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ACTING WARDEN, :

V. : No. 05-493

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Tuesday, October 3, 2006

APPEARANCES:

ERIC S. MULTHAUP, ESQ., Mill Valley, California; on behalf
of the Respondent.

1	C O N T E N T S	
2	ORAL ARGUMENT OF	PAGE
3	MARK A. JOHNSON, ESQ.	
4	On behalf of the Petitioner	3
5	ORAL ARGUMENT OF	
6	ERIC S. MULTHAUP, ESQ.	
7	On behalf of the Respondent	23
8	REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF	
9	MARK A. JOHNSON, ESQ.	
10	On behalf of the Petitioner	46
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 [11:05 a.m.]

3 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: We'll hear argument next
4 in Ayers versus Belmontes.

5 Mr. Johnson.

6 ORAL ARGUMENT OF MARK A. JOHNSON

7 ON BEHALF OF PETITIONER

8 MR. JOHNSON: Mr. Chief Justice, and may it
9 please the Court:

10 This case concerns the constitutional
11 sufficiency of California's catchall factor (k)
12 instruction, which was given in the penalty-phase portion
13 of California capital cases, and which directed the jurors
14 to consider any other circumstance that extenuates the
15 gravity of the crime, even though it is not a legal excuse
16 for the crime.

17 In this case, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals
18 held that this instruction violates the Eighth Amendment
19 because it allegedly misled the jurors to believe they
20 could not consider so-called forward-looking evidence that
21 did not relate directly to the defendant's actual
22 culpability for the crime itself.

23 In the State's view, the Ninth Circuit's
24 conclusion is fundamentally flawed, because it rests on an
25 illusory distinction between different forms of character

1 evidence in a way that is inconsistent with this Court's
2 prior decisions in California -- or Boyde versus
3 California and Brown versus Payton.

4 In Boyde, this Court addressed, and rejected, a
5 virtually identical challenge to the factor (k), and
6 concluded that this instruction did, in fact, allow jurors
7 to consider non-crime-related evidence; specifically, it
8 allowed the jurors to consider evidence of the defendant's
9 background and character. There was nothing in the Boyde
10 decision to support the Ninth Circuit's distinction
11 between different forms of character evidence. In fact,
12 Boyde implicitly acknowledged that the factor (k) would,
13 in fact, be understood to encompass Belmontes' good
14 character evidence, in this case, because, for all
15 practical purposes, there is no meaningful distinction
16 between the nature of the background and character offered
17 in Boyde and the nature of the background --

18 JUSTICE STEVENS: Mr. Johnson, would you comment
19 on the footnote on the -- on the -- drawing the
20 distinction with regard to the dance contest that the
21 defendant won in that case, between -- it's over here; I'm
22 asking the question -- between facts that occurred before
23 the crime and facts that might have occurred after.

24 MR. JOHNSON: Yes, Your Honor. In footnote 5,
25 this Court addressed a contention, raised for the first

1 time in argument, that Boyde's evidence might be
2 admissible under Skipper versus South Carolina, and this
3 Court distinguished Boyde from Skipper, for a couple of
4 reasons. First, as the -- as Your Honor pointed out, the
5 evidence in this case related to good-character evidence,
6 events that occurred before the crime itself, unlike in
7 Skipper, which dealt with post-crime events. The Court
8 also pointed out that the evidence in Boyde -- his dancing
9 achievement, his good character evidence in that case --
10 was not offered for the specific inference that the
11 evidence in Skipper was offered. The Court, in footnote 5
12 -- and in the opinion, in general, in Boyde -- nonetheless
13 found that this evidence did, in fact, constitute good-
14 character evidence of the -- of the defendant's present
15 good character, because it showed that his crime was an
16 aberration from otherwise good character. Or, as Justice
17 Marshall put it in his dissenting opinion, that Boyde had
18 redeeming qualities, which is a decidedly forward-looking
19 consideration.

20 And, as I was saying, the evidence in this case,
21 and in Boyde --

22 JUSTICE SCALIA: It doesn't have to be forward-
23 looking, does it? I mean, I thought we've said "so long
24 as it can be taken into account in any manner," whether
25 backward-looking or forward-looking. Haven't we said

1 that, explicitly?

2 MR. JOHNSON: Yes Your Honor. The -- and, in
3 fact, the Court has, in Franklin versus Linite, said that
4 they have not distinguished between different forms of
5 character evidence. And I understand that, in the past,
6 we've always discussed background and character evidence
7 as sort of the same thing. In this case, however, the
8 Ninth Circuit's conclusion does, in fact, rest on a
9 distinction between different forms of backward-looking
10 and forward-looking character --

11 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well it was --

12 MR. JOHNSON: -- evidence.

13 JUSTICE KENNEDY: -- it was addressing itself to
14 the fact -- to the words of the factor (k) instruction.
15 How does post-crime prison conduct reduce the seriousness
16 of a previous crime?

17 MR. JOHNSON: It does not -- it does not relate
18 to the seriousness of the -- of the crime at all. The --
19 Boyde's dancing --

20 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, I mean, it has to relate
21 to the gravity of the crime, under the words of factor
22 (k), doesn't it?

23 MR. JOHNSON: It would relate to the gravity --
24 to circumstances that extenuate the gravity of the crime,
25 for purposes of a jury's sentencing determination. And

1 the point I'd like to make on that point is this, Your
2 Honor. In California, jurors are well aware what their
3 task is at a sentencing determination. In California, the
4 guilt and the death eligibility determinations are made
5 during the guilt-phase trial and the jurors are expressly
6 told, during the penalty-phase trial, that their lone
7 determination, their one concern, is to decide between a
8 sentence of death or a sentence of life without the
9 possibility of parole. And, in that light, the jurors are
10 very well aware that their only determination in a
11 California case is to make a moral, normative
12 determination, a single normal -- moral normative
13 determination, as to whether this man, this defendant
14 standing before them in this Court today, deserves death
15 or life without possibility --

16 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, now, do you --

17 MR. JOHNSON: -- of parole.

18 JUSTICE KENNEDY: -- do you have an instruction
19 that supports what you've just told us, that the jury is
20 told they have to make a single moral determination? Is
21 that what the court instructed the jury? Or was --

22 MR. JOHNSON: No, that's --

23 JUSTICE KENNEDY: -- instructed in items of
24 factor (k)?

25 MR. JOHNSON: The --

1 JUSTICE KENNEDY: And I think you have to rest
2 on your argument, that what we are talking about is the
3 gravity of his crime "for purposes of sentencing." I
4 understand that argument. But then, when you go on to
5 make the argument you just made, the jury understands it
6 is a single moral judgment, what -- is there some specific
7 instruction you can point to, other than the factor (k)
8 instruction itself?

9 MR. JOHNSON: No, they are -- and I may have
10 been misleading. The jurors are expressly instructed that
11 is -- that it is their duty to determine, and their only
12 duty to determine, whether the defendant should receive
13 life or death and parole, and -- or life without the
14 possibility of parole -- and in --

15 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well --

16 MR. JOHNSON: -- light of that determination,
17 jurors, naturally, would understand that they could take
18 into account anything that extenuated the gravity of the
19 crime.

20 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, that's what they
21 were told, right? They're instructed that the mitigating
22 circumstances, including factor (k), are merely examples,
23 right?

24 MR. JOHNSON: Yes. In this -- yes. In --

25 JUSTICE STEVENS: May I ask you about that?

1 This case is unusual, because it has that separate
2 instruction that, "The mitigating circumstances are merely
3 examples, and you should pay careful attention to those,
4 but you may -- but you may rely on other mitigating
5 circumstances."

6 May I ask you, would it have been constitutional
7 if the judge had added a sentence at the end of that
8 instruction which said, "However, you may not consider
9 anything mitigating unless it extenuates the gravity of
10 the crime"?

11 MR. JOHNSON: It would have been constitutional,
12 to the extent that it would have allowed the jurors to
13 give some use whatsoever to Belmontes' proffered evidence
14 in mitigation, and that's what this Court's prior cases
15 has -- and, particularly, the various Texas cases have
16 said that jurors must be given an avenue to make use of
17 the evidence. In California --

18 JUSTICE STEVENS: I'm not sure you've answered
19 my question. Would it have been a constitutional addition
20 to that instruction to say, "But I want to -- you to
21 clearly understand that it is not to be considered
22 mitigating unless it extenuates the gravity of the crime"?
23 Would that have been permissible?

24 MR. JOHNSON: It would appear to -- no. It
25 would appear not to be, because --

1 JUSTICE STEVENS: Because that would have
2 foreclosed consideration of the Skipper-type evidence,
3 right?

4 MR. JOHNSON: It would have -- well, it would
5 foreclose consideration of all present good-character
6 evidence, I believe. It would -- it would have foreclosed
7 the consideration of Boyde's evidence, of Payton's
8 evidence.

9 JUSTICE STEVENS: So, then the question in this
10 case is whether the jury might have understood factor (k)
11 to limit them to the consideration of factors that
12 extenuate the gravity of the crime.

13 MR. JOHNSON: Well, the -- yes, the question is
14 whether the jurors would reasonably understand the
15 instruction to preclude the consideration of
16 constitutionally -- of relevant evidence.

17 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: This Court, in Payton,
18 said that it was not unreasonable to conclude that
19 evidence of remorse extenuated the gravity of the crime.
20 So, why wouldn't an instruction to the jury along the
21 lines of Justice Stevens's hypothetical have been
22 perfectly constitutional as extenuate the gravity of the
23 crime that's interpreted in Brown versus Payton?

24 MR. JOHNSON: Well, to the -- to the extent --
25 the jurors would have likely understood that, it -- that

1 instruction in Belmontes and in Payton, to extenuate the
2 gravity of the crime for purposes of their sentencing
3 determination --

4 JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, that's what I thought
5 your position was. And --

6 MR. JOHNSON: Yes --

7 JUSTICE SCALIA: -- then you back off of it, and
8 you say, "extenuate the gravity" of the crime doesn't
9 relate to anything that's after the crime. I would have
10 -- I would have interpreted the phrase to mean "anything
11 that justifies you in giving a lesser punishment for the
12 crime."

13 MR. JOHNSON: That's precisely my argument.

14 JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, then your answer to
15 Justice Stevens should have been different.

16 MR. JOHNSON: Well, if -- and I apologize if I
17 was misunderstood. My --

18 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Do you think --

19 MR. JOHNSON: -- question --

20 JUSTICE GINSBURG: -- that the jury in this very
21 case understood that, given the questions that were asked?

22 MR. JOHNSON: Oh, yes, Your Honor. In this --
23 in this case, I -- there is certainly no reasonable
24 likelihood that the jurors felt precluded, because, as was
25 previously discussed, first there was this additional

1 instruction that supplemented the other instructions in
2 this case that made it very clear that the aggravating
3 factors, the various factors listed in the standard
4 instruction A through G, that those were the -- they could
5 only rely on those two for aggravating factors, but their
6 understanding of mitigating factors was not limited. In
7 fact, they were expressly told that the previous factors
8 were merely examples.

9 JUSTICE GINSBURG: What about the -- what
10 actually went on? I mean, the jury first came in and
11 said, "What if we can't decide? Can we decide by
12 majority?" And then the question was asked, that seemed
13 to indicate the jurors' understanding, that we take all
14 those factors that you told us about, and we just take
15 those factors into account. And there were clarifying
16 instructions asked by the defense that were not given.

17 MR. JOHNSON: Well, there -- to answer your
18 questions, Your Honor, first, there was no indication at
19 this conference that the jurors were, in fact, confused
20 about whether they could consider any particular evidence
21 as being mitigating. The conference itself was called to
22 address, as you mentioned, the jurors' concern -- or the
23 jurors' inquiry about the result -- what would happen if
24 they couldn't reach a unanimous verdict in this case.

25 JUSTICE SOUTER: Well, that may be why they had

1 the conference, but they got into the colloquy that
2 Justice Ginsburg described. And the last -- as I recall,
3 the last reference to "factors," whether aggravating or
4 mitigating, was simply in terms of the list, or "the
5 listing," I guess the term was, so that the -- it seems to
6 me at least, there's a fair argument on the other side of
7 this case, that the last reference that the -- that the
8 judge made to the jurors with respect to aggravation or
9 mitigation was to refer to a listing. The listing itself
10 didn't have anything to do, as I understand it, with the
11 instruction that you are not limited to the listed
12 mitigating factors.

13 So, the concern is that, because the last
14 reference was to the list, that the list included factor
15 (k), without embellishment, and that jurors tend to give
16 -- we have held that the jurors tend to give the greatest
17 emphasis to clarifying instructions or later instructions
18 in response to questions. Isn't it a pretty good argument
19 that, in this case, there is -- there's a reasonable
20 likelihood that the jurors went back to their task
21 thinking that they were limited to the list?

22 MR. JOHNSON: Respectfully, no, Your Honor. And
23 the reason why is --

24 JUSTICE SOUTER: Well, I -- I'm not necessarily
25 saying that's my position, so you don't have to be

1 respectful to me about it. Just --

2 MR. JOHNSON: I'll be respectful anyhow, Your
3 Honor.

4 JUSTICE SOUTER: -- knock it down if you can.

5 JUSTICE SCALIA: Be respectful anyway.

6 MR. JOHNSON: Yes. The point is, with this
7 instruction conference, there -- the -- an argument that
8 this reference to "the listing" reflected some
9 unconstitutional -- or constitutionally restrictive view
10 presupposes that the jurors reasonably would have
11 misinterpreted the meaning of the factor (k); and there is
12 nothing in there -- in any of these questions to put
13 anybody on notice that that -- that they had any such
14 concerns. And first --

15 JUSTICE SOUTER: Well, except for the language
16 of factor (k) itself. And if -- without some
17 embellishment, isn't it a bit of a stretch to think that
18 factor (k) goes as far as Skipper evidence?

19 MR. JOHNSON: No, Your Honor, it's not a stretch
20 at all, because any evidence relating to the defendant's
21 background and character, his present character in court,
22 could be seen as extenuating the gravity of the crime for
23 sentencing purposes.

24 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Well --

25 MR. JOHNSON: And the jurors --

1 JUSTICE GINSBURG: -- California itself
2 recognized that there was a problem here of jury
3 confusion. And now they have amended the provision so
4 that it would be clear to any juror.

5 MR. JOHNSON: That's correct, Your Honor, in
6 People v. Easley the California --

7 JUSTICE SCALIA: Or maybe they thought that was
8 a problem of Ninth Circuit confusion rather than jury
9 confusion.

10 [Laughter.]

11 JUSTICE SCALIA: I mean, having that opinion in
12 front of them, you would think they would amend it, of
13 course, to prevent that kind of decision again.

14 MR. JOHNSON: Well, they -- what they were doing
15 was certainly a prophylactic measure here, to -- they
16 recognized that perhaps there might be some concern of
17 confusion, and so they wanted to forestall any chance of
18 that happening. But notably, this case and -- this case,
19 and no other California Supreme Court case, has found that
20 the factor (k) instruction, the pre-Easley version of it,
21 by itself, did mislead the jurors. In fact, the Supreme
22 Court, in this case, came down 7-0 in support of the
23 conclusion that the jurors were properly told about the --

24 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Where does this factor (k)
25 come from? What was the source of it?

1 MR. JOHNSON: The factor (k), as the entire
2 standard instruction given in these cases, recites
3 verbatim the language of the California statute, which is
4 California penal code section 190.3. And, interestingly
5 enough, the -- not only the California Supreme Court, but
6 this Court, implicitly has -- have both said that not only
7 the California statute, but the instruction -- this
8 standard instruction, upon -- which is based on the
9 statute, do allow consideration of all relevant mitigating
10 factors. In fact, as far back as 1983, in this Court's
11 California v. Ramos decision, this Court stated, albeit in
12 dicta, that the factor (k) -- or that the standard
13 instruction would allow consideration of background and
14 character evidence; and, in fact, the Court stated, in
15 footnote 20 --

16 JUSTICE STEVENS: General Johnson, I don't mean
17 to interrupt you, but I want to be sure you answered your
18 -- you stick to your answer on -- to my question, earlier,
19 --

20 MR. JOHNSON: Okay.

21 JUSTICE STEVENS: -- because you -- I think you
22 changed your answer after Justice -- the Chief Justice and
23 Justice Scalia suggested you might have made a mistake.

24 Are you -- is it your position that it would be
25 constitutional to instruct the jury that, "You may not

1 consider any evidence mitigating, unless it extenuates the
2 gravity of the crime"?

3 MR. JOHNSON: Yes, Your Honor, because the
4 jurors would -- even if that instruction were given, the
5 jurors would understand that an instruction that
6 extenuates the gravity of the crime would encompass any
7 relevant character evidence. And this Court has made
8 these determinations all the time.

9 JUSTICE STEVENS: Is --

10 MR. JOHNSON: That --

11 JUSTICE STEVENS: -- that answer consistent with
12 the position of defense counsel, who said he would not
13 insult the intelligence of the jury by suggesting to them
14 that the religious conversion of the defendant did not
15 extenuate the gravity of the crime?

16 MR. JOHNSON: No, Your Honor. What the -- what
17 the counsel actually said was that the defendant's
18 religious conversion did not provide an excuse for the
19 crime itself. And, in fact, that argument was, itself,
20 echoing the language of the factor (k) instruction, which
21 of course --

22 JUSTICE STEVENS: That's right.

23 MR. JOHNSON: -- directs the jurors to consider
24 any other circumstance that extenuates the gravity of the
25 crime, even though it's not a legal excuse for the crime.

1 And so, counsel was dovetailing his very effective
2 argument with the -- with the instruction itself. And
3 what's significant here is that, like in Payton, like in
4 Boyde, this case involved virtually all of Belmontes'
5 penalty-phase evidence. And the entire main thrust of his
6 argument to the jury was that he could not make it on the
7 outside, but he could fit in the system and contribute to
8 society in the future, if given a chance on the inside.
9 And again, as was true in Boyde and Payton --

10 JUSTICE STEVENS: If that were true would that
11 have extenuated the gravity of the crime, if he could get
12 along in prison?

13 MR. JOHNSON: Yes, for purposes of jurors -- at
14 jury's sentencing determination, absolutely, because it
15 would be viewed as good-character evidence, precisely --

16 JUSTICE STEVENS: And you think juries would
17 clearly understand that what he did in the future in
18 prison would extenuate the gravity of the crime.

19 MR. JOHNSON: Yes, Your Honor, because, in light
20 of everything that's been said and done in this trial, as
21 the Boyde Court noted, jurors do not parse instructions
22 for subtle shades of meaning; they understand instructions
23 in a commonsense manner, and in --

24 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: The prosecutor didn't
25 object to any of this mitigating -- mitigation evidence

1 that was submitted by the defendant, did he?

2 MR. JOHNSON: The prosecutor objected to none of
3 this evidence. And, in fact, the prosecutor, in closing
4 statement, argued that the -- not only could the jurors
5 consider Belmontes' forward-looking prospects, but the
6 jurors should consider those prospects. So, in this case
7 what we have --

8 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Well, the prosecutor's
9 closing was schizophrenic, because he said, "But really
10 this shouldn't matter."

11 MR. JOHNSON: He acknowledged it was something
12 that -- this argument was something that was proper for
13 consideration, but -- however, he argued that the evidence
14 of Belmontes' religious conversion, which happens -- you
15 know, and then lapsed immediately before he committed the
16 murder, in this case -- was very weak evidence. But he
17 did, nonetheless, tell the jurors that they could consider
18 Belmontes' prior character as bearing on his present
19 character now.

20 JUSTICE SOUTER: But, didn't he go beyond saying
21 it was weak? He did say that, but didn't he say that he
22 doubted that it fit within (k)?

23 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Yes.

24 MR. JOHNSON: He's -- yes, the prosecutor first
25 stated that the factor (k) was a catchall, a true

1 catchall.

2 JUSTICE SOUTER: So, the prosecutor, I take it,
3 would have answered Justice Stevens's question the other
4 way. The prosecutor would have said, "Well, no, this
5 probably would not be understood by the jurors to refer to
6 the gravity of the offense."

7 MR. JOHNSON: No, Your Honor, because in the --
8 in the previous page, the prosecutor did State that it was
9 a catchall, you know, which, by implication, incorporates
10 everything, but -- and the prosecutor's argument, that,
11 "I'm not sure if it fits in there," signifies that there
12 -- not that the evidence -- that such evidence could not
13 be considered as mitigating as a -- in a general matter,
14 but that -- just that the religious evidence in this case
15 was extremely weak, to the point of having, as a practical
16 purpose, no mitigating value. The prosecutor followed
17 that comment. I'm not sure it fits in there, in next
18 breath, with, "It's" -- something to the effect of, "It's
19 no secret that Belmontes' religious evidence is pretty
20 shaky here," and went on to conclude that. But then, in
21 the next breath, he said, "But, nonetheless, this is
22 something that's proper for you to consider."

23 And, again, reasonable jurors, hearing this --
24 having been given the instruction here -- would reasonably
25 interpret this -- all of this evidence as something they

1 could use to extenuate the gravity of the crime. And
2 particularly in this context, because, like in Boyde, in
3 addition to this factor (k), the standard instruction
4 directed the jurors to consider all the evidence. The
5 first factor of the enumerated factors -- (a) through (g),
6 in this case -- told the jurors that they should -- that
7 they should focus on -- that the first thing to consider
8 was the -- or the circumstances of the crime itself.

9 The final factor, therefore, that any other
10 circumstance that extenuates the gravity of the crime
11 would clearly be understood to relate to matters outside
12 the crime itself. And, to the extent that there was any
13 ambiguity about the meaning of that in this particular
14 case, the argument by counsel, the additional instruction
15 here, clarified that to the point that there is certainly
16 no reasonable likelihood that the jurors felt that they
17 were constrained in considering any mitigating evidence in
18 any way they thought fit.

19 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Mr. Johnson, when I asked you
20 about the derivation of factor (k), you gave me a
21 California statutory cite, but is there -- does it come
22 from any model code? Does any other State have such a
23 provision? How widespread is it?

24 MR. JOHNSON: Of the -- the actual wording of
25 this instruction?

1 JUSTICE GINSBURG: How many States have an
2 instruction that talks about extenuating the circumstances
3 of the crime?

4 MR. JOHNSON: I'm not sure, Your Honor. I'm not
5 sure. I know that this -- that this instruction itself
6 came from the statute, which, in turn, was adopted from
7 the California Briggs initiative in the 1978 statute. I'm
8 not aware of any -- of any other States -- there may or
9 may not be -- who have adopted the same statutory model
10 that California has.

11 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Which -- California hasn't
12 had it since 1983, right?

13 MR. JOHNSON: Pardon me, Your Honor?

14 JUSTICE GINSBURG: California hasn't used this
15 instruction since 1983.

16 MR. JOHNSON: That's correct, Your Honor. After
17 *People v. Easley*, the California Supreme Court augmented
18 the instruction.

19 JUSTICE GINSBURG: So, is this a one-of-a-kind
20 case? I mean, you said, in your brief, that the Ninth
21 Circuit decision threatens many other valid California
22 death judgments. But these would all have to be rather
23 ancient cases.

24 MR. JOHNSON: Yes. And, unfortunately, there's
25 -- there are several of them that are still being

1 litigated. I've done research on this issue, and, as of
2 this date, I can't give you an actual -- an absolute
3 number, but I believe there is approximately 15 cases
4 pending, like this one, that involve the factor (k)
5 instruction -- this factor (k) instruction -- that involve
6 evidence of -- somehow, future-looking evidence, which --
7 all character evidence, frankly, is future-looking --

8 JUSTICE GINSBURG: And --

9 MR. JOHNSON: -- whereas --

10 JUSTICE GINSBURG: -- that wouldn't wash out, on
11 the other grounds?

12 MR. JOHNSON: Right, that -- and -- that are
13 still pending, and that are -- unlike Payton, are not
14 governed by the AEDPA.

15 JUSTICE SCALIA: But you're saying those
16 convictions are more than -- more than 23 years old?

17 MR. JOHNSON: Yes, Your Honor. Unfortunately,
18 there's -- they're -- I believe all of them are being
19 litigated now in the Federal court system in California.

20 If you have no further questions, I guess I'll
21 reserve the rest of my time.

22 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, Counsel.

23 Mr. Multhaup.

24 ORAL ARGUMENT OF ERIC S. MULTHAUP

25 ON BEHALF OF RESPONDENT

1 MR. MULTHAUP: Mr. Chief Justice, and may it
2 please the Court:

3 Here is Respondent's 60-second nutshell summary
4 of our core position. This case does not turn on the
5 constitutional factor (k) standing alone. Rather, it
6 turns on a straightforward application of the Boyde test,
7 to the unusual, unique circumstances that occurred during
8 the arguments, instructions to deliberations at the
9 penalty trial of this case.

10 Here are the two key components of our claim.
11 During arguments to the jury, both counsel conveyed to the
12 jury that Belmontes' evidence of Youth Authority religious
13 experience was not covered by factor (k). However, both
14 counsel suggested to the jury that it should be considered
15 anyway. Now, this is unusual, because, of all -- of all
16 the things that the district attorney and the defense
17 counsel disagreed on, this was one that they did agree on,
18 and it's likely that the jury would have taken note of
19 that.

20 The case then proceeded to instructions and
21 deliberations. The jury came back to court, announced
22 that they were deeply divided, perhaps with a majority
23 favoring life. The turning point occurred when one juror,
24 Juror Hern, requested judicial confirmation that the
25 specific list of factors previously given was the only

1 base -- was the only framework within which the penalty
2 decision could be made. At that point, the trial court
3 had a constitutional obligation to disabuse Juror Hern and
4 the rest of the assembled jurors of that misapprehension
5 and, at the very least, to reinstruct the jurors that the
6 enumerated factors were merely illustrative and not
7 exhaustive, and instruct the jurors that the jury had to
8 consider all of the mitigating evidence.

9 The trial court did neither, with the result
10 that the jury all too likely returned to its deliberations
11 with the belief that the only factors -- the only matters
12 they considered -- could consider were those encompassed
13 within the enumerated factors, and believing -- based on
14 counsel's prior arguments -- that factor (k) did not
15 include the Youth Authority religious-experience evidence.

16 JUSTICE ALITO: When did the defense counsel say
17 that this evidence did not fit within factor (k)?

18 MR. MULTHAUP: Your Honor, it occurred in
19 argument. And my counsel -- esteemed co-counsel will give
20 me the exact page -- but it occurred in the context -- the
21 context -- during the prosecutor's argument, the
22 prosecutor said to the jury that, "I suspect" -- and then
23 he, for emphasis, said, "I can't imagine that you won't be
24 told that the religious-conversion evidence doesn't fit
25 within factor (k)." And, at that point, he expressed

1 reservations, doubts, as to whether it did fit in factor
2 (k) or --

3 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Why does that --

4 MR. MULTHAUP: -- any other factor.

5 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Why does that matter?

6 Because the jury was told that the factors were merely
7 examples of the mitigating evidence they could consider.

8 MR. MULTHAUP: I'm more than --

9 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: It probably didn't fit
10 into factor (h), either, but it doesn't matter.

11 MR. MULTHAUP: Well, it has -- if it -- oh, Your
12 Honor, the -- calling your -- or you've called my
13 attention to the instruction that said that the set -- in
14 the prior set of -- or in the general set of instructions,
15 that the enumerated factors were merely illustrative.
16 Now, that instruction had a cloud of confusion surrounding
17 it, because the way it was phrased was, the Court said,
18 "The mitigating factors that I have expressed to you are
19 illustrative." There was no list of mitigating factors.
20 There was only a single list, unitary list, of factors
21 that could be either aggravating or mitigating, depending
22 on a jury's decision.

23 The instruction that you're referring to, Your
24 Honor, was a -- was the result of the trial court denying
25 some, and granting some, parts of the special instructions

1 requested by the defense. And so, when the trial court
2 said to the jury, "The list of mitigating factors is
3 illustrative only," I -- we, who know the background of
4 this, understand what -- the point he was trying to make,
5 but the jury, hearing it, they would think, very
6 reasonably, "There's no list of mitigating factors."

7 JUSTICE ALITO: You said this case is different
8 because both counsel told the jury that the evidence that
9 you're relying on did not fit within factor (k). And I'm
10 not sure what you're referring to.

11 MR. MULTHAUP: Okay.

12 JUSTICE ALITO: Now, as to defense counsel, are
13 you referring to what you quoted on page 9 of your brief,
14 where he says, "I'm not going to insult you" -- what you
15 highlighted on page 9 -- "I'm not going to insult you by
16 telling you I think it excuses, in any way, what happened
17 here"? That's what you -- is that what you're referring
18 to?

19 MR. MULTHAUP: That's one of the passages that I
20 am referring to, and it came as a direct response to the
21 District Attorney, in effect, calling out the defense
22 attorney, "I can't imagine that you won't be told that
23 this fits within factor (k)." So, at that point, the
24 defense counsel had to make a decision, "Okay, either I
25 have to argue that my Skipper evidence is -- my square peg

1 of Skipper evidence has to fit in the round hole of" --

2 JUSTICE ALITO: Isn't he --

3 MR. MULTHAUP: -- "factor (k)" --

4 JUSTICE ALITO: -- saying something very
5 different there? He isn't -- he's not saying, "This
6 doesn't fit within factor (k)." And he makes no reference
7 to factor (k). He says nothing about "extenuating." He
8 says "excuses." Isn't that something very different,
9 "excusing" the crime?

10 MR. MULTHAUP: Your Honor, this Court has used
11 the terms "extenuate" and "excuse" as synonyms in Boyde
12 and --

13 JUSTICE ALITO: If you had been --

14 MR. MULTHAUP: -- in Payton with --

15 JUSTICE ALITO: -- if you were arguing this to
16 the jury, would you have said, "You know, my client earned
17 a position of responsibility on the fire crew that
18 patrolled the Sierra Foothills, and, therefore, that
19 excuses the crime that you've found that he committed
20 here"?

21 MR. MULTHAUP: No. No. The --

22 JUSTICE BREYER: I don't see, anywhere in Mr.
23 Schick's statement, at least from 165 to 170, where he
24 says what you said he said. Now, maybe he says it some
25 other place, but -- I'd like the reference to it -- but I

1 -- what I have him as saying is that -- he says, for
2 example, several times, "The presence -- I don't suggest
3 that the -- that the presence of religion, in itself, is
4 totally mitigating." Well, it certainly wasn't, in this
5 instance. I gather I'm right. Am I right in thinking
6 that all this religious conversion took place before he
7 murdered the girl? So, this is not a case of your trying
8 to get some evidence that took place after the crime.

9 MR. MULTHAUP: That's right. And --

10 JUSTICE BREYER: All right. If --

11 MR. MULTHAUP: -- then --

12 JUSTICE BREYER: -- that's right, then maybe it
13 does more easily fit within factor (k). The prosecutor
14 told the jury they should consider it, or they could. The
15 judge told the jury they could consider it -- it sounded
16 as -- says, "You take it -- this is an example" -- he
17 says, "It's an example in factor (k)." Maybe he's wrong,
18 but they certainly likely think they can consider it. And
19 Mr. Schick doesn't say it's not in factor (k). At least,
20 I don't see it. That's why I'm asking.

21 MR. MULTHAUP: Your Honor, the whole point of
22 factor (k) is that -- evidence that's an excuse for the
23 crime. And if we're --

24 JUSTICE BREYER: No, no, I know the point of
25 factor (k). I'm trying to be absolutely certain, before

1 thinking --

2 MR. MULTHAUP: Right.

3 JUSTICE BREYER: -- he didn't say it, that I've
4 made every effort to get from you the place where -- that
5 this -- where the defense counsel says, "Jury, I agree,
6 you cannot put this into factor (k)."

7 MR. MULTHAUP: Okay. And, Your Honor, looking
8 at it in context, given the district attorney's argument,
9 the district attorney says, "I can't imagine you won't be
10 told that it doesn't -- that it -- that it doesn't fit
11 within factor (k)." So, the defense attorney gets up and
12 says, "I'm -- I am going to tell you that it doesn't
13 within -- fit within factor (k). It doesn't" --

14 JUSTICE KENNEDY: And that page --

15 MR. MULTHAUP: -- "constitute" --

16 JUSTICE KENNEDY: -- where he says that is
17 where?

18 MR. MULTHAUP: When he -- when he says, Your
19 Honor, "It doesn't constitute an excuse in any way."

20 JUSTICE BREYER: Were his words "it doesn't
21 constitute an excuse"?

22 MR. MULTHAUP: "It doesn't excuse, in any way,"
23 Your Honor. And we -- as a matter --

24 JUSTICE KENNEDY: But in --

25 MR. MULTHAUP: -- of semantics --

1 JUSTICE KENNEDY: -- but, in a sense, that's
2 right, just like remorse. Remorse doesn't excuse the
3 crime. It's a consideration that you take into account in
4 assessing the gravity of the crime for purposes of
5 punishment.

6 MR. MULTHAUP: Okay. Your Honor, this is a
7 point of, perhaps, semantics. But the -- by the time you
8 get to penalty phase, there's nothing to excuse the crime,
9 in the sense of self-defense or "not guilty by reason of
10 insanity." The only thing --

11 JUSTICE BREYER: -- "in any way."

12 MR. MULTHAUP: It does say "in any way."

13 JUSTICE BREYER: Where?

14 JUSTICE SCALIA: It's on page 9 of your -- of
15 your brief. The --

16 MR. MULTHAUP: Thank you.

17 JUSTICE BREYER: Thank you.

18 JUSTICE SCALIA: -- italicized portion.

19 JUSTICE STEVENS: It's on 166 of the joint
20 appendix.

21 MR. MULTHAUP: Thank you.

22 And if the -- if trial counsel was trying to
23 make the point that, "Well, it doesn't constitute a legal
24 excuse, but it does constitute a partial excuse or some
25 kind of mitigating evidence under this factor," he would

1 have put that in there. The clear import, from the
2 context here, is that defense counsel was not trying to
3 sell the jury a position that was, on its face, untenable,
4 but, rather, to acknowledge that it did not fit within the
5 "excuse the gravity of the crime" factor, which --

6 JUSTICE SCALIA: Only if you think that excusing
7 the crime and extenuating its gravity are one and the same
8 thing, which I don't really think.

9 MR. MULTHAUP: Well, Your Honor, there's two --
10 I'd like to make two responses to that. First of all,
11 this Court has used those terms interchangeably, in Boyde
12 and Payton, with respect to mitigating evidence. Second
13 of all, let's -- as a -- as a practical matter, we have a
14 defense attorney arguing a case to a jury in a Central
15 Valley California county. And if the defense attorney has
16 a choice between two synonyms, one which is used in common
17 parlance, "excuse," and one which is not used in common
18 parlance, "extenuate," it hardly constitutes an -- a
19 defect or concession on his part if he were to say, "This
20 does not excuse the crime in any way." That's plain
21 speaking to a jury, that -- and what he -- what he --
22 counsel --

23 JUSTICE GINSBURG: But wouldn't a jury think all
24 this evidence must have some purpose? The only purpose it
25 could have is to -- is to propel us toward life rather

1 than death. I mean, the bulk of the evidence at the
2 sentencing phase -- wasn't it? -- was how he behaved when
3 he was a prisoner before.

4 MR. MULTHAUP: Your Honor, not -- that's not
5 exactly what happened at penalty phase here. This is not
6 a case like Boyde, where all the evidence was background
7 and character evidence, and it's not a case like Payton,
8 where the only evidence was a post-crime conversion. This
9 case involved a mixture of evidence, where first there was
10 the grandfather who testified to what a bad upbringing he
11 had, traditional background and character evidence. The
12 mother testified to her undying love for her son,
13 traditional evidence. Friends testified to his good
14 characteristics. And then, at the end, there was a clear
15 segment that related to his good performance in Youth
16 Authority and his religious conversion. So, it was only a
17 -- it was a partial part of -- partial part of the
18 penalty-phase presentation, but it certainly wasn't the
19 entire presentation, as it was in Boyde and --

20 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Even so, there was --

21 MR. MULTHAUP: -- Payton.

22 JUSTICE GINSBURG: -- there was extensive
23 testimony about his prospects for doing good in a prison
24 setting.

25 MR. MULTHAUP: Well, certainly, Your Honor.

1 JUSTICE GINSBURG: And the jury must have
2 thought there's some reason why the judge allowed that
3 evidence in. And what reason could it be, other than to
4 show that, if he is given life, he will be a good
5 prisoner?

6 MR. MULTHAUP: Your Honor, that's a very
7 logical, sensible thing for the jury to have thought. And
8 now I'd like to drop the second shoe of the key components
9 of our claim. The first shoe was the arguments of counsel
10 that we've discussed the various permutations on. The
11 most likely -- so, the jury began deliberating based on
12 the instructions and the arguments that they had -- that
13 they had had. And it's entirely likely that when the jury
14 was favoring a life verdict during the first part of their
15 deliberations, Belmontes' prospects for good behavior in
16 prison and contributions were part of the debate.

17 When Juror Hern asked for judicial clarification
18 -- not clarification, confirmation -- of a very specific
19 view that only the enumerated factors could be considered
20 in the penalty-phase deliberations, the jury -- and the
21 trial court assented without qualification to that -- at
22 that point, the jury would have very likely thought, "The
23 trial court who holds a position of great deference to us,
24 much more than most other authority figures we have in our
25 life, just told us what the marching orders are here.

1 This is the framework for decision."

2 Now, what happened during the -- during the
3 trial is the defense -- and I'm suggesting what the jury
4 might have thought, in relation to your question -- that,
5 "The defense attorney was taking his best shot for his
6 client, pushing the envelope, maybe went over the top a
7 little bit. But defense attorneys do that. The
8 prosecutor was being a very decent stand-up kind of
9 person, and -- but, right now, when we get down to the
10 business of making the decision, we have to follow the
11 rules. And the rules are what the -- are what the -- are
12 what Judge Gisson just confirmed to us, that we are
13 limited to the enumerated factors, and factor (k) does not
14 include the Skipper evidence, because that was explained
15 to us by counsel."

16 I would like to --

17 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Before you move on,
18 Counsel --

19 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, of course you --

20 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: -- don't you --

21 JUSTICE KENNEDY: -- don't you -- excuse me.
22 Excuse me.

23 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: -- don't you have to
24 address the Teague question a little bit? You -- you're
25 entitled to this new rule adopted by the Court of Appeals

1 only if it was dictated by precedent at the time the
2 judgment became final. Isn't that kind of a hard argument
3 to make in light of our subsequent decision in *Brown v.*
4 *Payton*?

5 MR. MULTHAUP: Your Honor, I don't see -- as to
6 the first part of Your Honor's question, I don't believe
7 that there is any new rule whatsoever in the Ninth Circuit
8 opinion. It's a straightforward application of *Boyde* to
9 the totality of circumstances that occurred.

10 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Of *Boyde*? It's
11 straightforward application of *Boyde*?

12 MR. MULTHAUP: Yes. The Ninth Circuit began
13 with *Boyde*, and it went through all of the proceedings at
14 trial, and concluded that there was a reasonable
15 likelihood that the jury didn't consider *Skipper* evidence.
16 And that's what we're asking this Court to do, the exact
17 same -- applying the *Boyde* test to the rule -- the rule of
18 decision that was clearly established by this Court as of
19 1986, and reiterated and expanded by this Court in 1987,
20 with *Skipper*.

21 JUSTICE SCALIA: Yes, but what has to be clear
22 under *Teague* is not just the rule, but the rule's
23 application in circumstances like this. There are a lot
24 of rules that are clear, but if *Teague* means anything at
25 all it has to mean that you should have known that, in

1 this case, the rule would produce this result. So it's
2 not enough to say that there was a rule. There are a lot
3 of rules out there, but the question is whether the
4 outcome should have been clear at the time. Isn't that
5 what Teague means?

6 MR. MULTHAUP: Certainly, Your Honor. And
7 applying -- because when we -- when we take a look at
8 Penry I, this Court said -- in response to a Teague
9 argument by the attorney general, this Court held that
10 Penry got past the threshold Teague issue because of -- at
11 the time of the finality of his direct appeal, in 1986,
12 the rule was well-established that the sentencer may not
13 be precluded from considering relevant evidence in
14 mitigation, by Lockett, Eddings, and others. So if that
15 was a firmly established rule as of 1986 --

16 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, Penry was
17 considerably tightened by the subsequent decision in
18 Graham versus Collins, though.

19 MR. MULTHAUP: Graham v. Collins was an AEDPA
20 case, as was Payton. So, we have a very, very different
21 standard of review. And, if I may, Your Honor --

22 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: No, I know Payton was an
23 AEDPA case, but it, nonetheless, concluded that it was not
24 unreasonable for the California Supreme Court to read
25 instruction (k) in a way that allowed this evidence to be

1 considered. And I would have thought, if it was not
2 unreasonable to have that reading, that the contrary
3 reading that you're proposing, and that the Ninth Circuit
4 adopted below, could hardly be said to have been dictated
5 by existing precedent.

6 MR. MULTHAUP: Ah. Well, the -- our position in
7 relation to that is, the direct quote from -- direct quote
8 from Payton itself, in which the Court said that, assuming
9 the California Supreme Court was incorrect, Payton,
10 nonetheless, loses. Here we're arguing that the
11 California Supreme Court was incorrect, and, therefore,
12 Belmontes --

13 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Because if it was --

14 MR. MULTHAUP: -- should win.

15 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: -- because, even if
16 incorrect, it was, nonetheless, reasonable. And I'm just
17 having trouble understanding how, if a contrary position
18 is dictated by precedent under Teague, a reading 180
19 degrees the opposite of that could be regarded by this
20 Court as reasonable.

21 MR. MULTHAUP: The unusual facts of this case
22 are much stronger in favor of relief under the Boyde test
23 than were those in Payton. Therefore, applying the
24 longstanding rule of Lockett and Eddings to the different,
25 and more compelling, facts of this case, there is no

1 reason -- there is every reason to provide Belmontes
2 relief, where it was denied to Payton. And there's no
3 reason to believe that the California Supreme Court was
4 being incorrect, but reasonable, in -- to presume, or
5 find, based on Payton, that the California Supreme Court
6 was being incorrect, but reasonable, in this case.

7 Penry could not have won his case under the --
8 under the -- that particular analysis, because the Texas
9 --

10 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, I --

11 MR. MULTHAUP: -- Supreme Court --

12 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Graham didn't win his
13 case.

14 MR. MULTHAUP: And Payton didn't win either, but
15 we're operating under the prior regime. So -- I
16 understand the -- the Court is suggesting, I believe, that
17 somehow Payton is a sword, in some sense, to deny relief
18 as to all California defendants under penalty-phase
19 instructional claims cited by the California Supreme
20 Court, even under different facts and under more egregious
21 circumstances. And I -- I may have -- be misinterpreting
22 the Court's argument, but I would argue that there are any
23 number of scenarios, notwithstanding Payton, that would
24 require relief under the pre-AEDPA standards when you
25 apply the test of Boyde to all the circumstances of the

1 case.

2 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Mr. Multhaup, one aspect of
3 your argument I wish you would clarify, and that's in your
4 brief at page 20, footnote 3. As I understand it, you are
5 saying -- you are not challenging factor -- the factor (k)
6 instruction as excluding Skipper evidence. Your challenge
7 is limited to this particular case. Is that what you're
8 saying in that footnote?

9 MR. MULTHAUP: Yes, Your Honor. I'm not here to
10 refight the battle of Boyde. You know, I spilled tons of
11 hours of time and printer's ink in an amicus brief in
12 1989, and I understand the concept of "you lose." What we
13 are arguing is that the Boyde test should be applied to
14 the circumstances of this case, and that factor (k),
15 standing alone, in a -- in a case where defendant relies
16 on Skipper evidence, does not warrant relief by that fact
17 alone. Here we have much more than that fact which, under
18 Boyde, does call for relief.

19 I would like to give --

20 JUSTICE GINSBURG: And the --

21 MR. MULTHAUP: -- Respondent's --

22 JUSTICE GINSBURG: -- the "much more" is the
23 questions that the jury asked?

24 MR. MULTHAUP: The "much more" includes the
25 arguments by counsel, which, notwithstanding different --

1 reasonably differing views of it, does put a context on
2 the -- put into context what defense counsel was arguing.
3 We have the confusion inherent in the instruction that the
4 Court gave the -- the putatively proper instruction about
5 them being illustrative rather than exhaustive. We have
6 the colloquy during the penalty deliberations. We have
7 Juror Hailstone's follow-up question regarding the
8 possibility of considering the availability of psychiatric
9 treatment, which was explicitly rejected, and very likely
10 confirming the message that had just been given to -- via
11 the answer to Juror Hern's case, that only the enumerated
12 factors can be considered.

13 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, there is no
14 evidence on that question presented, right? The reason
15 that the possibility of psychiatric treatment couldn't be
16 considered is because neither party had put evidence on
17 that question before the jury.

18 MR. MULTHAUP: Well, Your Honor, you know that,
19 because you're the Chief Justice, but the people of San
20 Joaquin County had no idea that that was the reason, and
21 if not explained --

22 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: No, no. It's a question
23 of what mitigating evidence was put before the jury. The
24 jurors couldn't consider that, because it was the -- quite
25 proper for the trial judge to say, "You can't consider

1 that, because there was no evidence on it."

2 MR. MULTHAUP: It would have been perfectly
3 proper for the trial court to say, "You can't consider
4 that, because" -- appended exactly the -- the explanation
5 that you gave. And the jurors would have understood that
6 they had to consider the evidence presented, but they
7 couldn't speculate about other things. If, at the crucial
8 point in the proceedings, the trial court had said, "Juror
9 Hern, you do have to pay attention to those factors, but
10 they're illustrative rather than exhaustive, and you must
11 consider all of Belmontes' evidence. Please go back and
12 deliberate," that would have cured the errors here.

13 However, the error occurred when the -- when the
14 court didn't do that. And Juror Hailstone's question --
15 the trial court's answer could only have reaffirmed the
16 misimpression that the court returned to the -- to
17 deliberate with.

18 I have a -- just a few minutes, and I would like
19 to give Respondent's answer to Justice Kennedy's question
20 to Petitioner, paraphrasing somewhat, How does Skipper
21 evidence extenuate the gravity of the crime? And the
22 answer is, it doesn't at all, logically, ethically, or
23 morally. As defense counsel conveyed to the jury, the
24 circumstances of the crime are what they are, and there's
25 nothing that can be done about that. The circumstances of

1 the crime are immutable and irreparable. The only thing
2 that can be extenuated in a penalty presentation is
3 Petitioner's culpability for the crime. And counsel
4 argued that Petitioner's culpability was some -- to some
5 extent, extenuated and mitigated because the evidence
6 showed that there was no plan to kill the decedent when
7 they went to her house.

8 JUSTICE KENNEDY: But we have said that remorse
9 extenuates the gravity of the crime, for punishment
10 purposes, under factor (k).

11 MR. MULTHAUP: Well, of --

12 JUSTICE KENNEDY: And that --

13 MR. MULTHAUP: -- course --

14 JUSTICE KENNEDY: And that -- and that -- that's
15 post -- that's post-crime.

16 MR. MULTHAUP: And, Your Honor, this pre- and
17 post- distinction, I don't believe has -- is a relevant
18 distinction. It's whether it's functionally related to
19 the culpability for the crime, because when a defendant
20 expresses remorse --

21 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Oh, you think pre- and crime --
22 pre- and post- distinction has no bearing on this case?
23 I thought that was really the linchpin of your argument?

24 MR. MULTHAUP: No, Your Honor. It's that
25 Skipper evidence is a specific and different kind of

1 mitigating character evidence that doesn't extenuate the
2 gravity of the crime, but it provides a different kind of
3 reason for sparing the defendant's life. There is --

4 JUSTICE GINSBURG: And yours is both pre- and
5 post- -- that is, you're referring to conduct that took
6 place before this crime was committed -- that is, his
7 prior incarceration -- and asking the jury to project that
8 forward to say, "That's how he behaved in prison, before
9 he committed this most recent crime, and that's how he's
10 likely to behave again."

11 MR. MULTHAUP: Well, all of the Skipper evidence
12 in this case occurred as a matter of historical fact
13 before the capital crime and -- which, in fact, gives it's
14 much -- gives it much more weight, because it can't be
15 suggested that he contrived his good conduct after being
16 arrested for a capital crime.

17 But, I'm going to make a broad statement here.
18 There is no reported case in California where either a
19 defense attorney or the California Supreme Court makes a
20 text-based argument that Skipper evidence extenuates the
21 gravity of the crime, because it's illogical and doesn't
22 work. Look what the defense attorney did in Payton. He
23 argued that, "Well, of course you have to consider that
24 evidence under factor (k), because it's a catchall. It's
25 supposed to be inclusive." That's not a text-based

1 argument, that's a circumstantial-evidence kind of -- kind
2 of argument.

3 When we look at that -- when we look at that
4 phrasing of "extenuating the gravity of the crime," with
5 its plain meaning in English, and the distinction made, in
6 Skipper itself, that Skipper evidence does not relate to
7 Petitioner's culpability for the crime, the jury is going
8 to appreciate what the -- what the attorney said to them,
9 that the -- that the Youth Authority religious evidence
10 does not extenuate the gravity of the crime, but has
11 independent mitigating effect outside those enumerated
12 factors. There's nothing -- that's a perfectly
13 appropriate position to take, no constitutional problem
14 there until, during deliberations, the trial court
15 confirmed that they could only consider the enumerated
16 factors and could not consider nonstatutory mitigation,
17 the -- any other kind of mitigation, because that, in
18 effect, closed out consideration of the -- of the Skipper
19 evidence.

20 JUSTICE SCALIA: If the judge's response to
21 Juror Hern was so misleading, why didn't counsel object to
22 it, if it was as obviously misleading as you say?

23 MR. MULTHAUP: Your Honor, it's like being --
24 stepping off a curb and being hit by a bicycle that you
25 didn't see coming. This occurs in the middle of jury

1 deliberations. Nobody expected a juror to ask a question
2 of this type. And, of course, I'm speculating here, but
3 the trial court fielded the questions, responded off-the-
4 cuff, and the juror -- jury went back.

5 JUSTICE SCALIA: That's why you have counsel
6 there, to help the court when the court makes a real
7 boo-boo, and if this was as obviously error as you say,
8 one would have expected some objection from defense
9 counsel.

10 MR. MULTHAUP: One could also have expected the
11 trial court to say, "Let's take a minute to think about
12 that. We're going into recess, and I'd like counsel's
13 opinion about this, because this is a difficult question.
14 It's not a simple yes-or-no answer." Under --

15 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.

16 Mr. Johnson, you have 6 minutes remaining.

17 REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF MARK A. JOHNSON

18 ON BEHALF OF PETITIONER

19 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Your Honor.

20 In a minute, I'd like to briefly touch on the
21 Teague issue. At the time Belmontes' judgment was
22 pending, there was no precedent that would have dictated
23 the Ninth Circuit's conclusion here regarding the
24 sufficiency of the factor (k) instruction. And, indeed,
25 this Court's subsequent holdings, in Boyde and Payton,

1 bear out the fact that it was at least -- that that
2 decision certainly was not dictated by precedent.

3 In Boyde, this Court dealt with evidence of good
4 character that was precisely the same as the evidence of
5 good character here. The -- Belmontes' evidence of having
6 succeeded during a prior commitment and religious
7 conversion, that he might be able to help others in the
8 future, was good-character evidence in the same way that
9 Boyde's evidence of having won a dancing prize, of having
10 helped children, of having helped artistic -- having
11 artistic abilities, was all good character. And there is
12 certainly nothing in Boyde to suggest that there is any
13 distinction. But, even if there was, it would not be one
14 that would compel all rational jurists to distinguish the
15 two cases.

16 And that's further buttressed, of course, by
17 this Court's more recent opinion in Payton, which found
18 that it was at least reasonable for the State Court to
19 conclude that Payton's post-crime forward-looking evidence
20 would be understood to fall within the factor (k)
21 instruction if it was at least reasonable for California
22 to find that such forward -- post-crime forward-looking
23 evidence would fit within the factor (k). The Ninth
24 Circuit's conclusion, to the contrary, regarding pre-crime
25 good-character evidence, certainly was not dictated by

1 precedent.

2 I'd also like to address, quickly in my
3 remaining time, Mr. Multhaup's arguments regarding the
4 jury -- or the argument of counsel and the jury questions.

5 Again, Boyde counsels that the relevant
6 consideration is whether there is any reasonable
7 likelihood that the jurors view the instructions in a way
8 as to foreclose consideration of constitutionally relevant
9 evidence. In this case, both -- the jurors were
10 instructed with the factor (k). As I've said, they were
11 given the supplemental instruction that said that the --
12 that the previous listing -- factors were only examples of
13 some. And then, both counsel clearly said that the jurors
14 could, and should, consider this evidence.

15 Is there some possibility out there that some
16 juror might have misinterpreted this in a -- in a -- in a
17 different manner? I suppose so, but there is certainly no
18 reasonable likelihood, especially in light of the fact
19 that Belmontes' evidence, virtually all of it, was
20 directed at this main thrust of the argument. And, just
21 like in Payton and Boyde, for the jurors to have believed
22 that they could nonetheless not consider that evidence
23 would have turned the whole proceedings in a virtual
24 charade or a pointless exercise.

25 So far as the questions during juror

1 deliberations, it's, first, important to recognize, none
2 of these jurors said anything to suggest that they were
3 actually confused about whether they could consider any
4 evidence offered. Their question -- Juror Hern's question
5 merely related to her -- she wanted to confirm her
6 understanding about the role of balancing mitigating
7 versus aggravating factors under California law. And
8 certainly the parties there if -- would have been in a
9 better position to realize it if these questions somehow
10 suggested some ambiguity. There was no objection there.
11 Moreover, in the same conference, the judge advised the
12 jurors to review the instructions again, which, of course,
13 again included the factor (k), and which, of course,
14 included the supplemental instruction that said that their
15 consideration of mitigating factors was not limited to
16 those that had been listed, but those that had been listed
17 were merely examples.

18 If the Court has no further questions, I will
19 submit the case.

20 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, Counsel.

21 The case is submitted.

22 [Whereupon, at 12:03 p.m., the case in the
23 above-entitled matter was submitted.]

24

25

A	allegedly 3:19	39:22	22:17	Belmontes 1:7
aberration 5:16	allow 4:6 16:9	argued 19:4,13	authority 24:12	3:4 4:13 9:13
abilities 47:11	16:13	43:4 44:23	25:15 33:16	11:1 18:4 19:5
able 47:7	allowed 4:8 9:12	arguing 28:15	34:24 45:9	19:14,18 20:19
above-entitled	34:2 37:25	32:14 38:10	availability 41:8	24:12 34:15
1:12 49:23	ambiguity 21:13	40:13 41:2	avenue 9:16	38:12 39:1
absolute 23:2	49:10	argument 1:13	aware 7:2,10	42:11 46:21
absolutely 18:14	amend 15:12	2:2,5,8 3:3,6	22:8	47:5 48:19
29:25	amended 15:3	5:1 8:2,4,5	Ayers 1:3 3:4	best 35:5
account 5:24	Amendment	11:13 13:6,18	a.m 1:14 3:2	better 49:9
8:18 12:15	3:18	14:7 17:19		beyond 19:20
31:3	amicus 40:11	18:2,6 19:12	B	bicycle 45:24
achievement 5:9	analysis 39:8	20:10 21:14	back 11:7 13:20	bit 14:17 35:7
acknowledge	ancient 22:23	23:24 25:19,21	16:10 24:21	35:24
32:4	announced	30:8 36:2 37:9	42:11 46:4	boo-boo 46:7
acknowledged	24:21	39:22 40:3	background 4:9	Boyde 4:2,4,9,12
4:12 19:11	answer 11:14	43:23 44:20	4:16,17 6:6	4:17 5:3,8,12
ACTING 1:4	12:17 16:18,22	45:1,2 46:17	14:21 16:13	5:17,21 18:4,9
actual 3:21	17:11 41:11	48:4,20	27:3 33:6,11	18:21 21:2
21:24 23:2	42:15,19,22	arguments 24:8	backward-loo...	24:6 28:11
added 9:7	46:14	24:11 25:14	5:25 6:9	32:11 33:6,19
addition 9:19	answered 9:18	34:9,12 40:25	bad 33:10	36:8,10,11,13
21:3	16:17 20:3	48:3	balancing 49:6	36:17 38:22
additional 11:25	anybody 14:13	arrested 44:16	base 25:1	39:25 40:10,13
21:14	anyway 14:5	artistic 47:10,11	based 16:8	40:18 46:25
address 12:22	24:15	asked 11:21	25:13 34:11	47:3,12 48:5
35:24 48:2	apologize 11:16	12:12,16 21:19	39:5	48:21
addressed 4:4	appeal 37:11	34:17 40:23	battle 40:10	Boyde's 5:1 6:19
4:25	Appeals 3:17	asking 4:22	bear 47:1	10:7 47:9
addressing 6:13	35:25	29:20 36:16	bearing 19:18	breath 20:18,21
admissible 5:2	appear 9:24,25	44:7	43:22	BREYER 28:22
adopted 22:6,9	APPEARAN...	aspect 40:2	began 34:11	29:10,12,24
35:25 38:4	1:15	assembled 25:4	36:12	30:3,20 31:11
advised 49:11	appended 42:4	assented 34:21	behalf 1:17,18	31:13,17
AEDPA 23:14	appendix 31:20	assessing 31:4	2:4,7,10 3:7	brief 22:20
37:19,23	application 24:6	assuming 38:8	23:25 46:18	27:13 31:15
aggravating	36:8,11,23	attention 9:3	behave 44:10	40:4,11
12:2,5 13:3	applied 40:13	26:13 42:9	behaved 33:2	briefly 46:20
26:21 49:7	apply 39:25	attorney 1:16	44:8	Briggs 22:7
aggravation	applying 36:17	24:16 27:21,22	behavior 34:15	broad 44:17
13:8	37:7 38:23	30:9,11 32:14	belief 25:11	Brown 4:3 10:23
agree 24:17 30:5	appreciate 45:8	32:15 35:5	believe 3:19	36:3
Ah 38:6	appropriate	37:9 44:19,22	10:6 23:3,18	bulk 33:1
albeit 16:11	45:13	45:8	36:6 39:3,16	business 35:10
ALITO 25:16	approximately	attorneys 35:7	43:17	buttressed
27:7,12 28:2,4	23:3	attorney's 30:8	believed 48:21	47:16
28:13,15	argue 27:25	augmented	believing 25:13	

C	22:23 23:3	47:24	32:17	41:24,25 42:3
C 2:1 3:1	47:15	circumstance	commonsense	42:6,11 44:23
California 1:17	catchall 3:11	3:14 17:24	18:23	45:15,16 48:14
1:18 3:13 4:2,3	19:25 20:1,9	21:10	compel 47:14	48:22 49:3
7:2,3,11 9:17	44:24	circumstances	compelling	considerably
15:1,6,19 16:3	Central 32:14	6:24 8:22 9:2,5	38:25	37:17
16:4,5,7,11	certain 29:25	21:8 22:2 24:7	components	consideration
21:21 22:7,10	certainly 11:23	36:9,23 39:21	24:10 34:8	5:19 10:2,5,7
22:11,14,17,21	15:15 21:15	39:25 40:14	concept 40:12	10:11,15 16:9
23:19 32:15	29:4,18 33:18	42:24,25	concern 7:7	16:13 19:13
37:24 38:9,11	33:25 37:6	circumstantia...	12:22 13:13	31:3 45:18
39:3,5,18,19	47:2,12,25	45:1	15:16	48:6,8 49:15
44:18,19 47:21	48:17 49:8	cite 21:21	concerns 3:10	considered 9:21
49:7	challenge 4:5	cited 39:19	14:14	20:13 24:14
California's	40:6	claim 24:10 34:9	concession	25:12 34:19
3:11	challenging 40:5	claims 39:19	32:19	38:1 41:12,16
call 40:18	chance 15:17	clarification	conclude 10:18	considering
called 12:21	18:8	34:17,18	20:20 47:19	21:17 37:13
26:12	changed 16:22	clarified 21:15	concluded 4:6	41:8
calling 26:12	character 3:25	clarify 40:3	36:14 37:23	consistent 17:11
27:21	4:9,11,14,16	clarifying 12:15	conclusion 3:24	constitute 5:13
capital 3:13	5:9,14,15,16	13:17	6:8 15:23	30:15,19,21
44:13,16	6:5,6,10 14:21	clear 12:2 15:4	46:23 47:24	31:23,24
careful 9:3	14:21 16:14	32:1 33:14	conduct 6:15	constitutes
Carolina 5:2	17:7 19:18,19	36:21,24 37:4	44:5,15	32:18
case 3:10,17	23:7 33:7,11	clearly 9:21	conference	constitutional
4:14,21 5:5,9	44:1 47:4,5,11	18:17 21:11	12:19,21 13:1	3:10 9:6,11,19
5:20 6:7 7:11	characteristics	36:18 48:13	14:7 49:11	10:22 16:25
9:1 10:10	33:14	client 28:16 35:6	confirm 49:5	24:5 25:3
11:21,23 12:2	charade 48:24	closed 45:18	confirmation	45:13
12:24 13:7,19	Chief 3:3,8 8:15	closing 19:3,9	24:24 34:18	constitutionally
15:18,18,19,22	8:20 10:17	cloud 26:16	confirmed 35:12	10:16 14:9
18:4 19:6,16	16:22 18:24	code 16:4 21:22	45:15	48:8
20:14 21:6,14	23:22 24:1	Collins 37:18,19	confirming	constrained
22:20 24:4,9	26:3,5,9 35:17	colloquy 13:1	41:10	21:17
24:20 27:7	35:20,23 36:10	41:6	confused 12:19	contention 4:25
29:7 32:14	37:16,22 38:13	come 15:25	49:3	contest 4:20
33:6,7,9 37:1	38:15 39:10,12	21:21	confusion 15:3,8	context 21:2
37:20,23 38:21	41:13,19,22	coming 45:25	15:9,17 26:16	25:20,21 30:8
38:25 39:6,7	46:15 49:20	comment 4:18	41:3	32:2 41:1,2
39:13 40:1,7	children 47:10	20:17	consider 3:14,20	contrary 38:2
40:14,15 41:11	choice 32:16	commitment	4:7,8 9:8 12:20	38:17 47:24
43:22 44:12,18	Circuit 3:17	47:6	17:1,23 19:5,6	contribute 18:7
48:9 49:19,21	15:8 22:21	committed	19:17 20:22	contributions
49:22	36:7,12 38:3	19:15 28:19	21:4,7 25:8,12	34:16
cases 3:13 9:14	Circuit's 3:23	44:6,9	26:7 29:14,15	contrived 44:15
9:15 16:2	4:10 6:8 46:23	common 32:16	29:18 36:15	conversion

17:14,18 19:14 29:6 33:8,16 47:7 conveyed 24:11 42:23 convictions 23:16 core 24:4 correct 15:5 22:16 counsel 17:12,17 18:1 21:14 23:22 24:11,14 24:17 25:16,19 27:8,12,24 30:5 31:22 32:2,22 34:9 35:15,18 40:25 41:2 42:23 43:3 45:21 46:5,9,15 48:4 48:13 49:20 counsels 48:5 counsel's 25:14 46:12 county 32:15 41:20 couple 5:3 course 15:13 17:21 35:19 43:13 44:23 46:2 47:16 49:12,13 court 1:1,13 3:9 3:17 4:4,25 5:3 5:7,11 6:3 7:14 7:21 10:17 14:21 15:19,22 16:5,6,11,14 17:7 18:21 22:17 23:19 24:2,21 25:2,9 26:17,24 27:1 28:10 32:11 34:21,23 35:25 36:16,18,19 37:8,9,24 38:8	38:9,11,20 39:3,5,11,16 39:20 41:4 42:3,8,14,16 44:19 45:14 46:3,6,6,11 47:3,18 49:18 court's 4:1 9:14 16:10 39:22 42:15 46:25 47:17 covered 24:13 co-counsel 25:19 crew 28:17 crime 3:15,16 3:22 4:23 5:6 5:15 6:16,18 6:21,24 8:3,19 9:10,22 10:12 10:19,23 11:2 11:8,9,12 14:22 17:2,6 17:15,19,25,25 18:11,18 21:1 21:8,10,12 22:3 28:9,19 29:8,23 31:3,4 31:8 32:5,7,20 42:21,24 43:1 43:3,9,19,21 44:2,6,9,13,16 44:21 45:4,7 45:10 crucial 42:7 cuff 46:4 culpability 3:22 43:3,4,19 45:7 curb 45:24 cured 42:12	dealt 5:7 47:3 death 7:4,8,14 8:13 22:22 33:1 debate 34:16 decedent 43:6 decent 35:8 decide 7:7 12:11 12:11 decidedly 5:18 decision 4:10 15:13 16:11 22:21 25:2 26:22 27:24 35:1,10 36:3 36:18 37:17 47:2 decisions 4:2 deeply 24:22 defect 32:19 defendant 4:21 7:13 8:12 17:14 19:1 40:15 43:19 defendants 39:18 defendant's 3:21 4:8 5:14 14:20 17:17 44:3 defense 12:16 17:12 24:16 25:16 27:1,12 27:21,24 30:5 30:11 32:2,14 32:15 35:3,5,7 41:2 42:23 44:19,22 46:8 deference 34:23 degrees 38:19 deliberate 42:12 42:17 deliberating 34:11 deliberations 24:8,21 25:10 34:15,20 41:6	45:14 46:1 49:1 denied 39:2 deny 39:17 denying 26:24 depending 26:21 Deputy 1:16 derivation 21:20 described 13:2 deserves 7:14 determination 6:25 7:3,7,10 7:12,13,20 8:16 11:3 18:14 determinations 7:4 17:8 determine 8:11 8:12 dicta 16:12 dictated 36:1 38:4,18 46:22 47:2,25 different 3:25 4:11 6:4,9 11:15 27:7 28:5,8 37:20 38:24 39:20 40:25 43:25 44:2 48:17 differing 41:1 difficult 46:13 direct 27:20 37:11 38:7,7 directed 3:13 21:4 48:20 directly 3:21 directs 17:23 disabuse 25:3 disagreed 24:17 discussed 6:6 11:25 34:10 dissenting 5:17 distinction 3:25 4:10,15,20 6:9 43:17,18,22	45:5 47:13 distinguish 47:14 distinguished 5:3 6:4 district 24:16 27:21 30:8,9 divided 24:22 doing 15:14 33:23 doubted 19:22 doubts 26:1 dovetailing 18:1 drawing 4:19 drop 34:8 duty 8:11,12 D.C 1:9
				<hr/> E <hr/>
				E 2:1 3:1,1 earlier 16:18 earned 28:16 Easily 22:17 easily 29:13 Easley 15:6 echoing 17:20 Eddings 37:14 38:24 effect 20:18 27:21 45:11,18 effective 18:1 effort 30:4 egregious 39:20 Eighth 3:18 either 26:10,21 27:24 39:14 44:18 eligibility 7:4 embellishment 13:15 14:17 emphasis 13:17 25:23 encompass 4:13 17:6 encompassed 25:12 English 45:5

33:19	44:20,24 45:6	extent 9:12	32:5 35:13	47:23
entirely 34:13	45:9,19 47:3,4	10:24 21:12	40:5,5,14	fits 20:11,17
entitled 35:25	47:5,8,9,19,23	43:5	43:10 44:24	27:23
enumerated	47:25 48:9,14	extenuate 6:24	46:24 47:20,23	flawed 3:24
21:5 25:6,13	48:19,22 49:4	10:12,22 11:1	48:10 49:13	focus 21:7
26:15 34:19	exact 25:20	11:8 17:15	factors 10:11	follow 35:10
35:13 41:11	36:16	18:18 21:1	12:3,3,5,6,7,14	followed 20:16
45:11,15	exactly 33:5	28:11 32:18	12:15 13:3,12	follow-up 41:7
envelope 35:6	42:4	42:21 44:1	16:10 21:5	Foothills 28:18
ERIC 1:18 2:6	example 29:2,16	45:10	24:25 25:6,11	footnote 4:19,24
23:24	29:17	extenuated 8:18	25:13 26:6,15	5:11 16:15
error 42:13 46:7	examples 8:22	10:19 18:11	26:18,19,20	40:4,8
errors 42:12	9:3 12:8 26:7	43:2,5	27:2,6 34:19	foreclose 10:5
especially 48:18	48:12 49:17	extenuates 3:14	35:13 41:12	48:8
ESQ 1:16,18 2:3	excluding 40:6	9:9,22 17:1,6	42:9 45:12,16	foreclosed 10:2
2:6,9	excuse 3:15	17:24 21:10	48:12 49:7,15	10:6
established	17:18,25 28:11	43:9 44:20	facts 4:22,23	forestall 15:17
36:18 37:15	29:22 30:19,21	extenuating	38:21,25 39:20	forms 3:25 4:11
esteemed 25:19	30:22 31:2,8	14:22 22:2	fair 13:6	6:4,9
ethically 42:22	31:24,24 32:5	28:7 32:7 45:4	fall 47:20	forward 5:22
events 5:6,7	32:17,20 35:21	extremely 20:15	far 14:18 16:10	44:8 47:22
evidence 3:20	35:22		48:25	forward-looki...
4:1,7,8,11,14	excuses 27:16	F	favor 38:22	3:20 5:18,25
5:1,5,5,8,9,11	28:8,19	face 32:3	favoring 24:23	6:10 19:5
5:13,14,20 6:5	excusing 28:9	fact 4:6,11,13	34:14	47:19,22
6:6,12 9:13,17	32:6	5:13 6:3,8,14	Federal 23:19	found 5:13
10:2,6,7,8,16	exercise 48:24	12:7,19 15:21	felt 11:24 21:16	15:19 28:19
10:19 12:20	exhaustive 25:7	16:10,14 17:19	FERNANDO	47:17
14:18,20 16:14	41:5 42:10	19:3 40:16,17	1:7	framework 25:1
17:1,7 18:5,15	existing 38:5	44:12,13 47:1	fielded 46:3	35:1
18:25 19:3,13	expanded 36:19	48:18	figures 34:24	Franklin 6:3
19:16 20:12,12	expected 46:1,8	factor 3:11 4:5	final 21:9 36:2	frankly 23:7
20:14,19,25	46:10	4:12 6:14,21	finality 37:11	Friends 33:13
21:4,17 23:6,6	experience	7:24 8:7,22	find 39:5 47:22	front 15:12
23:7 24:12	24:13	10:10 13:14	fire 28:17	functionally
25:8,15,17,24	explained 35:14	14:11,16,18	firmly 37:15	43:18
26:7 27:8,25	41:21	15:20,24 16:1	first 4:25 5:4	fundamentally
28:1 29:8,22	explanation	16:12 17:20	11:25 12:10,18	3:24
31:25 32:12,24	42:4	19:25 21:3,5,9	14:14 19:24	further 23:20
33:1,6,7,8,9,11	explicitly 6:1	21:20 23:4,5	21:5,7 32:10	47:16 49:18
33:13 34:3	41:9	24:5,13 25:14	33:9 34:9,14	future 18:8,17
35:14 36:15	expressed 25:25	25:17,25 26:1	36:6 49:1	47:8
37:13,25 40:6	26:18	26:4,10 27:9	fit 18:7 19:22	future-looking
40:16 41:14,16	expresses 43:20	27:23 28:3,6,7	21:18 25:17,24	23:6,7
41:23 42:1,6	expressly 7:5	29:13,17,19,22	26:1,9 27:9	
42:11,21 43:5	8:10 12:7	29:25 30:6,11	28:1,6 29:13	G
43:25 44:1,11	extensive 33:22	30:13 31:25	30:10,13 32:4	g 3:1 12:4 21:5

gather 29:5	33:10	hit 45:24	35:14	39:19
general 1:16	granting 26:25	holdings 46:25	included 13:14	instructions
5:12 16:16	gravity 3:15	holds 34:23	49:13,14	12:1,16 13:17
20:13 26:14	6:21,23,24 8:3	hole 28:1	includes 40:24	13:17 18:21,22
37:9	8:18 9:9,22	Honor 4:24 5:4	including 8:22	24:8,20 26:14
Ginsburg 11:18	10:12,19,22	6:2 7:2 11:22	inclusive 44:25	26:25 34:12
11:20 12:9	11:2,8 14:22	12:18 13:22	inconsistent 4:1	48:7 49:12
13:2 14:24	17:2,6,15,24	14:3,19 15:5	incorporates	insult 17:13
15:1,24 19:8	18:11,18 20:6	17:3,16 18:19	20:9	27:14,15
19:23 21:19	21:1,10 31:4	20:7 22:4,13	incorrect 38:9	intelligence
22:1,11,14,19	32:5,7 42:21	22:16 23:17	38:11,16 39:4	17:13
23:8,10 32:23	43:9 44:2,21	25:18 26:12,24	39:6	interchangeably
33:20,22 34:1	45:4,10	28:10 29:21	independent	32:11
40:2,20,22	great 34:23	30:7,19,23	45:11	interestingly
44:4	greatest 13:16	31:6 32:9 33:4	indicate 12:13	16:4
girl 29:7	grounds 23:11	33:25 34:6	indication 12:18	interpret 20:25
Gisson 35:12	guess 13:5 23:20	36:5 37:6,21	inference 5:10	interpreted
give 9:13 13:15	guilt 7:4	40:9 41:18	inherent 41:3	10:23 11:10
13:16 23:2	guilty 31:9	43:16,24 45:23	initiative 22:7	interrupt 16:17
25:19 40:19	guilt-phase 7:5	46:19	ink 40:11	involve 23:4,5
42:19		Honor's 36:6	inquiry 12:23	involved 18:4
given 3:12 9:16	H	hours 40:11	insanity 31:10	33:9
11:21 12:16	h 26:10	house 43:7	inside 18:8	irreparable 43:1
16:2 17:4 18:8	Hailstone's 41:7	hypothetical	instance 29:5	issue 23:1 37:10
20:24 24:25	42:14	10:21	instruct 16:25	46:21
30:8 34:4	happen 12:23	I	25:7	italicized 31:18
41:10 48:11	happened 27:16	idea 41:20	instructed 7:21	items 7:23
gives 44:13,14	33:5 35:2	identical 4:5	7:23 8:10,21	J
giving 11:11	happening	illogical 44:21	48:10	Joaquin 41:20
go 8:4 19:20	15:18	illusory 3:25	instruction 3:12	Johnson 1:16
42:11	happens 19:14	illustrative 25:6	3:18 4:6 6:14	2:3,9 3:5,6,8
goes 14:18	hard 36:2	26:15,19 27:3	7:18 8:7,8 9:2	4:18,24 6:2,12
going 27:14,15	hear 3:3	41:5 42:10	9:8,20 10:15	6:17,23 7:17
30:12 44:17	hearing 20:23	imagine 25:23	10:20 11:1	7:22,25 8:9,16
45:7 46:12	27:5	27:22 30:9	12:1,4 13:11	8:24 9:11,24
good 4:13 5:9,13	held 3:18 13:16	immediately	14:7 15:20	10:4,13,24
5:15,16 13:18	37:9	19:15	16:2,7,8,13	11:6,13,16,19
33:13,15,23	help 46:6 47:7	immutable 43:1	17:4,5,20 18:2	11:22 12:17
34:4,15 44:15	helped 47:10,10	implication 20:9	20:24 21:3,14	13:22 14:2,6
47:3,5,11	Hern 24:24 25:3	implicitly 4:12	21:25 22:2,5	14:19,25 15:5
good-character	34:17 42:9	16:6	22:15,18 23:5	15:14 16:1,16
5:5 10:5 18:15	45:21	import 32:1	23:5 26:13,16	16:20 17:3,10
47:8,25	Hern's 41:11	important 49:1	26:23 37:25	17:16,23 18:13
governed 23:14	49:4	incarceration	40:6 41:3,4	18:19 19:2,11
Graham 37:18	highlighted	44:7	46:24 47:21	19:24 20:7
37:19 39:12	27:15	include 25:15	48:11 49:14	21:19,24 22:4
grandfather	historical 44:12		instructional	

22:13,16,24 23:9,12,17 46:16,17,19 joint 31:19 JR 1:3 judge 9:7 13:8 29:15 34:2 35:12 41:25 49:11 judge's 45:20 judgment 8:6 36:2 46:21 judgments 22:22 judicial 24:24 34:17 juries 18:16 jurists 47:14 juror 15:4 24:23 24:24 25:3 34:17 41:7,11 42:8,14 45:21 46:1,4 48:16 48:25 49:4 jurors 3:13,19 4:6,8 7:2,5,9 8:10,17 9:12 9:16 10:14,25 11:24 12:13,19 12:22,23 13:8 13:15,16,20 14:10,25 15:21 15:23 17:4,5 17:23 18:13,21 19:4,6,17 20:5 20:23 21:4,6 21:16 25:4,5,7 41:24 42:5 48:7,9,13,21 49:2,12 jury 7:19,21 8:5 10:10,20 11:20 12:10 15:2,8 16:25 17:13 18:6 24:11,12 24:14,18,21 25:7,10,22	26:6 27:2,5,8 28:16 29:14,15 30:5 32:3,14 32:21,23 34:1 34:7,11,13,20 34:22 35:3 36:15 40:23 41:17,23 42:23 44:7 45:7,25 46:4 48:4,4 jury's 6:25 18:14 26:22 Justice 3:3,8 4:18 5:16,22 6:11,13,20 7:16,18,23 8:1 8:15,20,25 9:18 10:1,9,17 10:21 11:4,7 11:14,15,18,20 12:9,25 13:2 13:24 14:4,5 14:15,24 15:1 15:7,11,24 16:16,21,22,22 16:23 17:9,11 17:22 18:10,16 18:24 19:8,20 19:23 20:2,3 21:19 22:1,11 22:14,19 23:8 23:10,15,22 24:1 25:16 26:3,5,9 27:7 27:12 28:2,4 28:13,15,22 29:10,12,24 30:3,14,16,20 30:24 31:1,11 31:13,14,17,18 31:19 32:6,23 33:20,22 34:1 35:17,19,20,21 35:23 36:10,21 37:16,22 38:13 38:15 39:10,12 40:2,20,22	41:13,19,22 42:19 43:8,12 43:14,21 44:4 45:20 46:5,15 49:20 justifies 11:11 K k 3:11 4:5,12 6:14,22 7:24 8:7,22 10:10 13:15 14:11,16 14:18 15:20,24 16:1,12 17:20 19:22,25 21:3 21:20 23:4,5 24:5,13 25:14 25:17,25 26:2 27:9,23 28:3,6 28:7 29:13,17 29:19,22,25 30:6,11,13 35:13 37:25 40:5,14 43:10 44:24 46:24 47:20,23 48:10 49:13 KENNEDY 6:11,13,20 7:16,18,23 8:1 30:14,16,24 31:1 35:19,21 43:8,12,14,21 Kennedy's 42:19 key 24:10 34:8 kill 43:6 kind 15:13 31:25 35:8 36:2 43:25 44:2 45:1,1,17 knock 14:4 know 19:15 20:9 22:5 27:3 28:16 29:24 37:22 40:10 41:18	known 36:25 L L 1:3 language 14:15 16:3 17:20 lapsed 19:15 Laughter 15:10 law 49:7 legal 3:15 17:25 31:23 lesser 11:11 let's 32:13 46:11 life 7:8,15 8:13 8:13 24:23 32:25 34:4,14 34:25 44:3 light 7:9 8:16 18:19 36:3 48:18 likelihood 11:24 13:20 21:16 36:15 48:7,18 limit 10:11 limited 12:6 13:11,21 35:13 40:7 49:15 linchpin 43:23 lines 10:21 Linite 6:3 list 13:4,14,14 13:21 24:25 26:19,20,20 27:2,6 listed 12:3 13:11 49:16,16 listing 13:5,9,9 14:8 48:12 litigated 23:1,19 little 35:7,24 Lockett 37:14 38:24 logical 34:7 logically 42:22 lone 7:6 long 5:23 longstanding	38:24 look 37:7 44:22 45:3,3 looking 5:23 30:7 lose 40:12 loses 38:10 lot 36:23 37:2 love 33:12 M main 18:5 48:20 majority 12:12 24:22 making 35:10 man 7:13 manner 5:24 18:23 48:17 marching 34:25 MARK 1:16 2:3 2:9 3:6 46:17 Marshall 5:17 matter 1:12 19:10 20:13 26:5,10 30:23 32:13 44:12 49:23 matters 21:11 25:11 mean 5:23 6:20 11:10 12:10 15:11 16:16 22:20 33:1 36:25 meaning 14:11 18:22 21:13 45:5 meaningful 4:15 means 36:24 37:5 measure 15:15 mentioned 12:22 merely 8:22 9:2 12:8 25:6 26:6 26:15 49:5,17 message 41:10
--	---	--	---	--

<p>middle 45:25</p> <p>Mill 1:18</p> <p>minute 46:11,20</p> <p>minutes 42:18</p> <p>46:16</p> <p>misapprehens...</p> <p>25:4</p> <p>misimpression</p> <p>42:16</p> <p>misinterpreted</p> <p>14:11 48:16</p> <p>misinterpreting</p> <p>39:21</p> <p>mislead 15:21</p> <p>misleading 8:10</p> <p>45:21,22</p> <p>misled 3:19</p> <p>mistake 16:23</p> <p>misunderstood</p> <p>11:17</p> <p>mitigated 43:5</p> <p>mitigating 8:21</p> <p>9:2,4,9,22 12:6</p> <p>12:21 13:4,12</p> <p>16:9 17:1</p> <p>18:25 20:13,16</p> <p>21:17 25:8</p> <p>26:7,18,19,21</p> <p>27:2,6 29:4</p> <p>31:25 32:12</p> <p>41:23 44:1</p> <p>45:11 49:6,15</p> <p>mitigation 9:14</p> <p>13:9 18:25</p> <p>37:14 45:16,17</p> <p>mixture 33:9</p> <p>model 21:22</p> <p>22:9</p> <p>moral 7:11,12</p> <p>7:20 8:6</p> <p>morally 42:23</p> <p>mother 33:12</p> <p>move 35:17</p> <p>Multhaup 1:18</p> <p>2:6 23:23,24</p> <p>24:1 25:18</p> <p>26:4,8,11</p>	<p>27:11,19 28:3</p> <p>28:10,14,21</p> <p>29:9,11,21</p> <p>30:2,7,15,18</p> <p>30:22,25 31:6</p> <p>31:12,16,21</p> <p>32:9 33:4,21</p> <p>33:25 34:6</p> <p>36:5,12 37:6</p> <p>37:19 38:6,14</p> <p>38:21 39:11,14</p> <p>40:2,9,21,24</p> <p>41:18 42:2</p> <p>43:11,13,16,24</p> <p>44:11 45:23</p> <p>46:10</p> <p>Multhaup's</p> <p>48:3</p> <p>murder 19:16</p> <p>murdered 29:7</p> <hr/> <p>N</p> <hr/> <p>N 2:1,1 3:1</p> <p>naturally 8:17</p> <p>nature 4:16,17</p> <p>necessarily</p> <p>13:24</p> <p>neither 25:9</p> <p>41:16</p> <p>new 35:25 36:7</p> <p>Ninth 3:17,23</p> <p>4:10 6:8 15:8</p> <p>22:20 36:7,12</p> <p>38:3 46:23</p> <p>47:23</p> <p>nonstatutory</p> <p>45:16</p> <p>non-crime-rel...</p> <p>4:7</p> <p>normal 7:12</p> <p>normative 7:11</p> <p>7:12</p> <p>notably 15:18</p> <p>note 24:18</p> <p>noted 18:21</p> <p>notice 14:13</p> <p>notwithstandi...</p>	<p>39:23 40:25</p> <p>number 23:3</p> <p>39:23</p> <p>nutshell 24:3</p> <hr/> <p>O</p> <hr/> <p>O 2:1 3:1</p> <p>object 18:25</p> <p>45:21</p> <p>objected 19:2</p> <p>objection 46:8</p> <p>49:10</p> <p>obligation 25:3</p> <p>obviously 45:22</p> <p>46:7</p> <p>occurred 4:22</p> <p>4:23 5:6 24:7</p> <p>24:23 25:18,20</p> <p>36:9 42:13</p> <p>44:12</p> <p>occurs 45:25</p> <p>October 1:10</p> <p>offense 20:6</p> <p>offered 4:16</p> <p>5:10,11 49:4</p> <p>off-the 46:3</p> <p>oh 11:22 26:11</p> <p>43:21</p> <p>Okay 16:20</p> <p>27:11,24 30:7</p> <p>31:6</p> <p>old 23:16</p> <p>one-of-a-kind</p> <p>22:19</p> <p>operating 39:15</p> <p>opinion 5:12,17</p> <p>15:11 36:8</p> <p>46:13 47:17</p> <p>opposite 38:19</p> <p>oral 1:12 2:2,5</p> <p>3:6 23:24</p> <p>orders 34:25</p> <p>outcome 37:4</p> <p>outside 18:7</p> <p>21:11 45:11</p> <hr/> <p>P</p> <hr/> <p>P 3:1</p>	<p>page 2:2 20:8</p> <p>25:20 27:13,15</p> <p>30:14 31:14</p> <p>40:4</p> <p>paraphrasing</p> <p>42:20</p> <p>Pardon 22:13</p> <p>parlance 32:17</p> <p>32:18</p> <p>parole 7:9,17</p> <p>8:13,14</p> <p>parse 18:21</p> <p>part 32:19 33:17</p> <p>33:17 34:14,16</p> <p>36:6</p> <p>partial 31:24</p> <p>33:17,17</p> <p>particular 12:20</p> <p>21:13 39:8</p> <p>40:7</p> <p>particularly</p> <p>9:15 21:2</p> <p>parties 49:8</p> <p>parts 26:25</p> <p>party 41:16</p> <p>passages 27:19</p> <p>patrolled 28:18</p> <p>pay 9:3 42:9</p> <p>Payton 4:3</p> <p>10:17,23 11:1</p> <p>18:3,9 23:13</p> <p>28:14 32:12</p> <p>33:7,21 36:4</p> <p>37:20,22 38:8</p> <p>38:9,23 39:2,5</p> <p>39:14,17,23</p> <p>44:22 46:25</p> <p>47:17 48:21</p> <p>Payton's 10:7</p> <p>47:19</p> <p>peg 27:25</p> <p>penal 16:4</p> <p>penalty 24:9</p> <p>25:1 31:8 33:5</p> <p>41:6 43:2</p> <p>penalty-phase</p> <p>3:12 7:6 18:5</p>	<p>33:18 34:20</p> <p>39:18</p> <p>pending 23:4,13</p> <p>46:22</p> <p>Penry 37:8,10</p> <p>37:16 39:7</p> <p>people 15:6</p> <p>22:17 41:19</p> <p>perfectly 10:22</p> <p>42:2 45:12</p> <p>performance</p> <p>33:15</p> <p>permissible 9:23</p> <p>permutations</p> <p>34:10</p> <p>person 35:9</p> <p>Petitioner 1:5</p> <p>1:17 2:4,10 3:7</p> <p>42:20 46:18</p> <p>Petitioner's 43:3</p> <p>43:4 45:7</p> <p>phase 31:8 33:2</p> <p>33:5</p> <p>phrase 11:10</p> <p>phrased 26:17</p> <p>phrasing 45:4</p> <p>place 28:25 29:6</p> <p>29:8 30:4 44:6</p> <p>plain 32:20 45:5</p> <p>plan 43:6</p> <p>please 3:9 24:2</p> <p>42:11</p> <p>point 7:1,1 8:7</p> <p>14:6 20:15</p> <p>21:15 24:23</p> <p>25:2,25 27:4</p> <p>27:23 29:21,24</p> <p>31:7,23 34:22</p> <p>42:8</p> <p>pointed 5:4,8</p> <p>pointless 48:24</p> <p>portion 3:12</p> <p>31:18</p> <p>position 11:5</p> <p>13:25 16:24</p> <p>17:12 24:4</p> <p>28:17 32:3</p>
--	---	--	---	--

34:23 38:6,17 45:13 49:9 possibility 7:9 7:15 8:14 41:8 41:15 48:15 post 43:15,17,22 44:5 post-crime 5:7 6:15 33:8 43:15 47:19,22 practical 4:15 20:15 32:13 pre 43:16,21,22 44:4 precedent 36:1 38:5,18 46:22 47:2 48:1 precisely 11:13 18:15 47:4 preclude 10:15 precluded 11:24 37:13 presence 29:2,3 present 5:14 10:5 14:21 19:18 presentation 33:18,19 43:2 presented 41:14 42:6 presume 39:4 presupposes 14:10 pretty 13:18 20:19 prevent 15:13 previous 6:16 12:7 20:8 48:12 previously 11:25 24:25 pre-AEDPA 39:24 pre-crime 47:24 pre-Easley 15:20 printer's 40:11	prior 4:2 9:14 19:18 25:14 26:14 39:15 44:7 47:6 prison 6:15 18:12,18 33:23 34:16 44:8 prisoner 33:3 34:5 prize 47:9 probably 20:5 26:9 problem 15:2,8 45:13 proceeded 24:20 proceedings 36:13 42:8 48:23 produce 37:1 proffered 9:13 project 44:7 propel 32:25 proper 19:12 20:22 41:4,25 42:3 properly 15:23 prophylactic 15:15 proposing 38:3 prosecutor 18:24 19:2,3 19:24 20:2,4,8 20:16 25:22 29:13 35:8 prosecutor's 19:8 20:10 25:21 prospects 19:5,6 33:23 34:15 provide 17:18 39:1 provides 44:2 provision 15:3 21:23 psychiatric 41:8 41:15 punishment	11:11 31:5 43:9 purpose 20:16 32:24,24 purposes 4:15 6:25 8:3 11:2 14:23 18:13 31:4 43:10 pushing 35:6 put 5:17 14:12 30:6 32:1 41:1 41:2,16,23 putatively 41:4 p.m 49:22 <hr/> Q <hr/> qualification 34:21 qualities 5:18 question 4:22 9:19 10:9,13 11:19 12:12 16:18 20:3 35:4,24 36:6 37:3 41:7,14 41:17,22 42:14 42:19 46:1,13 49:4,4 questions 11:21 12:18 13:18 14:12 23:20 40:23 46:3 48:4,25 49:9 49:18 quickly 48:2 quite 41:24 quote 38:7,7 quoted 27:13 <hr/> R <hr/> R 3:1 raised 4:25 Ramos 16:11 rational 47:14 reach 12:24 read 37:24 reading 38:2,3 38:18	reaffirmed 42:15 real 46:6 realize 49:9 really 19:9 32:8 43:23 reason 13:23 31:9 34:2,3 39:1,1,3 41:14 41:20 44:3 reasonable 11:23 13:19 20:23 21:16 36:14 38:16,20 39:4,6 47:18 47:21 48:6,18 reasonably 10:14 14:10 20:24 27:6 41:1 reasons 5:4 REBUTTAL 2:8 46:17 recall 13:2 receive 8:12 recess 46:12 recites 16:2 recognize 49:1 recognized 15:2 15:16 redeeming 5:18 reduce 6:15 refer 13:9 20:5 reference 13:3,7 13:14 14:8 28:6,25 referring 26:23 27:10,13,17,20 44:5 refight 40:10 reflected 14:8 regard 4:20 regarded 38:19 regarding 41:7 46:23 47:24 48:3 regime 39:15	reinstruct 25:5 reiterated 36:19 rejected 4:4 41:9 relate 3:21 6:17 6:20,23 11:9 21:11 45:6 related 5:5 33:15 43:18 49:5 relating 14:20 relation 35:4 38:7 relevant 10:16 16:9 17:7 37:13 43:17 48:5,8 relief 38:22 39:2 39:17,24 40:16 40:18 relies 40:15 religion 29:3 religious 17:14 17:18 19:14 20:14,19 24:12 29:6 33:16 45:9 47:6 religious-conv... 25:24 religious-expe... 25:15 rely 9:4 12:5 relying 27:9 remaining 46:16 48:3 remorse 10:19 31:2,2 43:8,20 reported 44:18 requested 24:24 27:1 require 39:24 research 23:1 reservations 26:1 reserve 23:21 respect 13:8 32:12
---	---	--	--	---

respectful 14:1 14:2,5	37:1,2,12,15 38:24	sensible 34:7	so-called 3:20	submitted 19:1 49:21,23
Respectfully 13:22	rules 35:11,11 36:24 37:3	sentence 7:8,8 9:7	sparing 44:3	subsequent 36:3 37:17 46:25
responded 46:3	rule's 36:22	sentencer 37:12	speaking 32:21	subtle 18:22
Respondent 1:19 2:7 23:25	<hr/> S <hr/>	sentencing 6:25 7:3 8:3 11:2 14:23 18:14 33:2	special 26:25	succeeded 47:6
Respondent's 24:3 40:21 42:19	S 1:18 2:1,6 3:1 23:24	separate 9:1	specific 5:10 8:6 24:25 34:18 43:25	sufficiency 3:11 46:24
response 13:18 27:20 37:8 45:20	Sacramento 1:17	seriousness 6:15 6:18	specifically 4:7	suggest 29:2 47:12 49:2
responses 32:10	San 41:19	set 26:13,14,14	speculate 42:7	suggested 16:23 24:14 44:15 49:10
responsibility 28:17	saying 5:20 13:25 19:20 23:15 28:4,5 29:1 40:5,8	setting 33:24	speculating 46:2	suggesting 17:13 35:3 39:16
rest 6:8 8:1 23:21 25:4	says 27:14 28:7 28:8,24,24 29:1,16,17 30:5,9,12,16 30:18	shades 18:22	spilled 40:10	summary 24:3
restrictive 14:9	Scalia 5:22 11:4 11:7,14 14:5 15:7,11 16:23 23:15 31:14,18 32:6 36:21 45:20 46:5	shaky 20:20	square 27:25	supplemental 48:11 49:14
rests 3:24	scenarios 39:23	shoe 34:8,9	standard 12:3 16:2,8,12 21:3 37:21	supplemented 12:1
result 12:23 25:9 26:24 37:1	Schick 29:19	shot 35:5	standards 39:24	support 4:10 15:22
returned 25:10 42:16	Schick's 28:23	show 34:4	standing 7:14 24:5 40:15	supports 7:19
review 37:21 49:12	schizophrenic 19:9	showed 5:15 43:6	stand-up 35:8	suppose 48:17
right 8:21,23 10:3 17:22 22:12 23:12 29:5,5,9,10,12 30:2 31:2 35:9 41:14	second 32:12 34:8	side 13:6	State 20:8 21:22 47:18	supposed 44:25
ROBERT 1:3	secret 20:19	Sierra 28:18	stated 16:11,14 19:25	Supreme 1:1,13 15:19,21 16:5 22:17 37:24 38:9,11 39:3,5 39:11,19 44:19
ROBERTS 3:3 8:15,20 10:17 18:24 23:22 26:3,5,9 35:17 35:20,23 36:10 37:16,22 38:13 38:15 39:10,12 41:13,22 46:15 49:20	section 16:4	significant 18:3	statute 16:3,7,9 22:6,7	sure 9:18 16:17 20:11,17 22:4 22:5 27:10
role 49:6	see 28:22 29:20 36:5 45:25	signifies 20:11	States 1:1,13 22:1,8	surrounding 26:16
round 28:1	seen 14:22	simple 46:14	State's 3:23	suspect 25:22
rule 35:25 36:7 36:17,17,22	segment 33:15	simply 13:4	statutory 21:21 22:9	sword 39:17
	self-defense 31:9	single 7:12,20 8:6 26:20	stepping 45:24	synonyms 28:11 32:16
	sell 32:3	Skipper 5:2,3,7 5:11 14:18 27:25 28:1 35:14 36:15,20 40:6,16 42:20 43:25 44:11,20 45:6,6,18	Stevens 4:18 8:25 9:18 10:1 10:9 11:15 16:16,21 17:9 17:11,22 18:10 18:16 31:19	system 18:7 23:19
	semantics 30:25 31:7	Skipper-type 10:2	Stevens's 10:21 20:3	<hr/> T <hr/>
	sense 31:1,9 39:17	society 18:8	stick 16:18	T 2:1,1
		sounded 29:15	straightforward 24:6 36:8,11	take 8:17 12:13 12:14 20:2
		source 15:25	stretch 14:17,19	
		SOUTER 12:25 13:24 14:4,15 19:20 20:2	stronger 38:22	
		South 5:2	submit 49:19	

29:16 31:3 37:7 45:13 46:11 taken 5:24 24:18 talking 8:2 talks 22:2 task 7:3 13:20 Teague 35:24 36:22,24 37:5 37:8,10 38:18 46:21 tell 19:17 30:12 telling 27:16 tend 13:15,16 term 13:5 terms 13:4 28:11 32:11 test 24:6 36:17 38:22 39:25 40:13 testified 33:10 33:12,13 testimony 33:23 Texas 9:15 39:8 text-based 44:20 44:25 Thank 23:22 31:16,17,21 46:15,19 49:20 thing 6:7 21:7 31:10 32:8 34:7 43:1 things 24:16 42:7 think 8:1 11:18 14:17 15:12 16:21 18:16 27:5,16 29:18 32:6,8,23 43:21 46:11 thinking 13:21 29:5 30:1 thought 5:23 11:4 15:7 21:18 34:2,7 34:22 35:4 38:1 43:23	threatens 22:21 threshold 37:10 thrust 18:5 48:20 tightened 37:17 time 5:1 17:8 23:21 31:7 36:1 37:4,11 40:11 46:21 48:3 times 29:2 today 7:14 told 7:6,19,20 8:21 12:7,14 15:23 21:6 25:24 26:6 27:8,22 29:14 29:15 30:10 34:25 tons 40:10 top 35:6 totality 36:9 totally 29:4 touch 46:20 traditional 33:11,13 treatment 41:9 41:15 trial 7:5,6 18:20 24:9 25:2,9 26:24 27:1 31:22 34:21,23 35:3 36:14 41:25 42:3,8 42:15 45:14 46:3,11 trouble 38:17 true 18:9,10 19:25 trying 27:4 29:7 29:25 31:22 32:2 Tuesday 1:10 turn 22:6 24:4 turned 48:23 turning 24:23 turns 24:6	two 12:5 24:10 32:9,10,16 47:15 type 46:2 <hr/> U <hr/> unanimous 12:24 unconstitutio... 14:9 understand 6:5 8:4,17 9:21 10:14 13:10 17:5 18:17,22 27:4 39:16 40:4,12 understanding 12:6,13 38:17 49:6 understands 8:5 understood 4:13 10:10,25 11:21 20:5 21:11 42:5 47:20 undying 33:12 unfortunately 22:24 23:17 unique 24:7 unitary 26:20 United 1:1,13 unreasonable 10:18 37:24 38:2 untenable 32:3 unusual 9:1 24:7 24:15 38:21 upbringing 33:10 use 9:13,16 21:1 <hr/> V <hr/> v 1:6 15:6 16:11 22:17 36:3 37:19 valid 22:21 Valley 1:18 32:15 value 20:16	various 9:15 12:3 34:10 verbatim 16:3 verdict 12:24 34:14 version 15:20 versus 3:4 4:2,3 5:2 6:3 10:23 37:18 49:7 view 3:23 14:9 34:19 48:7 viewed 18:15 views 41:1 violates 3:18 virtual 48:23 virtually 4:5 18:4 48:19 <hr/> W <hr/> want 9:20 16:17 wanted 15:17 49:5 WARDEN 1:4 warrant 40:16 wash 23:10 Washington 1:9 wasn't 29:4 33:2 33:18 way 4:1 20:4 21:18 26:17 27:16 30:19,22 31:11,12 32:20 37:25 47:8 48:7 weak 19:16,21 20:15 weight 44:14 well-established 37:12 went 12:10 13:20 20:20 35:6 36:13 43:7 46:4 We'll 3:3 we're 29:23 36:16 38:10 39:15 46:12	we've 5:23 6:6 34:10 whatsoever 9:13 36:7 widespread 21:23 win 38:14 39:12 39:14 wish 40:3 won 4:21 39:7 47:9 wording 21:24 words 6:14,21 30:20 work 44:22 wouldn't 10:20 23:10 32:23 wrong 29:17 <hr/> X <hr/> x 1:2,8 <hr/> Y <hr/> years 23:16 yes-or-no 46:14 Youth 24:12 25:15 33:15 45:9 <hr/> 0 <hr/> 05-493 1:6 <hr/> 1 <hr/> 11:05 1:14 3:2 12:03 49:22 15 23:3 165 28:23 166 31:19 170 28:23 180 38:18 190.3 16:4 1978 22:7 1983 16:10 22:12,15 1986 36:19 37:11,15 1987 36:19 1989 40:12
--	--	--	--	---

2				
20 16:15 40:4				
2006 1:10				
23 2:7 23:16				
3				
3 1:10 2:4 40:4				
4				
46 2:10				
5				
5 4:24 5:11				
6				
6 46:16				
60-second 24:3				
7				
7-0 15:22				
9				
9 27:13,15 31:14				