Honor. However --
- 16 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: It does. So the
- 17 question --
- MR. MARSHALL: But such a thing would not
- 19 occur in California.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I'm sorry. What?
- 21 MR. MARSHALL: Such a thing would not occur
- 22 in California.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Well, that's the issue.
- MR. MARSHALL: A meritorious --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Which is: What rule do

- 1 you want us to impose and how does that rule capture
- 2 that case?
- 3 MR. MARSHALL: There's a specific exception
- 4 for timeliness in California to preclude fundamental
- 5 miscarriages of justice. And anybody that had a
- 6 meritorious United States --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: You're not answering my
- 8 question.
- 9 MR. MARSHALL: I misunderstood it.
- 10 JUSTICE SCALIA: Wait. No. Why do you
- 11 concede that it would be bad? Can't the State, if it
- 12 wishes, give grace to people who did apply late, but
- 13 because the case is so meritorious or for any other
- 14 reason? The issue is whether those people who filed 5
- 15 years later and knew that it was very late, whether
- 16 they're entitled to have their cases heard, not whether
- 17 the -- the State allows somebody who filed 6 years
- 18 earlier to have it heard. How does that do any
- 19 injustice to the person who knew that 5 years was, you
- 20 know, you're likely to be denied?
- MR. MARSHALL: I absolutely agree, Your
- 22 Honor. The basis for my earlier comments was the -- I
- 23 believe the hypothetical was 3 to 6 months, which was a
- 24 much shorter period of time.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: I don't see why the State

- 1 has to be consistent in it. If -- as a matter of grace,
- 2 it can -- it can allow some people, so long as the
- 3 people who are denied had every reason to believe that
- 4 they were coming in too late, and 5 years is coming in
- 5 too late.
- 6 MR. MARSHALL: Just as occurred in this
- 7 case, I absolutely agree, Your Honor.
- 8 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: But it doesn't answer
- 9 why inconsistent application among similarly situated
- 10 individuals should not provide an avenue of relief.
- 11 MR. MARSHALL: This Court has never
- 12 reversed --
- 13 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Five years is different.
- 14 I'm talking about treatment of similarly situated
- 15 individuals differently.
- 16 MR. MARSHALL: First, this Court has only
- 17 looked at the treatment of this individual, not
- 18 disparate treatment of prior individuals. The -- the
- 19 rule exists for --
- 20 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Oh, I don't disagree
- 21 with you. So that the question I have for your
- 22 adversary is whether or not he can point to any case
- 23 where a litigant who proffered an -- something that was
- 24 evident on the trial record and on the appellate record
- 25 was ever granted a merits review after 5 years. Because

- 1 I don't see them proffering any case that shows that.
- 2 But -- and I think that may be your argument.
- MR. MARSHALL: Yes, exactly. That no one --
- 4 JUSTICE ALITO: Well, I -- I'm not -- I
- 5 don't understand your answer, then. You have -- let me
- 6 just adapt what Justice Sotomayor said. You have -- a
- 7 case, a Supreme Court case is decided. And you have
- 8 10 -- 10 habeas petitioners in California who file on
- 9 exactly the same day. And five of them, if you were to
- 10 get to the merits of their claim under this new decision
- of this Court, five of them would be entitled to relief,
- 12 five of them would not be entitled to relief on the
- 13 merits. And the California Supreme Court holds that the
- 14 five who would be entitled to relief are procedurally
- 15 barred and the five who were not entitled to relief on
- 16 the merits are not, and they are rejected on the merits.
- 17 Now, would that be an adequate State ground?
- 18 MR. MARSHALL: Well, I'm not sure. It
- 19 doesn't happen in California that way.
- JUSTICE ALITO: No, I know --
- MR. MARSHALL: All right. I'm sorry.
- JUSTICE ALITO: -- and I'm not suggesting
- 23 that it would. But if it were to happen, would that be
- 24 adequate?
- MR. MARSHALL: It doesn't sound like it

- 1 would be adequate under this Court's prior tests.
- 2 JUSTICE ALITO: So fair notice is not the
- 3 only requirement.
- 4 MR. MARSHALL: This Court has also required
- 5 legitimate State interests, and this Court has used the
- 6 legitimate State interests context, like, for example,
- 7 in Smith v. Texas, where this Court has declared a
- 8 particular kind of violation was a constitutional
- 9 violation and the Court exercised its discretion not to
- 10 reach the violation, this Court found that the State had
- 11 no legitimate State interest in such a ruling.
- 12 Our point is that --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: But -- but the cases that
- 14 you're using in which we insisted upon adequacy in the
- 15 sense of equal treatment of equal people are cases in
- 16 which the effect of the State decision was to exclude
- 17 the matter from Federal -- from Federal supervision.
- 18 The matter could not come before the Federal courts.
- MR. MARSHALL: Yes, Your Honor.
- 20 JUSTICE SCALIA: This is something quite
- 21 different. This is applying a time limit. I don't see
- 22 why we have to apply the same rule and -- and look into
- 23 the -- whether it's not discretionary. I mean, to say
- 24 it's discretionary always means that sometimes similar
- 25 cases may be treated differently.

- 1 MR. MARSHALL: Yes, Your Honor, exactly.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: So I don't know why you --
- 3 you concede that -- that we take an adequacy rule that's
- 4 used for one purpose and should apply it to a totally
- 5 different situation.
- 6 MR. MARSHALL: It was the meritorious nature
- 7 of the claims. And in California, meritorious claims
- 8 don't receive the time bar because there's exceptions
- 9 that take those into consideration.
- 10 JUSTICE SCALIA: But none of this is -- is a
- 11 device as is used in the cases that -- that you are
- 12 referring to that go into adequacy, a device to exclude
- 13 the Federal courts from the case. That's -- that's not
- 14 what's going on here, is it?
- MR. MARSHALL: That's correct.
- 16 JUSTICE BREYER: I guess if the situation
- 17 were such that a lawyer who is representing a client and
- 18 has to figure out has there been too much delay or not,
- 19 suppose he looked into the situation thoroughly and he
- 20 said, gee, I just have no idea, because half the cases
- 21 come out one way and half of them come out the other
- 22 way. Could he then go to the California Supreme Court
- 23 and say, Court, look what you have been doing? And
- 24 would the court then grant a hearing on that and
- 25 possibly correct it?

- 1 MR. MARSHALL: Well, in California, there's
- 2 no such evidence, but I suppose that the lawyer could --
- JUSTICE BREYER: All right. So you're
- 4 saying there is no such evidence.
- 5 MR. MARSHALL: That's correct. In fact --
- 6 JUSTICE BREYER: That's what I suspected
- 7 reading this. But if there were such evidence is there
- 8 a route in California that they could deal with it?
- 9 MR. MARSHALL: Certainly.
- 10 JUSTICE BREYER: Yes.
- 11 JUSTICE SCALIA: But that's not a question
- 12 of adequacy, is it? It's a question of notice.
- MR. MARSHALL: That's correct, Your Honor.
- JUSTICE BREYER: Adequacy of notice, because
- 15 no notice might be an inadequate notice.
- 16 MR. MARSHALL: That's correct.
- JUSTICE BREYER: And if it's absolutely
- 18 divided 50/50, you have no notice. You don't know what
- 19 will happen. And it isn't a rule to say, oh, this is
- 20 our rule, you don't know what will happen.
- MR. MARSHALL: Within an area of discretion,
- 22 like, for example, the finding of whether a piece of
- 23 evidence was hearsay, if the court down the hall finds
- 24 the evidence should be excluded and the court in the
- 25 next room says it should be admissible, that isn't

- 1 necessarily an abuse of --
- JUSTICE BREYER: I agree with you, we are in
- 3 hypothetical, never-never land so far. But it's
- 4 possible your opponents will convince us it's real land
- 5 and not never-never land.
- 6 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: And for it to be
- 7 real -- just so I understand -- for it to be real, you
- 8 have to have a defense counsel, a client comes to him
- 9 with a non-frivolous Federal habeas claim, and the
- 10 defense counsel says, I can't tell whether we're going
- 11 to be barred by this time rule or not. Some courts,
- 12 looks like we will; some don't. So -- what?
- Of course he's going to file the Federal
- 14 habeas and see if it's determined to be adequate or
- 15 inadequate, correct?
- MR. MARSHALL: California's rule is
- 17 perfectly suited to such a scenario. All that litigant
- 18 has to do is explain why they didn't bring the claim
- 19 sooner, either from late discovery or some other
- 20 impediment, and the substantial delay can be justified
- 21 with exactly those sorts of circumstances.
- JUSTICE KAGAN: What happens if a -- a
- 23 person in this position is trying to investigate
- 24 multiple claims at once, and some of them are ready to
- 25 be put before the court and others are not? How does he

- 1 know, look, I really better get in there right now and
- 2 put whatever I have before the court? Or, look, I have
- 3 a little bit more time in order to investigate some of
- 4 my claims further? How does he make that determination?
- 5 MR. MARSHALL: The Gallego case specifically
- 6 speaks to that exact circumstance and provides that if
- 7 you have a good faith basis in investigating further
- 8 triggering facts, you may withhold the claims that
- 9 you've already presented -- or prepared, to prevent
- 10 piecemeal presentation. And that's a perfectly
- 11 acceptable explanation in California.
- 12 JUSTICE KAGAN: Why is it, Mr. Marshall,
- 13 that the -- the California courts have not been a little
- 14 bit more transparent about what the presumptive time
- 15 limits are? You know, look, it's around a year unless
- 16 have you a good reason. You know, at least we're taking
- 17 3 years off the table.
- 18 I mean, why don't we have decisions like
- 19 that from the California courts that would -- would help
- 20 folks here?
- MR. MARSHALL: Well, other than the Robbins
- 22 decision, which speaks of 5 months as being reasonable,
- 23 the court has tried to maintain a discretion-based,
- 24 circumstantially driven analysis in which they take
- 25 different litigants into consideration. One litigant

- 1 may be in a maximum security prison and only gets to go
- 2 to the library once a month. Another litigant may be in
- 3 a minimum security prison; he can go to the library
- 4 every day. Those two litigants are going to be
- 5 different and should be treated differently.
- And if I might reserve the remainder of my
- 7 time.
- 8 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.
- 9 Mr. Bigelow.
- 10 ORAL ARGUMENT OF MICHAEL B. BIGELOW
- 11 ON BEHALF OF THE RESPONDENT
- MR. BIGELOW: Mr. Chief Justice, and if it
- 13 please the Court:
- 14 The adequacy inquiry is framed by asking
- 15 whether the State rule in question is firmly established
- 16 and regularly followed. At its core is the prevention
- 17 of State courts from declining to enforce Federal rights
- 18 and to maintain Federal authority over the protection of
- 19 constitutional rights in the Supremacy Clause. In its
- 20 brief at page 7, the State would seem to agree that a
- 21 rule is inadequate unless earlier decisions of the State
- 22 court are at least consistent.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Well, but what did you
- 24 present below, or what has Habeas Corpus Resource Center
- 25 presented? A case with a 5-year delay where the claimed

- 1 errors are apparent on the trial record and the
- 2 appellate record, and no justification for the delay is
- 3 proffered. Those are the three seminal facts that go to
- 4 the requirements of Robbins and the other supreme
- 5 court -- other California Supreme Court cases.
- 6 Do you have one case that's similar where
- 7 the court went to the merits?
- 8 MR. BIGELOW: Sanders was a 5-year case
- 9 that's cited in my brief. Jones was --
- 10 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: No. Was that someone
- 11 who made a claim based on the trial and appellate record
- 12 with no justification?
- 13 MR. BIGELOW: I'll speak to justification in
- 14 just a moment, if I may.
- 15 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Uh-huh.
- MR. BIGELOW: And Jones was an 8-year case.
- 17 The amicus brief, the Resource Center, cited Cooper,
- 18 Duke, and Hardiman. Cooper was a 5-year case. Those
- 19 were both IAC claims which appear to -- with respect to
- 20 the Sanders and the Jones case, I cannot -- I do not
- 21 know specifically what the claim was as I stand here,
- 22 and I apologize for that. But let us look at
- 23 justification for just a moment. The justification
- 24 offered in those cases was that the habeas petitioner
- 25 was ignorant and had no counsel. Now, I will represent

- 1 to you that, in the State of California, 99.9 percent of
- 2 the lawyers -- the lawyers -- 99 percent of the
- 3 petitioners who file aren't represented by counsel and
- 4 aren't lawyers themselves, and I will represent further
- 5 that probably 98 percent, 99 percent have no more than a
- 6 12th grade education.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: These cases that you cite,
- 8 before you go any further -- are they cases in which the
- 9 California Supreme Court came out with an opinion saying
- 10 that 6 years was okay? Or are they just cases where,
- 11 without an opinion, the California Supreme Court went to
- 12 the merits?
- MR. BIGELOW: They are -- well, in the
- 14 Sanders case and in the Jones case, there were -- I
- 15 believe that they were decisions in -- they were
- 16 decisions. These cases predated the Clark/Robbins
- 17 situation. In the Cooper case and the Duke case, those
- 18 cases --
- 19 JUSTICE SCALIA: What -- what do you mean
- 20 they were decisions, written opinions or just went to
- 21 the merits and decided the merits? Did they say
- 22 anything about the delay question?
- MR. BIGELOW: They did say something about
- 24 the delay question in at least two of the cases, well,
- 25 at least in one of the cases, the Mitchell case, which

- 1 was a 2-year delay. They said 2 years is unreasonable,
- 2 but I didn't cite those. And I cannot speak to --
- 3 JUSTICE SCALIA: But the other side says
- 4 that, unless there is an opinion, the reason they may
- 5 have gone to the merits is it was just a lot easier.
- 6 MR. BIGELOW: No --
- 7 JUSTICE SCALIA: They didn't have to worry
- 8 about it.
- 9 MR. BIGELOW: To that extent, it -- it's my
- 10 recollection they went to the merits. They're not
- 11 silent denials, and they don't cite Clark/Robbins
- 12 because they predated Clark/Robbins. With respect to
- 13 the Cooper case and Duke case, those I believe were
- 14 silent denials. Now -- and that's the interesting thing
- 15 about California. We are presuming -- we are presuming
- 16 and this Court has reached that presumption -- that they
- 17 are merit denials when they are silent, but we really
- 18 don't know --
- 19 JUSTICE BREYER: Well, that's a puzzle to
- 20 me. I mean, Justice Scalia's question was courts all
- 21 the time -- they -- you used see all the time they don't
- 22 decide an issue of whether it's filed too late because
- 23 it's the simplest thing just to decide the merits. It's
- 24 the same result. And sometimes they don't do that. But
- 25 that happens often in a district court on appeal and

- 1 triple in a supreme court which has hundreds or
- 2 thousands of questions for review. So how do we know
- 3 that that simple practice, which I've never heard of as
- 4 attacked as unconstitutional -- how do we know that that
- 5 isn't what's going on?
- 6 MR. BIGELOW: Well, in -- in any given year
- 7 recently, in recent history at least, there are about
- 8 800 truly silent denials, no explanation. Now, the
- 9 State says we can't consider them because they mean
- 10 nothing. From our perspective, they have to mean
- 11 something, and they have to count because we don't have
- 12 the information that the litigant in this matter is --
- doesn't have the same kind of resources, for example,
- 14 that the State does.
- JUSTICE BREYER: All right, but that's --
- 16 they -- what's your point? Eight hundred are silent.
- 17 What does that show?
- 18 MR. BIGELOW: That they have got to count in
- 19 the adequacy -- in the consistency application, they've
- 20 got to count against the Petitioner.
- JUSTICE BREYER: Why?
- 22 MR. BIGELOW: Because the Petitioner is the
- 23 one who has the resources and has the opportunity --
- JUSTICE BREYER: Well, I mean, but then you
- 25 can make any claim against him. I mean, what I

- wonder -- maybe this is where I'm leading -- the
- 2 California Supreme Court is not the only court in
- 3 California where people file for habeas petitions, is
- 4 it?
- 5 MR. BIGELOW: No. The appellate court --
- 6 JUSTICE BREYER: Yes. So why, if there's
- 7 inconsistency in this rule, wouldn't somebody go look at
- 8 the decisions of the appellate courts which write their
- 9 reasons down, and then you would know whether it is
- 10 being decided -- applied inconsistently or not
- 11 inconsistently. Why look at a blank wall? Why not look
- 12 at people who write opinions? And then you'll find out.
- MR. BIGELOW: Not all -- not all habeas
- 14 petitions in California are filed in lower courts.
- 15 JUSTICE BREYER: No, of course not. But is
- 16 your claim -- are you conceding, or are you conceding,
- 17 are you denying, are you just saying nothing about
- 18 whether the practice in this rule, applying the rule of
- 19 substantial unexcused delay, disqualifies you for --
- that's the rule, isn't it?
- MR. BIGELOW: That's the rule.
- JUSTICE BREYER: All right. Are you saying
- 23 it is being applied consistently or inconsistently or
- 24 you do not know --
- MR. BIGELOW: It is being applied --

- 1 JUSTICE BREYER: -- in all courts below the
- 2 California Supreme Court?
- 3 MR. BIGELOW: In all courts below, I do not
- 4 know, but --
- JUSTICE BREYER: So you don't know. So what
- 6 you've come -- what you've done your research on are
- 7 questions that cannot be answered due to the fact that a
- 8 supreme court normally doesn't say why when it denies
- 9 something, but you haven't looked into the research that
- 10 is readily obtainable, which is these are courts that
- 11 write opinions. Is that -- have I gotten that
- 12 correctly?
- MR. BIGELOW: That's -- \
- 14 JUSTICE BREYER: Because if that's
- 15 correct --
- 16 MR. BIGELOW: That would be a correct
- 17 statement.
- 18 JUSTICE BREYER: All right. Then I don't
- 19 see why you didn't because it would be so easy, if
- 20 you're right, to show this from the lower courts, but of
- 21 course if you're wrong, it wouldn't be easy, then a
- 22 blank wall is better than nothing.
- Now, what can you say that will disabuse me
- of the notion that I just expressed?
- MR. BIGELOW: The -- the lower appellate

- 1 courts -- there are six -- there are six district --
- 2 district courts. There are six appellate districts, I
- 3 guess, within the State -- within the State of
- 4 California and who knows how many superior courts. For
- 5 a petitioner to examine the holdings, the rulings in
- 6 each of those districts would be virtually impossible.
- 7 The only one -- for a petitioner who is in prison, who
- 8 is unrepresented by counsel, and let's not forget that
- 9 non-capital habeas petitioners, and this is a
- 10 non-capital habeas petitioner, is not represented by
- 11 counsel.
- 12 JUSTICE BREYER: No, no. But some are --
- 13 there's a thing called sampling techniques, and sampling
- 14 techniques are designed to limit the burden. I'm not
- 15 saying it wouldn't be burdensome, but you have examined
- 16 thousands of cases. And so I'm back to my original
- 17 question. And statisticians, many of whom would like to
- 18 help you perhaps you could find some, could do this for
- 19 you, I think.
- 20 MR. BIGELOW: Amicus did it with respect to
- 21 the California Supreme Court.
- JUSTICE BREYER: The wrong court. And
- 23 amicus did it from the time that -- that the case was
- 24 filed, while the rule is you start the period of running
- 25 from the case it was reasonably -- the person should

- 1 reasonably have known his issue, which isn't the same
- 2 time as the time his case was decided against him. So,
- 3 yes.
- 4 MR. BIGELOW: Well, that's an excellent
- 5 point the Court makes. And it is that -- nobody in this
- 6 room, nobody in this room can tell this -- this litigant
- 7 when his petition was filed late.
- JUSTICE BREYER: That's true.
- 9 MR. BIGELOW: And so --
- 10 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, but everybody
- 11 -- everybody in this room can tell him that he is
- 12 obligated to file the petition as promptly as the
- 13 circumstances allow. He has complete notice of that.
- 14 And if he wants to go and do the research and say, well,
- 15 here's one where they let it in after 5 months, but
- 16 here's one where they didn't leave it in after 9 months,
- 17 and he sits here and decides so I'm going to wait 9
- 18 months and put my money on that court -- that -- that is
- 19 not a scenario that's likely to happen, right?
- 20 MR. BIGELOW: That -- that -- it is not a
- 21 scenario that is likely to happen, but the construct
- 22 that the Court has -- "as promptly as circumstances
- 23 would allow" shows up in a footnote in a capital case.
- 24 It -- that --
- 25 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: You're not

- 1 challenging that as the State rule, are you?
- 2 MR. BIGELOW: That is the -- that's the
- 3 State rule that they proffer.
- 4 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Right.
- 5 MR. BIGELOW: That is the rule that the
- 6 State proffers. And what I'm suggesting is that that
- 7 rule is so vague and unknown, in the context at least of
- 8 the habeas litigation, no one understands what that rule
- 9 means. How prompt is prompt?
- 10 JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, Mr. Bigelow, is that
- 11 right? I take your point that nobody can say exactly
- 12 when Mr. Martin's claims became untimely, but 5 years is
- 13 untimely, isn't it?
- 14 MR. BIGELOW: Five years is not untimely
- 15 if --
- 16 JUSTICE KAGAN: I mean, if there's a very
- 17 good reason, but 5 years without an explanation is --
- 18 why is that a hard question?
- MR. BIGELOW: Even with an explanation, 5
- 20 years is not beyond the pale of cases that have been
- 21 previously decided and with respect to similarly
- 22 situated litigants. Other cases in California -- and
- 23 don't forget, please, that the -- the Habeas Corpus
- 24 Research Center took only a small sample of a single day
- 25 and that was the day that Martin's decision came down.

- 1 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: And they didn't look
- 2 at possible justifications at all, correct?
- 3 MR. BIGELOW: There was no justification
- 4 with respect to Mr. Martin's petition, that's correct.
- 5 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: No, no. I'm not
- 6 asking about Mr. Martin's.
- 7 MR. BIGELOW: Oh, I'm sorry.
- 8 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: This -- the analysis
- 9 that the amicus undertook simply looked at the
- 10 chronological time. They did not consider the fact
- 11 that, for example, somebody with 3 years might have had
- 12 an explanation; somebody with 1 year might have not had
- 13 any. And they may view those cases as different cases.
- 14 MR. BIGELOW: I -- I would disagree. I
- 15 think that they did, in fact, look at explanations for
- 16 delay, and a curious thing that they did find, which is
- in their brief, is that even though -- cases which --
- 18 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, how did they
- 19 look -- did they look for explanations for delay when
- 20 you had the one-sentence denial?
- 21 MR. BIGELOW: I think the short answer to
- 22 that is yes, but they also looked at silent denials as
- 23 well. So they found that where there was no explanation
- 24 for delay, more of those cases were decided actually on
- 25 the merits than cases that did offer a delay. So

- 1 there's a -- a gross inconsistency, a gross
- 2 inconsistency between the need for justification of
- 3 delay.
- 4 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Well, your --
- 5 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, how much range
- 6 are you willing to give the State? Do they have 3
- 7 months' range? I mean, if you come in and say, well,
- 8 here they were filed in 9 months and they were allowed,
- 9 and here they were filed in 6 months and they weren't
- 10 allowed.
- Is that a problem under our consistency
- 12 requirement?
- MR. BIGELOW: It wouldn't be a problem.
- 14 That would be a discretionary rule if there were
- 15 quidelines; if there were quidelines --
- 16 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: No, it says --
- 17 MR. BIGELOW: -- some kind of guidelines --
- 18 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: It says "as promptly
- 19 as the circumstances allow." And then they go back and
- 20 say there is a 3-range, a 3-month range.
- MR. BIGELOW: Oh, if they went back, with
- 22 decisional law, decided the range?
- 23 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: You do the same sort
- 24 of research you've done here, and you find out that --
- 25 that there's a 3-month range. Sometimes -- I mean,

- 1 there are cases and you can show a lot where they are
- 2 allowed at 9 months, and then you find cases that are
- 3 not allowed under 6 months.
- 4 MR. BIGELOW: I would be in a lot more
- 5 tenuous position arguing this case if there was some
- 6 guidance to litigants with respect to what does
- 7 constitute a reasonable time period within which to
- 8 file. What --
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: And suppose -- suppose
- 10 California had a rule that said that you have to file
- 11 within 1 year of the finality of the conviction, absent
- 12 good cause for the delay. If that were the rule that
- 13 California had, your client certainly would be untimely
- 14 and you wouldn't have a leg to stand on, right?
- MR. BIGELOW: If that were the rule, the
- 16 petition would have been filed timely.
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: Would --
- 18 MR. BIGELOW: That's my answer. Had that --
- 19 that is my answer to that question. Had that time
- 20 period been known, the petition would have been filed
- 21 timely.
- 22 JUSTICE GINSBURG: But if there is a
- 23 requirement of prompt -- as promptly as circumstances
- 24 permit, wouldn't a person know that 5 years is not as
- 25 prompt as circumstances permitted?

- 1 MR. BIGELOW: There has -- my answer is no,
- 2 because in California there are no guidelines. That
- 3 came in the Clark decision, which was 1993, and nothing
- 4 has been decided in the State of California to define,
- 5 to clarify, to narrow what constitutes "promptly." What
- 6 constitutes "promptly."
- 7 JUSTICE KAGAN: Why was this petition not
- 8 filed for 5 years?
- 9 MR. BIGELOW: I'm sorry.
- JUSTICE KAGAN: Why -- why was this petition
- 11 not filed for 5 years?
- 12 MR. BIGELOW: The record is -- does not
- 13 speak to that point specifically.
- 14 JUSTICE GINSBURG: But didn't this come
- 15 about because it was returned? This was not -- I'm
- 16 thinking about -- he didn't -- he didn't make any claim
- 17 that he was -- he was diligent.
- MR. BIGELOW: I'm sorry.
- 19 JUSTICE GINSBURG: He didn't make any claim
- 20 that he was diligent in filing it 5 years late.
- 21 MR. BIGELOW: There were no claims made
- 22 excusing the -- excusing the filing at that time period.
- 23 JUSTICE SCALIA: Let's assume that -- that
- 24 California had just adopted this -- this rule that
- 25 habeas petitions have to be filed as promptly as

- 1 circumstances permit. They've just brand-new adopted
- 2 it, and you're the lawyer for somebody who says, you
- 3 know, I think I'm going to wait 5 years.
- 4 Don't you think that even if there were no
- 5 California law on the subject, you would know that his
- 6 habeas claim is going to be denied?
- 7 MR. BIGELOW: If this were a --
- 8 JUSTICE SCALIA: Do you really need case law
- 9 to tell you that 5 years is not as promptly as
- 10 circumstances permit when you -- when you have no
- 11 justification?
- 12 MR. BIGELOW: Decisional law is what our
- 13 system is all about, Your Honor.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Oh, so you can't have a
- 15 first case?
- 16 MR. BIGELOW: No, I think you can. I think
- 17 you can have a first case so long as -- so long as the
- 18 standard itself is not so vague --
- 19 JUSTICE SCALIA: Oh, okay.
- 20 MR. BIGELOW: -- that reasonable -- that
- 21 reasonable men are able -- so long as reasonable men are
- 22 able to understand the standard.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: You think reasonable men
- 24 differ about 5 years?
- MR. BIGELOW: Well --

- 1 JUSTICE KAGAN: Mr. Bigelow, isn't this
- 2 similar to the rule that governed Federal habeas review
- 3 prior to AEDPA?
- 4 MR. BIGELOW: Well --
- 5 JUSTICE KAGAN: A similar kind of delay
- 6 standard, whatever "delay" means.
- 7 MR. BIGELOW: No, if I recall, the standard
- 8 was prejudicial delay. If I recall correctly. And
- 9 prejudicial delay, if I'm correct, is a quantifiable
- 10 standard. It is a standard that had, over the years,
- 11 come to be understood. There was a -- a shared
- 12 expectation with what prejudice encompassed. And so
- 13 yes, it's similar, but it's not exact. It's not the
- 14 standard in California.
- 15 And if I may, California clearly understands
- 16 that case law can offer quidance to litigants. In In re
- 17 Harris, a case cited by -- by both of us, by both
- 18 parties, the State of California was concerned about the
- 19 Walterus rule, which is another procedural bar. And it
- 20 went on to -- it acknowledged that it wasn't clear at
- 21 that time, and it went on to explain what the Walterus
- 22 rule was all about and why it was needed.
- In another case, more recently, the State of
- 24 California -- a case not cited, the Kelly case; it's a
- 25 2006 case -- the California Supreme Court directed its

- 1 lower courts over which it supervises to provide greater
- 2 detail in their analysis of Wende briefs, which is the
- 3 State's alternative to the Anders brief, in order to
- 4 provide guidance to litigants, to provide guidance to
- 5 justices, and to -- to provide guidance to the Federal
- 6 courts who may be called upon to determine procedural
- 7 bars.
- 8 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Now, I understand
- 9 that you'd have a much stronger case if you were dealing
- 10 with a judge-made rule about timeliness, if the courts,
- on their own authority, said, look, we're not going to
- 12 look at things that are filed 4 years late because that
- 13 prejudices the State, it prejudices us, et cetera.
- 14 But here you have something different. You
- 15 have a rule, right? An established rule: promptly as
- 16 the circumstances allow.
- 17 MR. BIGELOW: Judge-made.
- 18 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Judge-made, but it's
- 19 been around for a long time. This isn't a new rule
- 20 that's just coming in.
- 21 MR. BIGELOW: So a rule in a footnote in a
- 22 capital case.
- 23 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, let me get
- 24 back. I tried to -- when you made that point earlier, I
- 25 wanted to follow up on it. Your claim is not that you

- 1 don't know or defendants in California don't know that
- 2 the rule is "as promptly as the circumstances allow," do
- 3 you?
- 4 MR. BIGELOW: No.
- 5 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: No. I thought you
- 6 had fair notice of that rule.
- 7 MR. BIGELOW: Yes.
- 8 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Okay.
- 9 MR. BIGELOW: Just not the parameters of the
- 10 rule. And the parameters of the rule, the guidelines
- 11 which guide judges, which guide litigants, is just
- 12 simply not there in California, either with respect to
- 13 that rule or with respect to substantial delay.
- 14 JUSTICE ALITO: Isn't your argument that the
- 15 California timeliness rule was never an adequate rule,
- 16 never can proceed, never can bar consideration of a
- 17 Federal claim?
- 18 MR. BIGELOW: The -- had the -- never. Had
- 19 the rule been applied even-handedly, had the rule been
- 20 applied consistently, it would certainly be more
- 21 adequate. However, and getting back to Justice Scalia's
- 22 point, it has never been fairly defined, so it does not
- 23 clearly --
- 24 JUSTICE ALITO: What if Mr. Walker had
- 25 waited 20 years; would it still be inadequate as to him?

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1 MR. BIGELOW: In -- that's not -- that's not
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- 2 this case. The rule hasn't been -- the rule has not
- 3 been thoroughly set out, at -- at least the guidelines
- 4 haven't been set, and it might be --
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: Well, why can't you take
- 6 the brackets of -- what was it, 5 months is reasonable
- 7 time; 18 months is not a reasonable time? Mr. Martin
- 8 falls outside of the 18 months.
- 9 MR. BIGELOW: Certainly, one -- one could do
- 10 that, but that hasn't been established as the brackets,
- 11 and it is, after all, California's rule. And it is
- 12 California that -- which needs to make that
- 13 determination. Now, it's -- it's not as if California
- 14 hadn't actually tried to do that.
- 15 JUSTICE GINSBURG: I thought there was a
- 16 decision that said 18 months is too long.
- MR. BIGELOW: Not a decision that said that.
- 18 These were extrapolated -- no, I beg your pardon.
- 19 JUSTICE GINSBURG: There was a decision that
- 20 said 18 months is too long.
- 21 MR. BIGELOW: There was a decision that said
- 22 a 16-month period, but that was pre-Clark. That was a
- 23 pre-Clark decision that actually did say 16 months after
- 24 all is not a particularly long period of time. And
- 25 another decision -- I beg your -- I beg the Court's

- 1 pardon -- another decision said that 2 years wasn't a
- 2 particularly long period of time.
- 3 But those are -- those are pre-Clark
- 4 decisions, if you will, and this case is relying upon --
- 5 or the State, rather, is relying on what has come after
- 6 -- after Clark with respect to its "as promptly as the
- 7 circumstances should allow."
- 8 But the other point that I would like to
- 9 make, it's not as if the State of California doesn't
- 10 understand the need for a finite period of time to
- 11 provide guidance to -- to all parties. In -- in
- 12 Saffold, the State requested this Court presume a filing
- 13 period. I think it was -- I want to say 60 days. More
- 14 recently in Chavez, a filing period was requested to be
- 15 presumed, again by the State.
- 16 And both occasions, this -- this Court
- 17 declined because it isn't this Court's prerogative to
- 18 set rules for the State. What this Court did do is it
- 19 certified the question to the State of California, or
- 20 they asked the Ninth Circuit at least to certify the
- 21 question to the State of California. The Ninth Circuit
- 22 did exactly as this Court asked it to do and certified
- 23 the question, and the State of California said: We're
- 24 not going to tell you what a timeliness period is.
- Now, that does not help pro se litigants

- 1 with minimal education, without benefit of counsel, who
- 2 are the vast majority of habeas petitioners in the State
- 3 of California.
- 4 JUSTICE ALITO: How many --
- 5 MR. BIGELOW: They --
- 6 JUSTICE ALITO: How may of these petitions
- 7 are filed each year in the California Supreme Court?
- 8 MR. BIGELOW: Approximately 2,500, give or
- 9 take.
- 10 JUSTICE ALITO: Approximately what?
- MR. BIGELOW: Approximately 2,500, based on
- 12 a LexisNexis kind of search.
- 13 JUSTICE ALITO: With that many petitions, is
- 14 there any possibility that a multifactor test such as
- 15 the one that California is applying could be applied
- 16 with any degree of regularity, unless there's some sort
- of secret internal guidelines that are being applied by
- 18 the California Supreme Court in deciding this?
- 19 MR. BIGELOW: That's the problem. That's
- 20 the problem. The test that is applied without
- 21 guidelines, without any kind of guidelines. Judicial
- 22 discretion -- judicial discretion is informed
- 23 discretion; it is not discretion -- it's -- it's
- 24 judgment pursuant to known guidelines. It is not a
- 25 judgment issued pursuant to inclination.

- 1 And the concern is that with this kind of
- 2 amorphous standard, inconsistent and arbitrary
- 3 application is impossible to enforce.
- 4 JUSTICE BREYER: But it's like having rules;
- 5 when you have rules and say 60 days or 90 days, you find
- 6 impossible cases that you should have heard because it
- 7 was the 91st day or it was the 92nd day, and then you
- 8 give the people equitable discretion to depart from it,
- 9 and pretty soon you get litigation over that. I mean,
- 10 there's no perfect system.
- 11 MR. BIGELOW: Discretion to depart from a
- 12 rule that has been violated is one thing. Here, there
- is no quantifiable or known parameters within which
- 14 discretion --
- 15 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So is the solution for
- 16 California to say, if you delay more than a year from
- 17 when you should have known, you're barred except we'll
- 18 excuse it for any number of reasons?
- MR. BIGELOW: Certainly, and --
- 20 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: That would be a
- 21 regularly and consistently applied rule in your mind?
- MR. BIGELOW: Well --
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: That would be enough?
- 24 MR. BIGELOW: It -- it wouldn't necessarily
- 25 be consistently applied until we're down the road and we

- learn how consistently it has, in fact, been applied,
- 2 but certainly it would be -- it would be an appropriate
- 3 rule.
- 4 JUSTICE SCALIA: You may be -- you'd better
- 5 be careful about what you wish for because I am not sure
- 6 that the kind of system that's being proposed is going
- 7 to be better for habeas applicants than the one that
- 8 California now has. We really don't know that, do we?
- 9 MR. BIGELOW: We -- if -- if we collectively
- 10 screamed and yelled when AEDPA passed with its 1-year
- 11 statute of limitations, we've learned to live with it,
- 12 and we meet the deadlines because we know what the
- 13 deadlines are.
- 14 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: And pro se litigants who
- 15 don't know deadlines generally are going to live with
- 16 knowing that -- what?
- 17 MR. BIGELOW: They've got a better chance of
- 18 -- they've got a better chance of meeting deadlines if
- 19 they know what those deadlines are, and there's nothing
- 20 to take -- there is nothing to take the flexibility from
- 21 the California Supreme Court if there is a deadline.
- 22 But the --
- JUSTICE BREYER: Well, what about -- that's
- 24 why I go back to the lower courts. If there really is a
- 25 problem here, why wouldn't the bar look into how well

- 1 this practice is working in the lower courts and find
- out, well, what is the practice? How do they use it?
- 3 Do we want more flexibility? Do we want more definite
- 4 rules? That's -- I agree that you put your finger on a
- 5 problem, an important problem. I'm not at all certain
- 6 that the one system is better or required or compulsory.
- 7 MR. BIGELOW: The red light is going to go
- 8 on in an about a minute. Let me answer it this way:
- 9 The most powerful court probably in the world requested
- 10 clarification of the rule and didn't get it. I don't
- 11 know who else is going to.
- Unless there are other questions --
- 13 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.
- Mr. Marshall, you have 4 minutes remaining.
- 15 REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF TODD MARSHALL
- 16 ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONERS
- 17 MR. MARSHALL: This Court has explained, in
- 18 Dugger v. Adams, that a handful of inconsistent cases do
- 19 not undermine the adequacy inquiry, and unless the
- 20 inconsistency becomes so profound that it undermines
- 21 fair notice, it should not matter that there are some
- 22 different rulings that can be shown. There's no reason
- 23 to think that a rule that has a bright deadline and then
- 24 takes into considerations after the deadline is somehow
- 25 preferable to a rule that takes into considerations

1	discretionary circumstances in the first instance.
2	And unless there are any further
3	questions
4	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.
5	The case is submitted.
6	(Whereupon, at 11:59 a.m., the case in the
7	above-entitled matter was submitted.)
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