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DISTRICT IV

November 26, 2025

To:

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Circuit Court Judge
Electronic Notice

Jeff Okazaki
Clerk of Circuit Court
Dane County Courthouse
Electronic Notice

John Blimling
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Michael E. Covey
Electronic Notice

Chandler M. Halderson 708271
Dodge Correctional Institution
P.O. Box 700
Waupun, WI 53963

You are hereby notified that the Court has entered the following opinion and order:

2023AP847-CRNM

State of Wisconsin v. Chandler M. Halderson
(L.C. # 2021CF1568)

Before Kloppenburg, Nashold, and Taylor, JJ.

Summary disposition orders may not be cited in any court of this state as precedent or authority, except for the limited purposes specified in WIS. STAT. RULE 809.23(3).

Attorney Michael Covey, appointed counsel for Chandler Halderson, has filed a no-merit report pursuant to WIS. STAT. RULE 809.32 (2023-24)¹ and *Anders v. California*, 386 U.S. 738 (1967). The no-merit report addresses whether there would be arguable merit to a challenge to the circuit court's decision allowing the State to introduce other-acts evidence at trial, the sufficiency of the evidence to support the jury verdicts, the sentence imposed by the circuit court,

¹ All references to the Wisconsin Statutes are to the 2023-24 version.

or any postconviction issue based on a claim of juror bias or ineffective assistance of counsel. Halderson has filed a response to the no-merit report asserting that he was denied his rights to the effective assistance of counsel and a fair trial. On our review of the no-merit report and response, as well as our independent review of the record, we conclude that there is no arguable merit to any issue that could be raised in postconviction proceedings. We summarily affirm the judgment of conviction. *See* WIS. STAT. RULE 809.21.

The State charged Halderson with two counts each of first-degree intentional homicide, providing false information about a missing person, dismembering a corpse, and hiding a corpse. The charges were based on the State's allegations that Halderson killed his parents, dismembered their bodies, hid the body parts, and lied to police about his parents' whereabouts.

Before trial, the State moved to admit other-acts evidence of a complex series of lies that Halderson had told his parents and others in the year leading up to the homicides. The State argued that Halderson killed his parents because they were on the verge of discovering his lies about his employment, education, and health, and that it offered the other-acts evidence to establish motive, plan, identity, intent, and absence of mistake or accident. The State argued that the evidence was relevant because it involved the same people and methods of deception involved in the charged offenses, and provided context to explain why Halderson killed his parents.

Halderson objected to admission of the other-acts evidence, arguing that it was offered merely to prove that Halderson was a liar and that evidence of Halderson's lies did not make it more likely that he had killed his parents. Halderson also argued that the probative value of the evidence was substantially outweighed by the danger of unfair prejudice.

The circuit court determined that the evidence was offered for a proper purpose, that it was highly relevant as to intent, motive, and identity, and that the high probative value of the evidence was not outweighed by the danger of unfair prejudice. The court therefore allowed the State to introduce the other-acts evidence over Halderson's objection.

After a ten-day trial, the jury returned guilty verdicts on all counts. The circuit court entered judgments of conviction and sentenced Halderson to life in prison without the possibility of release.²

The no-merit report concludes that there would be no arguable merit to a challenge to the circuit court's decision allowing the State to introduce other-acts evidence of Halderson's numerous lies leading up to the murders of his parents. Admissibility of other-acts evidence is governed by a three-step test: the evidence must be admitted for an acceptable purpose under WIS. STAT. § 904.04(2); it must be relevant; and its probative value must not be substantially outweighed by the danger of unfair prejudice. *State v. Sullivan*, 216 Wis. 2d 768, 772-73, 576 N.W.2d 30 (1998). We review a circuit court's decision to admit other-acts evidence for an erroneous exercise of discretion. *State v. Hunt*, 2003 WI 81, ¶34, 263 Wis. 2d 1, 666 N.W.2d 771. We agree with counsel's assessment that the circuit court properly applied the *Sullivan* test and that any challenge to the circuit court's exercise of discretion would be wholly frivolous.

The no-merit report concludes that there would be no arguable merit to a challenge to the sufficiency of the evidence to support the jury verdicts. We affirm a verdict unless the evidence,

² After sentencing, the circuit court vacated the convictions for hiding a corpse and dismissed those counts on the ground that they were lesser-included offenses of mutilating a corpse.

viewed most favorably to the State and the conviction, is so insufficient in probative value and force that no reasonable trier of fact could have found guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. *State v. Poellinger*, 153 Wis. 2d 493, 501, 451 N.W.2d 752 (1990). Determinations as to the credibility of witnesses are left to the trier of fact. *Id.* at 504.

Here, the extensive evidence presented by the State at trial—including evidence that Halderson falsely reported his parents missing on July 7, 2021, when his parents had in fact never left the home they shared with Halderson after July 1, 2021; that human bone fragments were found in the Haldersons’ fireplace after Halderson reported his parents missing; and that, in the days after July 1, 2021, Halderson drove to the remote locations where parts of his parents’ dismembered bodies were ultimately recovered—was sufficient to meet the *Poellinger* standard. Any argument that the evidence at trial was insufficient to support the jury verdicts would be wholly frivolous.

The no-merit report also concludes that there would be no arguable merit to a challenge to the circuit court’s decision to impose a life sentence without the possibility of release. Our review of a sentence determination begins “with the presumption that the trial court acted reasonably, and the defendant must show some unreasonable or unjustifiable basis in the record for the sentence complained of.” *State v. Krueger*, 119 Wis. 2d 327, 336, 351 N.W.2d 738 (Ct. App. 1984). The record establishes that Halderson was afforded the opportunity to address the court before sentencing. The court explained that it considered facts pertinent to the standard sentencing factors and objectives, including the seriousness of the offenses, Halderson’s rehabilitative needs, and the need to protect the public. *See State v. Gallion*, 2004 WI 42, ¶¶39-46 & n.11, 270 Wis. 2d 535, 678 N.W.2d 197. Given the facts of this case, there would be no arguable merit to a claim that the sentence was unduly harsh or excessive. *See State v. Stenzel*,

2004 WI App 181, ¶21, 276 Wis. 2d 224, 688 N.W.2d 20 (a sentence is unduly harsh or excessive “only where the sentence is so excessive and unusual and so disproportionate to the offense committed as to shock public sentiment and violate the judgment of reasonable people concerning what is right and proper under the circumstances” (quoted source omitted omitted)). We discern no nonfrivolous basis to challenge the court’s exercise of its sentencing discretion.

The no-merit report also states that a defense investigation did not reveal any support for a claim of juror bias or ineffective assistance of counsel. We agree with counsel’s assessment that there is no indication that those issues would have arguable merit.

Halderson has filed a response asserting that his trial counsel was ineffective. Specifically, Halderson contends that his counsel failed to present a defense, conduct cross-examination, or call expert witnesses. However, Halderson does not set forth any facts that would support a claim of ineffective assistance of counsel. Halderson’s counsel challenged the State’s evidence when appropriate, cross-examined multiple witnesses, and argued that the jury should not find Halderson guilty of first-degree intentional homicide based on the State’s evidence. Nothing before this court would support a nonfrivolous argument that defense counsel was ineffective, including by failing to present evidence, conduct additional cross-examination, or call expert witnesses.

Halderson also contends that there were errors at trial that rendered the trial unfair. However, again, Halderson does not set forth any facts to support that claim. We discern no arguable merit to a claim that the trial was unfair.

Our independent review of the record discloses no other potential issues of arguable merit.

Therefore,

IT IS ORDERED that the judgment of conviction is summarily affirmed. *See* WIS. STAT. RULE 809.21.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that Attorney Michael Covey is relieved of further representation of Chandler Halderson in this matter. *See* WIS. STAT. RULE 809.32(3).

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that this summary disposition order will not be published.

Samuel A. Christensen
Clerk of Court of Appeals