

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF NEVADA

BRIAN KERRY O'KEEFE,
Appellant,
vs.
THE STATE OF NEVADA,
Respondent.

No. 53859

FILED

APR 07 2010

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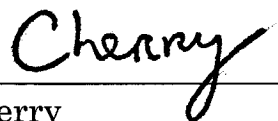
ORDER OF REVERSAL AND REMAND

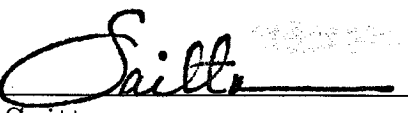
This is an appeal from a judgment of conviction entered pursuant to a jury verdict of one count of second-degree murder with the use of a deadly weapon. Eighth Judicial District Court, Clark County; Michael Villani, Judge.


Appellant Brian Kerry O'Keefe contends that the district court erred by giving the State's proposed instruction on second-degree murder because it set forth an alternative theory of second-degree murder, the charging document did not allege this alternate theory, and no evidence supported this theory. We agree. "The district court has broad discretion to settle jury instructions, and this court reviews the district court's decision for an abuse of that discretion or judicial error. An abuse of discretion occurs if the district court's decision is arbitrary or capricious or if it exceeds the bounds of law or reason." Crawford v. State, 121 Nev. 744, 748, 121 P.3d 582, 585 (2005) (internal quotation marks and footnote omitted). Here, the district court abused its discretion when it instructed the jury that second-degree murder includes involuntary killings that occur in the commission of an unlawful act because the State's charging document did not allege that O'Keefe killed the victim while he was

committing an unlawful act and the evidence presented at trial did not support this theory of second-degree murder. Cf., Jennings v. State, 116 Nev. 488, 490, 998 P.2d 557, 559 (2000) (adding an additional theory of murder at the close of the case violates the Sixth Amendment and NRS 173.075(1)). The district court's error in giving this instruction was not harmless because it is not clear beyond a reasonable doubt that a rational juror would have found O'Keefe guilty of second-degree murder absent the error. See Neder v. United States, 527 U.S. 1, 18-19 (1999); Wegner v. State, 116 Nev. 1149, 1155-56, 14 P.3d 25, 30 (2000), overruled on other grounds by Rosas v. State, 122 Nev. 1258, 147 P.3d 1101 (2006). Because we conclude that the judgment of conviction must be reversed and the case remanded for a new trial, we need not reach O'Keefe's remaining contentions. Accordingly, we

ORDER the judgment of conviction REVERSED AND REMAND this matter to the district court for proceedings consistent with this order.


_____, J.
Cherry


_____, J.
Saitta


_____, J.
Gibbons

cc: Hon. Michael Villani, District Judge
Special Public Defender
Attorney General/Carson City
Clark County District Attorney
Eighth District Court Clerk