1	IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES								
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3	KEVAN BRUMFIELD, :								
4	Petitioner : No. 13-1433								
5	v. :								
6	BURL CAIN, WARDEN. :								
7	x								
8	Washington, D.C.								
9	Monday, March 30th, 2015								
10									
11	The above-entitled matter came on for oral								
12	argument before the Supreme Court of the United States								
13	at 10:04 a.m.								
14	APPEARANCES:								
15	MICHAEL B. DeSANCTIS, ESQ., Washington, D.C.; on behalf								
16	of Petitioner.								
17	PREMILA BURNS, ESQ., Baton Rouge, La.; on behalf of								
18	Respondent.								
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- 2 (10:04 a.m.)
- 3 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: We'll hear argument
- 4 this morning in Case 13-1433, Brumfield v. Cain.
- 5 Mr. DeSanctis.
- 6 ORAL ARGUMENT OF MICHAEL B. DeSANCTIS
- 7 ON BEHALF OF PETITIONER
- 8 MR. DeSANCTIS: Mr. Chief Justice, and may
- 9 it please the Court:
- 10 The decision of the State court in this case
- 11 was to not -- to deny Kevan Brumfield a hearing on his
- 12 claim of intellectual disability. That decision was
- 13 based on an entirely unreasonable determination of the
- 14 facts of Brumfield's mental condition. The court
- 15 specifically -- the court expressly stated in its decision
- 16 to deny a hearing was, quote, "based on the three bases"
- 17 that it laid out in its oral ruling at Page 172 of the
- 18 Pet App. And I'd like to discuss each of those in turn.
- 19 The first basis given by the State court was
- that Brumfield scored a 75 on the Wechsler IQ Test.
- 21 That's not just suggestive of intellectual disability;
- 22 that's actual evidence of intellectual disability, and
- 23 there was no testimony in the record to the contrary.
- 24 This Court made it clear in Atkins, all of the clinical
- 25 texts on which this Court relied on in Atkins make it

- 1 clear, and the Louisiana Supreme Court had made it clear
- 2 in Williams and in Dunn.
- 3 The second basis for the State court's
- 4 decision was that the defendant has not, quote,
- 5 "demonstrated impairment based on this record in
- 6 adaptive skills." To demand or even expect that blood
- 7 from the stone of the pre-Atkins record where neither
- 8 intellectual disability nor adaptive skills were even
- 9 raised, is completely unreasonable. --
- 10 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I -- I'm sorry, but
- 11 isn't -- I -- I don't -- whether I agree with you or
- 12 not, isn't it your burden to prove that he had some
- 13 deficits in adaptive ability? You have to make the
- 14 threshold showing.
- 15 MR. DeSANCTIS: Yes. There's a threshold
- 16 showing under Louisiana law.
- 17 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So what did you show
- 18 that met that prong in any way?
- 19 MR. DeSANCTIS: Sure. The standard under
- 20 the Louisiana law is a low one. It's a burden of coming
- 21 forward with some evidence of objective facts that put
- the movant's intellectual disability at issue.
- 23 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, how is it --
- MR. DeSANCTIS: It's not --
- 25 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: How is that

- 1 determination under State law pertinent to the question
- 2 here?
- 3 MR. DeSANCTIS: I was -- I was merely
- 4 answering Justice Sotomayor's question as to what facts
- 5 were put into evidence before the State court. I was
- 6 setting the stage for the standard.
- 7 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, I understand
- 8 that. But given -- given the facts that were
- 9 presented -- and this is what the language of the law
- 10 is, of course. The evidence presented in the State
- 11 court proceeding, how is that pertinent on the
- 12 Federal -- Federal question?
- 13 MR. DeSANCTIS: We're --
- 14 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: In other words, I
- 15 don't think it would be a different -- your burden, I
- 16 don't think, would be different on the question that's
- 17 presented here if the State law required a higher
- 18 threshold or -- or not.
- 19 MR. DeSANCTIS: And we're not requiring --
- 20 we're not challenging the State law in this part of
- 21 our --
- 22 JUSTICE KENNEDY: But in your answer to
- 23 Justice Sotomayor, I -- I thought you said, well, if the
- 24 State has a very low standard. What difference does
- 25 that make? Are you saying that if the State with its

- 1 regular processes takes a Federal rule and misinterprets
- 2 the rule as part of its process, then there's a Federal
- 3 violation? Is that your point?
- 4 MR. DeSANCTIS: No. There -- there could be
- 5 in that case, but that's not our --
- 6 JUSTICE KENNEDY: What -- what --
- 7 MR. DeSANCTIS: -- but that's not our
- 8 argument.
- 9 JUSTICE KENNEDY: I mean, what -- what
- 10 difference does it make -- and I think this was what the
- 11 Chief Justice was concerned with as well. What difference
- does it make that Louisiana has a low bar or a high bar?
- 13 MR. DeSANCTIS: It -- it may not make a
- 14 difference, Your Honor. And -- and it's not a --
- 15 JUSTICE KENNEDY: All right.
- 16 MR. DeSANCTIS: -- critical part of our
- 17 argument. I will --
- 18 JUSTICE KENNEDY: And then while -- while
- 19 you're on -- on this: Suppose at the trial, in the
- 20 sentencing phase, an expert -- medical expert testified,
- 21 in my view, this defendant does not have an intellectual
- 22 disability as we define that in medical terms.
- Would you be here?
- MR. DeSANCTIS: We'd still be --
- 25 JUSTICE KENNEDY: That's a hypothetical of

- 1 course.
- 2 MR. DeSANCTIS: It's a hypothetical;
- 3 obviously, that wasn't this case. There was no
- 4 testimony at the State trial or sentencing about
- 5 intellectual disability. But in that case, we probably
- 6 still would be here because that's what happened in
- 7 Williams. In the -- in Williams 1, the defense's own
- 8 expert at trial, prior to Atkins, had testified that the
- 9 defendant was not intellectually disabled, and yet the
- 10 Louisiana Supreme Court sent it back for an Atkins
- 11 hearing because Atkins had entirely changed the legal
- 12 landscape. Now here --
- 13 JUSTICE ALITO: Well, the first question --
- 14 the first question presented in your petition is
- 15 "Whether a State court that considers the evidence
- 16 presented at a petitioner's penalty phase proceeding as
- 17 determinative of the petitioner's claim of intellectual
- 18 disability under Atkins... has based its decision on an
- 19 unreasonable determination of the facts."
- 20 So suppose that at the penalty phase
- 21 proceeding there is evidence of 5 IQ tests, all above
- 22 140. Would it be wrong to say that that's
- 23 determinative?
- 24 MR. DeSANCTIS: Again, obviously not our
- 25 case, but in that situation, we address that in our blue

- 1 brief. For the purpose of making clear that we are not
- 2 asking for a bright-line rule, in a situation where
- 3 there is uncontested -- uncontested evidence in the
- 4 pre-Atkins record that disqualifies the individual from
- 5 intellectual ability, if that were the case --
- 6 JUSTICE ALITO: So the answer to the first
- 7 question is no, it is not necessarily unconstitutional
- 8 to regard the penalty phase evidence as determinative.
- 9 MR. DeSANCTIS: It is in this case on this
- 10 record, and Section (d)(2) is by its very nature a
- 11 factual inquiry.
- 12 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Is -- is your point --
- MR. DeSANCTIS: So --
- 14 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Is your point that we are
- involved in a wholly different inquiry once Atkins is on
- 16 the books? Because when you were before the State court
- 17 at the sentencing hearing, you weren't talking about
- 18 intellectual disability.
- 19 MR. DeSANCTIS: That's --
- 20 JUSTICE GINSBURG: You were talking about
- 21 some mitigating factors. So the State court never had
- 22 before it an Atkins claim. An Atkins claim is raised
- 23 for the first time on post-conviction review.
- MR. DeSANCTIS: That -- that's exactly
- 25 right. It's -- it's similar to the reasoning that this

- 1 Court adopted in Bobby v. Bies. And in precisely this
- 2 setting, the Louisiana Supreme Court held -- or it
- 3 explained that prior to Atkins, as Your Honor just
- 4 explained, a defendant only had to show diminished
- 5 capacity as a mitigating factor and wasn't called upon
- 6 to marshal demonstrations of intellectual disability or
- 7 impairment in adaptive skills.
- 8 JUSTICE SCALIA: Do you not think it would
- 9 have been ineffective assistance of counsel pre-Atkins
- 10 for a lawyer who had a client who was severely mentally
- 11 disabled not to bring that fact forward in the -- in the
- 12 sentencing hearing for consideration by the jury?
- 13 MR. DeSANCTIS: Your Honor --
- 14 JUSTICE SCALIA: Even -- even though it
- 15 wasn't, you know, a mandatory Federal basis for -- for
- 16 exempting him from the death penalty, surely you would
- 17 want the jury to consider that kind of evidence,
- 18 wouldn't you?
- 19 MR. DeSANCTIS: Your Honor, this Court in
- 20 Henry and again in Atkins recognized that putting on a
- 21 defense of, quote-unquote, "mental retardation," as the
- 22 term was used at that time, is a double-edged sword.
- 23 It's a much higher burden typically than the lower
- 24 burden of putting on mitigating evidence of one's mental
- 25 condition.

- 1 And -- which brings me to answer Justice --
- 2 JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, I don't find that
- 3 persuasive. It seems to me you -- you have the burden
- 4 to show that there was some basis for the State Supreme
- 5 Court coming out the other way, and that basis should
- 6 have been in the record, according to the Federal
- 7 statute, and your only defense is, well, we didn't put
- 8 anything in the record because Atkins had not yet been
- 9 decided.
- 10 MR. DeSANCTIS: No, Your Honor. And that
- 11 goes to Justice Sotomayor's question as well. There was
- 12 overwhelming evidence of impairment of -- in adaptive
- 13 skills and intellectual disability in the State court
- 14 record --
- 15 JUSTICE SCALIA: All right.
- 16 MR. DeSANCTIS: -- before the State court
- 17 judge. First --
- 18 JUSTICE SCALIA: Fine. So let's get
- 19 rid of that argument that Atkins had not been decided.
- 20 That -- that had nothing to do with the case, right?
- 21 MR. DeSANCTIS: Okay. Turning to the
- 22 evidence in this case, first, it was evidence before
- 23 the State court judge that Mr. Brumfield had a fourth
- 24 grade reading level in terms of mere word recognition,
- 25 not even comprehension. That's, again, actual evidence

- 1 of impairment in adaptive skills.
- 2 It was in the record before the State court
- 3 that Mr. Brumfield, quote, "has a basic deficit
- 4 somewhere in his brain." It was in the record in the
- 5 State court that he had a very low birth weight that put
- 6 him at risk of neurological trauma, and it was in the
- 7 record from Dr. Bolter that Mr. Brumfield was in trouble
- 8 many, many, many years ago.
- 9 The second expert before the State court,
- 10 this is in the State court record, was Dr. Guin. She
- 11 was a social worker. She didn't perform any tests of
- 12 her own, but she found that Mr. Brumfield was sent to,
- 13 quote, "special education from the third grade; that he
- 14 had been placed in and out of mental hospitals because
- 15 no one knew what to do with him throughout his childhood
- 16 and youth; that his main problem was that he cannot
- 17 process information the way normal people do." And
- 18 that's -- that -- that is a key indicator of
- 19 intellectual disability that this Court recognized twice
- 20 in Atkins.
- 21 She testified that Brumfield -- before the
- 22 State court, she testified that Brumfield needed someone
- 23 to, quote, "help him function." That he did poorly even
- 24 at recess as a child because he couldn't function with a
- 25 lot of chaos around him. That age -- at age 11, one of

- 1 the mental institutions in which he had been placed,
- 2 quote, "questioned his intellectual functions and noted
- 3 his slowness in motor development." And that the
- 4 nurses, literally from his birth, recognized that there
- 5 was something wrong with him and that he was slower than
- 6 normal babies.
- 7 JUSTICE SCALIA: Am I wrong in my
- 8 understanding that the record included an expert report
- 9 stating that Brumfield possessed, quote, "a normal
- 10 capacity to learn and acquire information" and that he
- 11 had, quote, "adequate problem and" -- "and reasoning
- 12 skill" -- "problem-solving and reasoning skills." Is --
- is -- is that correct?
- MR. DeSANCTIS: Your Honor, if -- that's --
- 15 I believe that's from the report of Dr. Jordan.
- 16 Dr. Jordan did not testify in the State court
- 17 proceeding. It's --
- 18 JUSTICE SCALIA: It -- it was not in the
- 19 record?
- 20 MR. DeSANCTIS: It's actually an issue of
- 21 debate whether Dr. Jordan's report was in the record.
- 22 At the Federal hearing, the State conceded that it was
- 23 not. And the -- and the judge doesn't -- the State
- 24 court judge doesn't say he read it, although it was
- 25 discussed by some of the experts, though not the -- the

- 1 portion you just read.
- 2 JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, if it was in it, it's
- 3 pretty categorical, you know. I would think that's
- 4 enough for the State court to hang its hat on. I don't
- 5 think we -- we can possibly find that it was
- 6 unreasonable evidentiary finding, if -- if that was
- 7 indeed in the record.
- 8 MR. DeSANCTIS: Your Honor, it -- it is,
- 9 because, again, the burden --
- 10 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Did -- did the State put
- 11 it in the record?
- MR. DeSANCTIS: No, there's no evidence,
- 13 Your Honor, that the State put it in the record. They
- 14 have claimed at various points in the proceeding --
- 15 JUSTICE GINSBURG: And you didn't, but
- 16 another -- another expert referred to it.
- 17 MR. DeSANCTIS: That's correct. Bolter --
- 18 Dr. Bolter referenced Dr. Jordan's report regarding his
- 19 IQ testing, that it was merely a screening test and he
- 20 was dismissive of it.
- 21 JUSTICE GINSBURG: But the State wasn't --
- 22 didn't put it in evidence, so it wasn't --
- 23 MR. DeSANCTIS: And they didn't -- and they
- 24 did not --
- 25 JUSTICE KENNEDY: And -- and are we talking

- 1 about the trial record now?
- 2 MR. DeSANCTIS: We're talking about the
- 3 State trial record.
- 4 JUSTICE KENNEDY: At the sentencing -- at
- 5 the sentencing hearing.
- 6 MR. DeSANCTIS: At the sentencing, that's
- 7 correct.
- 8 Second, it -- it is very relevant that
- 9 the State court ignored all of the objective facts after
- 10 the defendant had been required only to come on with
- 11 some evidence. There's no indication in the State
- 12 court's decision, which he explains precisely was based
- on the three factors that he just laid out.
- 14 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Did you ask --
- 15 MR. DeSANCTIS: The State court did not --
- 16 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Did you ask the State
- 17 court for funds as a matter of Federal right? The other
- 18 side says, did you ask for funds for State habeas only
- 19 under State law and not under Federal law; is that true?
- 20 MR. DeSANCTIS: We requested funds
- 21 repeatedly in -- in every petition before the court.
- 22 And in doing so, at least six times we cited the
- 23 Louisiana court of Deboue v. Whitley. That case
- 24 discusses Ake and is based exclusively on Ake and
- 25 Federal law. And this Court has made clear that if --

- 1 that a claim is preserved by citing a case that relies
- on the appropriate Federal law. So, yes.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Mr. DeSanctis, I -- I
- 4 will perhaps talk about what is a little confusing; if
- 5 not confusing, disconcerting in this case. There seems
- 6 to be an inequity that one could perceive that says you
- 7 can use the penalty phase record, but the other side
- 8 can't to challenge your conclusions. Because that's
- 9 basically what you're saying. And so and that was, I
- 10 think, Justice Alito's point, which is you concede on
- 11 some -- in some circumstances the State might.
- 12 What makes your case different? Now, I do
- 13 know that this -- in this case you're saying you
- 14 provided some -- a sufficient amount of some evidence.
- 15 MR. DeSANCTIS: Correct.
- 16 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: And the State was
- 17 unreasonable by not giving you a hearing to determine
- 18 the merits of your claim.
- 19 MR. DeSANCTIS: Correct.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: All right. We don't
- 21 even get to the issue of whether you were entitled to
- 22 funds at that hearing, but I don't even think under
- 23 Louisiana you wouldn't be, once you've made the
- 24 threshold showing.
- 25 MR. DeSANCTIS: It's a distinct issue that

- 1 our question --
- 2 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Right.
- 3 MR. DESANCTIS: -- one does not depend on.
- 4 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: All right. So answer my
- 5 question, because it's -- it's a bit of a takeoff from
- 6 Justice Alito's question, which is what is -- why in
- 7 your case can't the State rely on the evidence in the
- 8 penalty phase, if that's what you're relying on to make
- 9 your sum showing?
- 10 MR. DeSANCTIS: There really is no inequity
- 11 there, Your Honor. And I'm glad you asked. The
- 12 Louisiana Supreme Court explained it in Dunn, which
- 13 predated the State court's decision in this case by
- 14 almost a year. The court explained that although the
- 15 defendant was not called upon to offer proof of
- 16 intellectual disability on -- at the trial prior to
- 17 Atkins, the defendant did offer evidence of intellectual
- 18 disability through that record. It was far less than
- 19 the evidence that I just articulated.
- 20 From there, the court explained that it was
- 21 improper for the State court to then weigh any contrary
- 22 evidence without the quidance of experts and essentially
- 23 make a diagnosis itself as to where -- whether the facts
- in the record are consistent or inconsistent with
- 25 intellectual disability.

1 JUSTICE SCALIA: The court always has to do

- 2 it itself, even when there are experts. I mean, I don't
- 3 understand that.
- 4 MR. DeSANCTIS: Once the defendant comes
- 5 forward with -- with some evidence, which Mr. Brumfield
- 6 did here overwhelmingly, if there's contrary evidence in
- 7 the record, that's what the hearing is for. And that's
- 8 all we were asking. We weren't asking for --
- 9 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Put this -- put this in
- 10 perspective for a moment. Suppose we're in the district
- 11 court on a petition for habeas.
- 12 MR. DeSANCTIS: Federal district court.
- 13 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Federal -- United States
- 14 district court, and the question is: Is the defendant
- 15 entitled to a hearing? This petitioner entitled to a
- 16 hearing?
- 17 what is the standard that the district
- 18 court must find -- met before the district court has a
- 19 hearing on the facts? Before the district court can
- 20 have its experts. Does he have to find that the State
- 21 collateral decision was clearly erroneous? Or that
- 22 there was a prima facie evidence of -- of disability
- 23 that the State collateral court ignored? What's the
- 24 district court have to do before it decides it's going
- 25 to have a hearing and call its own experts?

- 1 MR. DeSANCTIS: So --
- 2 JUSTICE KENNEDY: What standard must it meet
- 3 and did it meet that standard here?
- 4 MR. DeSANCTIS: The answer to the final part
- 5 of your question is yes. I would break it down this
- 6 way: The -- the question of whether an individual is
- 7 intellectually disabled this Court left to the States
- 8 under Atkins. So the State standard is what applies for
- 9 the showing that a defendant must make in order to prove
- 10 his intellectual disability at the hearing.
- 11 If that occurs pre-Atkins as it did in this
- 12 case and we get to Federal habeas, under 2254(d)(2), the
- 13 Federal habeas judge looks at whether the factual
- 14 determinations in this case of the defendant's mental
- 15 condition were unreasonable. And here they were. The
- 16 judge articulated three grounds, one of which was
- 17 evidence of intellectual disability, one of which was
- 18 irrelevant to the question of intellectual disability,
- 19 and ignored a plethora of evidence in the record putting
- 20 Mr. Brumfield's intellectual disability --
- 21 JUSTICE KENNEDY: So are you saying --

- 23 JUSTICE KENNEDY: -- that the district
- 24 court, the United States district court decided to have
- a hearing because it found that the State court's

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1 collateral review determination was, fill in the blank,
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- 2 clearly erroneous?
- 3 MR. DeSANCTIS: Was unreasonable.
- 4 Unreasonable.
- 5 JUSTICE KENNEDY: That's the AEDPA standard.
- 6 MR. DeSANCTIS: That's the AEDPA standard
- 7 and (d)(2) --
- 8 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Unreasonable because there
- 9 were some open questions, or because no one could read
- 10 the record to say that there was evidence that he had no
- 11 disability?
- MR. DeSANCTIS: Because the -- the State
- 13 court judge in this case expressly indicated what his
- 14 decision was based on. It was based on three bases, all
- of which are entirely unreasonable and no one could --
- 16 no one could say that they support a claim that the
- 17 defendant is not intellectually --
- 18 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Also, we've heard --
- 19 heard a lot of discussion on the evidence at issue in
- 20 this particular case. What -- what is the broader
- 21 significance of that discussion here? I'm concerned
- 22 your answer to Justice Alito was that the answer to
- 23 your -- your first question was no, it's not necessarily
- 24 the case that it's unreasonable determination in a
- 25 situation where the State considers the evidence blah

- 1 blah. But you're saying now that in this case it was?
- 2 MR. DeSANCTIS: Correct.
- 3 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: So what is the
- 4 broader significance of the question you want us to
- 5 decide? Since you've conceded that the question -- the
- 6 answer to the first question presented is no.
- 7 MR. DeSANCTIS: No. I'm sorry, I certainly
- 8 did not mean to concede that the answer to the first
- 9 question presented is no. My answer to Justice Alito's
- 10 hypothetical was if there is uncontested evidence in the
- 11 record --
- 12 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Right, right. But I
- 13 mean --
- 14 MR. DeSANCTIS: -- disqualifying
- 15 intellectual disability, then --
- 16 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Right. But you --
- 17 your question is: If it's determinative, is it
- 18 unreasonable? And Justice Alito --
- 19 MR. DeSANCTIS: That's right.
- 20 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: -- gave you an
- 21 example of where it was determinative and you said it
- 22 was not unreasonable. So as a general rule, the
- 23 question is -- the answer to the question is no. And in
- 24 terms of what we're going to decide, I just need to know
- 25 whether it is simply whether the facts in your

- 1 particular case lead to a particular result, or if there
- 2 is some more general legal rule that you're arguing for.
- 3 MR. DeSANCTIS: Section 2254(d)(2) is, on
- 4 its face and by its text, a factual inquiry. And this
- 5 Court need do nothing more than rule that what this
- 6 judge did in this proceeding on this pre-Atkins record
- 7 was unreasonable.
- 8 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Can you go back to
- 9 Justice Kennedy's question? And -- and either working
- 10 it backwards or working it forward, but you're not
- 11 taking it step by step, okay? Atkins I believe says
- 12 that a State doesn't have to give you a hearing if you
- 13 haven't met a threshold.
- 14 MR DeSANCTIS: That's correct.
- 15 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: And that's -- and that
- 16 threshold definition is a reasonable --
- 17 MR. DeSANCTIS: No. The threshold
- 18 definition in Louisiana --
- 19 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Not Louisiana, Atkins.
- 20 What did Atkins say?
- 21 MR. DeSANCTIS: Atkins doesn't -- Atkins
- doesn't articulate.
- 23 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: It doesn't, but it does
- 24 articulate that there has to be a threshold and it has
- 25 to be some doubt as to mental capacity, correct?

- 1 MR. DeSANCTIS: Some reason to believe that
- 2 the individual is intellectually disabled.
- 3 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Some reason to believe.
- 4 So that was the standard. Some reason to believe that
- 5 an individual's mental capacity is -- is compromised,
- 6 correct?
- 7 MR. DeSANCTIS: Correct.
- 8 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So is your first
- 9 argument that there was enough evidence to have -- for
- 10 you to have been entitled to a hearing?
- 11 MR. DeSANCTIS: That certainly is part of
- 12 our argument, but it doesn't explain the entirety of the
- 13 Federal error -- of the error recognized -- cognizable
- 14 under Federal law --
- 15 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Okay.
- 16 MR. DeSANCTIS: -- under Section (d)(2).
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: Why don't you tell us the
- 18 three -- you said that in the State habeas, there were
- 19 three things that were unreasonable.
- 20 MR. DeSANCTIS: Correct.
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: So tell us what they
- 22 were.
- 23 MR. DeSANCTIS: So the first -- this is on
- 24 pages 171 and 172 of the Petition Appendix. The first
- 25 was that Mr. Brumfield had an IQ score of 75. We know

- 1 as a matter of clinical fact that that is evidence of
- 2 intellectual disability. The second --
- 3 JUSTICE ALITO: There was a second. Was
- 4 there not testimony about a second IQ test that was a
- 5 little bit higher?
- 6 JUSTICE SCALIA: 75 I thought.
- 7 JUSTICE ALITO: There was one that was 75.
- 8 Was there another one that was higher than 75?
- 9 MR. DeSANCTIS: Not -- that came from
- 10 Dr. Jordan who did not testify. And his report actually
- 11 doesn't say what he scored there. And the evidence at
- 12 trial that came out about it was Dr. Bolter saying what
- 13 Dr, Jordan did was merely a screening test, which is not
- 14 reliable anyway. So there is no other number in the
- 15 record.
- 16 The second prong articulated by the State
- 17 court was that Mr. Brumfield had not demonstrated
- 18 impairment in adaptive skills. This Court, the
- 19 Louisiana Supreme Court have all indicated that because
- 20 Atkins changed the playing field, it is unjust and
- 21 unreasonable to look to a pre-Atkins record for that
- 22 determination. However, the record from that -- from
- 23 that pre-Atkins trial and sentencing was replete with
- 24 evidence which the -- which the State court never
- 25 mentions in his decision.

- 1 JUSTICE SCALIA: I thought the former --
- 2 MR. DeSANCTIS: Third --
- 3 JUSTICE SCALIA: I thought the former was
- 4 that the question you sought to bring before us; namely,
- 5 that the State court couldn't use it at all, period. I
- 6 mean, question one that you -- you presented in your
- 7 petition is as follows: "Whether a State court that
- 8 considers the evidence presented at a Petitioner's
- 9 penalty phase proceeding as determinative of the
- 10 Petitioner's claim of intellectual disability under
- 11 Atkins has based its decision on an unreasonable
- 12 determination of the facts." Whether a State court, any
- 13 State court, not this particular State court, but
- 14 whether any State court that makes its decision based
- 15 upon a pre-Atkins penalty phase hearing is
- 16 automatically -- has automatically made an unreasonable
- 17 determination of the facts. Wasn't that the question
- 18 you presented?
- 19 MR. DeSANCTIS: We did not intend that
- 20 the -- the question presented to be -- to sound more
- 21 like a legal question that would become a matter of law.
- 22 JUSTICE SCALIA: Oh, fine. That's what it
- 23 sounds like.
- JUSTICE BREYER: I thought your case
- 25 included the following: Atkins says you cannot sentence

- 1 to death and execute an intellectually disabled person.
- 2 So Mr. Smith, whose case is not final, says to the
- 3 judge, Judge, I would like to produce evidence I am
- 4 intellectually disabled. The State says, no, you can't.
- 5 That would clearly violate Atkins. Wouldn't it?
- 6 MR. DeSANCTIS: Correct.
- 7 JUSTICE BREYER: Now, suppose it says, yes,
- 8 you can -- now, we don't have an Atkins. A standard
- 9 which says when you do and when you don't have to state,
- 10 let this person present evidence. We don't say it. But
- 11 the State has found one. The State of Louisiana has a
- 12 standard, and I take it if that's a good enough
- 13 standard, that's what we should follow.
- 14 And that standard from State v. Williams
- 15 says, we will give you a hearing, if you, Mr. Smith,
- 16 provide objective factors that will put at issue -- put
- 17 at issue, the fact of mental retardation. If you will
- 18 come forward with some evidence to put your mental
- 19 condition at issue. And so I guess, unless we think
- 20 Louisiana can't use that standard, that that standard is
- 21 good enough for Federal purposes. And, therefore, the
- 22 issue is did your client and you put forward some
- 23 evidence to put your mental condition at issue.
- And as long as you came forward with some
- 25 evidence, then unless we're prepared to write some new

- 1 Federal standard for when you have to give a hearing and
- 2 when not, that's the question. And you're saying, among
- 3 other things, of course, Judges -- you're telling us --
- 4 of course we put forward some evidence. In fact, we
- 5 think we put forward a lot more, and we would have put
- 6 forward a lot more if the hearing hadn't been
- 7 pre-Atkins. Isn't that your argument?
- 8 MR. DeSANCTIS: That is correct.
- 9 JUSTICE BREYER: Thank you.
- 10 MR. DeSANCTIS: That is our argument.
- 11 (Laughter.)
- 12 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So let's get -- so let's
- 13 get to --
- 14 JUSTICE SCALIA: Thank you for putting it so
- 15 clearly.
- 16 JUSTICE BREYER: Well, I think that's
- important that that be your argument--
- 18 MR. DeSANCTIS: Well, I don't want to --
- 19 JUSTICE BREYER: -- whether you say -- I
- 20 mean, it's important if it really is your argument.
- 21 (Laughter.)
- 22 JUSTICE BREYER: And it is, isn't it?
- 23 MR. DeSANCTIS: I think it really is our
- 24 argument.
- 25 JUSTICE ALITO: I don't want to intrude too

- 1 much on your rebuttal time, but as the case has been
- 2 argued, I think you're making a strong argument that is
- 3 purely a factual argument about this case, that you are
- 4 not making an argument about the categorical --
- 5 categorical rule about not considering evidence at a
- 6 pre-Atkins penalty phase proceeding.
- 7 And unless you can point to precedent that
- 8 shows that it was clearly established that you had a
- 9 right to funding, then your -- your inability to put in
- 10 evidence via the funding is not to be considered. And
- 11 all that is before us is whether, on the evidence that
- 12 was in the record at the State -- at a post-conviction
- 13 proceeding, it was an unreasonable application of
- 14 Federal -- of constitutional law. That's the question;
- 15 right?
- MR. DeSANCTIS: No, Your Honor.
- 17 Respectfully, that would be under (d) (1). Under (d) (2)
- 18 the question --
- 19 JUSTICE ALITO: All right. An unreasonable
- 20 determination of fact.
- 21 MR. DeSANCTIS: Correct.
- 22 JUSTICE ALITO: But it's purely fact-bound.
- 23 MR. DeSANCTIS: Yes. That's the nature of
- 24 (d)(2) and that's the question on which the this Court
- 25 granted cert.

1 JUSTICE ALITO: There's no broader legal

- 2 issue involved here?
- 3 MR. DeSANCTIS: Not on (d)(1). Not on --
- 4 JUSTICE ALITO: No cross-cutting legal
- 5 issue?
- 6 MR. DeSANCTIS: Not on our first question
- 7 presented.
- 8 JUSTICE ALITO: On -- in the whole case?
- 9 MR. DeSANCTIS: Our -- our second question
- 10 presented is a question of whether the State court
- 11 application of Federal law was unreasonable contrary to
- 12 Federal law. We think it was, as spelled out in our
- 13 brief. But our first question presented does not depend
- 14 on that.
- Mr. Chief Justice, I'll reserve my time for
- 16 rebuttal.
- 17 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.
- 18 Ms. Burns.
- 19 ORAL ARGUMENT OF PREMILA BURNS
- ON BEHALF OF RESPONDENT
- 21 MS. BURNS: Mr. Chief Justice, and may it
- 22 please the Court:
- 23 I would like to just begin by recapping that
- 24 what is at issue here is whether the ultimate factual
- 25 conclusion that was made by the State habeas court, was

- 1 it reasonable and entitled to AEDPA deference under
- 2 whatever viable support was available in that record?
- 3 The magistrate judge, on April the 15th of
- 4 2008, in her recommendation to the district court, which
- 5 was in fact adopted and signed off on by the district
- 6 court, found that there was, in fact, failure to put
- 7 forth objective factors in this case and that he should
- 8 not been given an Atkins hearing.
- 9 JUSTICE BREYER: All right. But that's the
- 10 standard. That's what I think -- the quest -- of course
- 11 you can't know whether it's unreasonable or not
- 12 unreasonable unless you know what standard you're trying
- 13 to meet. And my impression is -- and that's why I went
- on at length, and you heard what I said -- and the --
- and it's really to you; I want to be sure he adopts
- 16 it -- the standards seem to be the standard you are
- 17 entitled to a hearing, says Louisiana, indeed a new one,
- 18 if you meet the standard of State v. Williams.
- 19 MS. BURNS: If --
- 20 JUSTICE BREYER: And that seemed to me good
- 21 enough to be a Federal standard in the absence of any
- 22 other.
- Now, am I right about that or wrong?
- MS. BURNS: The -- the court -- the cases
- 25 have held that for funding or for --

1 JUSTICE BREYER: Forget funding for the

- 2 moment.
- 3 MS. BURNS: There must be sufficient factors
- 4 set forth, objective factors, not mere conclusive.
- 5 JUSTICE BREYER: No. I agree with that. I
- 6 just want to know factors to show what. And am I right
- 7 in saying in the absence in Atkins of any standard about
- 8 when you have to have a hearing, that the State standard
- 9 is good enough. What he wants is a hearing. He doesn't
- 10 want us -- he'd like it -- but he doesn't want -- we
- don't have to say whether this person is intellectually
- 12 disabled or not. He wants a hearing. And there is
- 13 nothing in Atkins that says what the standard is to give
- 14 him a hearing. Therefore, I looked at the State
- 15 standard from Williams and thought that's good enough to
- 16 serve as a Federal standard. Now, am I right or wrong?
- 17 MS. BURNS: The standard is, under deference
- 18 to the State, and to the State of Louisiana and to our
- 19 mental retardation intellectual disability statute, that
- 20 there are three prongs --
- 21 JUSTICE BREYER: No. No. You're not
- 22 answering my question. Of course we defer to the State,
- 23 and we defer to the State when it makes what judgment?
- 24 The judgment you, Mr. Defendant, are not entitled to a
- 25 hearing. So what's the standard under which they decide

- 1 whether he's entitled to a hearing or not?
- 2 MS. BURNS: The standard --
- 3 JUSTICE BREYER: And I thought it's State v.
- 4 Williams. Am I right, or am I wrong?
- 5 MS. BURNS: The -- the failure to
- 6 meet an adaptive prong -- you have to put some evidence
- 7 forward of this prong.
- 8 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Excuse me. Are we going
- 9 around in a circle, a little bit of a circle? It seems
- 10 to me that if what happened here was the right thing,
- 11 the Federal court went back and said, did the State
- 12 properly preclude this Petitioner from putting on or
- 13 discovering evidence? Did it improperly fail to hold a
- 14 hearing? And the court there said, by the -- the
- 15 courts -- by any standard, there was some
- 16 evidence -- certainly by the State standard, but even by
- 17 a constitutional standard, there was some evidence of
- 18 incompetency. He was entitled to a hearing. They
- 19 didn't give it to him, so now I will give him the
- 20 hearing, because this is Federal habeas. And, in fact,
- 21 we have said if a State improperly precludes you from
- developing a claim, then there is no deference owed to
- 23 the State.
- So what we're really looking at was, was the
- 25 Federal hearing properly granted? You did not argue

- 1 that on the basis of the evidence produced at the
- 2 Federal hearing, that this man was not intellectually
- 3 disabled. You have put all your eggs in the basket of,
- 4 on the record that didn't permit a hearing, he didn't
- 5 make out a threshold finding. That's been your only
- 6 defense so far.
- 7 MS. BURNS: But the two issues that were
- 8 presented to the Fifth Circuit were both that there
- 9 should have been -- there should never have been a
- 10 hearing in this case, which is still our position, for
- 11 failure to give deference under AEDPA; and secondly --
- 12 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So if we disagree with
- 13 that -- if we disagree with that, what are you left
- 14 with?
- MS. BURNS: Well, then it -- it needs to
- 16 be -- if you find that there should have been a hearing,
- 17 then you need to remand it back to the Fifth -- the
- 18 Fifth Circuit for review of the facts.
- 19 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Why? Ah, to -- to view
- 20 the conclusion from the facts developed there?
- 21 MS. BURNS: Absolutely. And, of course, our
- 22 position to the Fifth Circuit was you should look at
- 23 both of these issues. You look at AEDPA, and if you
- 24 should find that there should have been a Federal
- 25 hearing, then at that point we ask you to look to the

- 1 fact that he did not make a preponderance case, which
- 2 they made a preliminary finding of in footnote 8.
- 3 JUSTICE BREYER: But that isn't -- that
- 4 isn't -- at this moment, I'll put it once more, and see
- 5 if I get an absolute, definite answer from you, and I'm
- 6 overstating, but if I had to decide at this moment
- 7 whether there is enough evidence for you to win on the
- 8 point is he intellectually disabled, I would say you
- 9 win. If I decide -- have to decide whether or not he
- 10 presented enough evidence to get a hearing, I would say
- 11 you lose.
- Now, that's why it's important to me to
- 13 know. Are we trying to decide here whether there was
- 14 enough evidence, such that the State under Federal law
- 15 was unreasonable in not granting him a hearing, there I
- 16 look at the standards of Williams, and I think you lose.
- 17 If we're deciding something else, like whether he's
- 18 intellectually disabled, and I'm repeating myself, I
- 19 think you win.
- That's why I want your answer to the
- 21 question of which are we deciding, or both.
- 22 MS. BURNS: The point is that no evidence,
- 23 not one adaptive deficit was ever presented at State
- 24 habeas.
- 25 JUSTICE KAGAN: But Ms. Burns -- Ms. Burns,

- 1 I think what Justice Breyer is driving at is just this,
- 2 and reasonable people might disagree on the answer to
- 3 this, but I think, you know, the determination that the
- 4 State court was making at that moment was whether to
- 5 have a hearing. And under Louisiana law, I don't think
- 6 you disagree with this, I don't think anybody could
- 7 disagree with this, under Louisiana law, you have a
- 8 hearing when the defendant has come forward, and it's --
- 9 the burden is on the defendant -- but when the defendant
- 10 has come forward with some evident -- some evidence that
- 11 raises a reasonable doubt as to his mental capacity.
- 12 That's the standard that's in Williams, it's repeated
- 13 again in Dunn. You don't agree -- disagree with that.
- 14 MS. BURNS: I do not, Your Honor.
- 15 JUSTICE KAGAN: And -- and so what Justice
- 16 Breyer is suggesting is that when we -- when we realize
- 17 that that's the determination that the State court is
- 18 making, whether the defendant has come forward with some
- 19 evidence putting his mental capacity at issue, it looks
- 20 awfully like an unreasonable determination of facts to
- 21 say that this record does not meet that standard.
- 22 That's all that the case is about, isn't it?
- 23 MS. BURNS: I disagree. I disagree. This
- 24 is almost a reverse Hall situation in the -- in the
- 25 States looking at. Because if you look at Hall, Hall

- 1 was trying to rest totally on an IQ. Here he's trying
- 2 to do the same thing to say, oh, there's a 75, possibly
- 3 we concede a higher IQ than that. But Hall -- in Hall,
- 4 there was a preclusion of the adaptive, as this Court
- 5 has said is -- is integral to the showing, not one
- 6 adaptive deficit --
- 7 JUSTICE KAGAN: Well, I think what --
- 8 JUSTICE GINSBURG: But the -- but
- 9 adaptive -- adaptive was not relevant to the -- the
- 10 determination at the sentencing hearing, because there
- 11 was no Atkins. They were trying to show mental deficit,
- 12 but they adapted something when we're making an Atkins
- 13 determination. And there was -- that was never before
- 14 the sentencing court. It's only after Atkins is decided
- 15 that adaptive becomes -- becomes relevant.
- But I didn't -- I wanted to ask you
- 17 something in this record that's disturbing, and maybe
- 18 you can explain it. There is a brief -- you know it;
- 19 it's by Justice Calogero -- that says there were 18
- 20 people who were sentenced to death and -- and before
- 21 Atkins. Then Atkins is decided. Every one except for
- 22 this Petitioner got a hearing in the State court; is
- 23 that true?
- 24 MS. BURNS: That is not true. And if Your
- 25 Honor will indulge me, I can go case by case. It will

- 1 eat into my time, but I'll be glad to do that. In
- 2 Dunn --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Please don't.
- 4 (Laughter.)
- 5 MS. BURNS: In many of those cases, there
- 6 was either a pretrial showing of mental retardation,
- 7 something in the record that was serious, a diagnosis
- 8 which was never present in this case. There was no
- 9 mention of the word "intellectual disability" in Kevan
- 10 Brumfield's case until June 16th of 2003, after Atkins
- 11 was decided -- and that is the first time -- after
- 12 Atkins was decided that he made this claim that says I
- 13 have a 75 IQ, I have adaptive deficits without
- 14 specifying one of them.
- 15 JUSTICE KAGAN: But --
- 16 MS. BURNS: And they were onset prior to 18.
- 17 He did not meet his standard under Atkins.
- 18 JUSTICE KAGAN: But Ms. Dunn, if we could go
- 19 back, just on this point: You said he didn't meet the
- 20 standard. And the standard is, as Justice Breyer
- 21 suggested and you agreed, the one that comes from Dunn.
- 22 And what I understand Mr. Brumfield to be saying is,
- 23 look, all I need is some evidence. The evidence that
- 24 was in the trial record, even though it was pre-Atkins,
- 25 the evidence was -- that was in the trial record was, I

- 1 had a very low IQ, 75. In addition, there was some
- 2 evidence of -- of adaptive deficits, even -- even though
- 3 they weren't trying to prove this point, evidence came
- 4 in that he didn't read very well, he didn't write very
- 5 well, he had problems processing information. So that
- 6 there was all that evidence.
- 7 And then you sort of top -- when you look at
- 8 the -- what the court said, I mean, basically, each one
- 9 of the three things that the court said was just wrong.
- 10 You know, the 75 is evidence of disability, there was
- 11 evidence of adaptive functioning, and this idea that the
- 12 court had that evidence relating to an antisocial
- 13 personality somehow precluded the finding of mental
- 14 disability is wrong as well.
- So I guess the question that Justice
- 16 Breyer's question really leads to is like: What's not
- 17 some evidence here? And didn't the court just
- 18 misunderstand what -- what record it was looking at and
- 19 what it was doing?
- 20 MS. BURNS: I -- I would disagree,
- 21 respectfully, and I would also ask this Court to
- 22 remember that the court here looked at the entire record
- 23 and that --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, that's the point. It
- 25 seems to me --

- 1 MS. BURNS: That is the --
- 2 JUSTICE SCALIA: That's the point you have
- 3 to attack. Does the State saying that there has to be
- 4 some evidence, does that mean if there is one item of
- 5 evidence -- even though it's outweighed by everything
- 6 else, it's contradicted by other -- by other
- 7 witnesses -- if there's one little peppercorn of
- 8 evidence, you have to go on to a hearing? Is that what
- 9 the State rule means? Or does it mean when you consider
- 10 the entirety, including the rebuttal evidence -- --
- 11 MS. BURNS: It is --
- 12 JUSTICE SCALIA: -- is there reasonably some
- 13 evidence of his mental disability?
- 14 MS. BURNS: Justice Scalia, it is the
- 15 entirety of the record.
- 16 JUSTICE SCALIA: I thought that's what it
- 17 was.
- 18 MS. BURNS: I am not --
- 19 JUSTICE KAGAN: Oh, sure, I consider the --
- 20 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Then -- then --
- 21 MS. BURNS: I cannot underscore that -- the
- 22 first thing that the State did at the sentencing hearing
- 23 was to reintroduce the 41 witnesses who testified, their
- 24 testimony, as well as the 159 exhibits that went into
- 25 the very sophisticated premeditated --

1 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: But wait a minute. Wait

- 2 a minute.
- 3 MS. BURNS: -- planning in this prong.
- 4 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: But wait a minute. Then
- 5 there is a legal question here. And the legal question
- 6 is: Can a State make the final determination of -- of
- 7 mental incapacity, or lack thereof, based on a trial
- 8 record that did not address the issue? That was the
- 9 question presented. And you're saying it can, and what
- 10 your adversary is saying, if there is some evidence of
- 11 mental incapacity, then I'm entitled to a separate
- 12 hearing that addresses that question alone; I can put in
- 13 additional evidence and contradict whatever happened at
- 14 the penalty stage. That's what his point is. Why is he
- 15 wrong?
- 16 MS. BURNS: He's wrong because that would
- 17 require -- if mental retardation was not raised, which
- 18 it could have been in this case as a mitigator, there's
- 19 any other relevant mitigating circumstances if you --
- 20 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: You don't disagree that
- 21 in Williams and Dunn, your own supreme court said, it's
- 22 a double-edged sword, and we don't expect counsel to
- 23 raise an issue that doesn't get them off.
- 24 MS. BURNS: Justice Sotomayor, if I may
- 25 disagree with that: The rationale of this Court in

- 1 Atkins is that we are an evolving, decent society that
- 2 will not have a consensus to execute mentally retarded
- 3 people.
- 4 JUSTICE BREYER: We're all on the same page.
- 5 MS. BURNS: That falls in the face -- that
- 6 falls in the face of saying that juries, then, are
- 7 inclined to execute them if they show some evidence of
- 8 mental retardation.
- 9 JUSTICE BREYER: No, no. I think we're all
- 10 on the same page here, and I think we've made some
- 11 progress in this, because I agree with you, and I agree
- 12 with Justice Scalia that what we have to do -and there
- 13 isn't to is to look at the whole record and see, keeping
- 14 in mind the fact that it was a pre-Atkins record, and they
- 15 didn't know about Atkins, but looking at the whole record,
- 16 is the Louisiana court clearly wrong? Is it unreasonable
- in saying there wasn't enough evidence, even though there
- 18 has to be some, which is up to them pretty much how they
- 19 say the some, but they're unreasonable in saying that
- 20 there wasn't some evidence justifying a hearing. And
- 21 the only way to do that is for us to read it. Is -- is
- 22 that right?
- 23 MS. BURNS: The record has to be read.
- JUSTICE BREYER: Would you agree with that?
- 25 MS. BURNS: I would agree that the --

- 1 JUSTICE BREYER: I agree with that.
- 2 MS. BURNS: -- entirety of the record has
- 3 got to be read. It cannot be taken in a vacuum as
- 4 counsel would have you believe that this judge was
- 5 myopic.
- 6 JUSTICE SCALIA: I haven't read the whole
- 7 record, you know, and I doubt that I'm going to. And --
- 8 and I doubt that this Court is going to read the whole
- 9 record in all of these Atkins cases in the future. I
- 10 mean, what -- what you're saying is -- is -- you don't
- 11 think it's -- it's fantastical?
- 12 MS. BURNS: I do, Your Honor. And that's --
- 13 that's my whole point, is if you make the argument that
- 14 in every one of these cases where mental retardation was
- 15 not raised as an issue, it opens the floodgates for
- 16 every pre-Atkins case to have to be reexamined, to have
- 17 to be given a hearing.
- 18 JUSTICE SCALIA: No. No.
- 19 JUSTICE BREYER: Not every one. They want
- 20 to do this one, and I --
- 21 JUSTICE KENNEDY: The Petitioner -- the
- 22 Petitioner's counsel conceded that if in this hearing,
- 23 at the sentencing hearing, medical evidence was that in
- 24 the opinion of the expert witness, this defendant, it --
- 25 has no intellectual disability, this would be a

- 1 different case. That's not in this case. And what is
- 2 in this case -- and you have still not answered Justice
- 3 Breyer's question echoed by Justice Kagan. Don't we
- 4 look at Dunn and Williams to see what the standard is?
- 5 MS. BURNS: Absolutely.
- 6 JUSTICE KENNEDY: And you have not said yes,
- 7 and you have not said no.
- 8 MS. BURNS: Yes. That is the law.
- 9 JUSTICE KENNEDY: All right.
- 10 MS. BURNS: But that still requires him to
- 11 come forward with not just some evidence, but
- 12 significant factors, significant objective factors to
- 13 trigger that hearing.
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: But he had no money to do
- 15 it. He said, if I had money I would investigate and I
- 16 would come up with a lot more than I did at the
- 17 sentencing hearing, but the State won't give me any
- 18 money.
- 19 MS. BURNS: Justice Ginsburg, if I may
- 20 address this issue, because unlike the majority of cases
- 21 that this Court has analyzed in an AEDPA deference,
- 22 although under a Strickland umbrella normally in terms
- 23 of mitigation and ineffectiveness of counsel, by filing
- 24 separate claims for funding, this man was awarded at --
- 25 at the time of this trial, approximately \$10,000 in

- 1 funding, which would be approximately \$30,000 today, for
- 2 investigators, for investigative services, for a
- 3 sociologist who was board certified for two
- 4 neuropsychologists.
- 5 And Dr. Guin testified she conducted 28 to
- 6 32 interviews. She procured every medical, school
- 7 record that included prior psychiatric and psychological
- 8 analyses of this defendant --
- 9 JUSTICE GINSBURG: What addition --
- 10 MS. BURNS: -- including what was --
- 11 JUSTICE GINSBURG: What was there in
- 12 addition that was put in? He did get funding when he
- 13 was in Federal court.
- 14 MS. BURNS: No. He got funding in the
- 15 State. This is in the State court to flesh out any
- 16 possible defense --
- 17 JUSTICE GINSBURG: I'm not talking about the
- 18 sentencing hearing. I'm talking about the Federal
- 19 habeas. What -- what, was there additional evidence?
- 20 MS. BURNS: That was just -- apparently that
- 21 they just showed up and they had the money. There was
- 22 never -- there was never a hearing. He showed up one
- 23 day, he got the -- he got the experts, and I don't know
- 24 how the funding was granted, because he just showed up
- 25 with those reports, filed them into -- as an amended

- 1 habeas, in -- in State -- in district court, and as a
- 2 result of the reports that he got independently, that's
- 3 what triggered --
- 4 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Didn't counsel --
- 5 MS. BURNS: -- in the court hearing.
- 6 JUSTICE ALITO: In the State --
- 7 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Go ahead.
- 8 JUSTICE ALITO: In the State court, did
- 9 Petitioner say, give me a hearing, and if you do, I will
- 10 produce additional evidence without having funding? Or
- 11 did he say, give me a hearing and if you -- and provide
- me with funding so that I can put in additional
- 13 evidence?
- MS. BURNS: He made a vague -- in his very
- 15 first habeas petition, and this went on for a period of
- 16 44 months. The first petition says, I need about 10
- 17 different types of experts and probably will need money.
- 18 Then he filed four motions to continue, saying, I am
- 19 still reviewing this record and I do not know what
- 20 experts I will be needing.
- 21 Then when he came in on the hearing, there
- 22 was never -- although there was a claim at the very,
- 23 very end; claim 105, which was the last claim -- he
- 24 never -- he never filed a separate Ake motion as had
- 25 been done in everything pre-trial in this case. He just

- 1 came in, he sat mute, he didn't say to the judge which
- 2 was -- which would be the Louisiana standard, Your
- 3 Honor, you -- you need to rule on this ahead of time, I
- 4 still need time to investigate. There was never any
- 5 kind of objection, any kind of moving for the funds or
- 6 any kind of specificity. And as a result of that, the
- 7 reviewing State habeas court dismissed those claims with
- 8 prejudice for failure to make them out with
- 9 particularity.
- 10 JUSTICE ALITO: Well, I see a -- unless we
- 11 know the answer to that question, I don't know how we
- 12 can answer the question of whether there should have
- 13 been a hearing. If he wasn't going to produce anything
- 14 more at the hearing, then what was already in the
- 15 record, there would be no point in granting a hearing.
- 16 And so if the only purpose of the hearing was to allow
- 17 him to put in additional evidence with funding, case
- 18 comes down to the question whether it was
- 19 unconstitutional -- whether under AEDPA it was clearly
- 20 established that it was unconstitutional for the State
- 21 court to deny funding for this purpose.
- 22 MS. BURNS: There was never -- my -- and my
- 23 point again, is just as he did not make the threshold
- 24 for the Atkins hearing, he did not make any kind of
- 25 threshold and showing of specificity for any expert

- 1 funding. You just -- you just don't have --
- 2 JUSTICE KAGAN: Because, Ms. Burns, wouldn't
- 3 it be right to think, sure, he'd rather have had
- 4 funding, but he wanted the hearing regardless of whether
- 5 he was going to get funding. And he can go out and seek
- 6 pro bono support. He could try to go back to the same
- 7 experts that he had used at the sentencing.
- 8 So even without funding, the opportunity for
- 9 a hearing might have been worth something to him. And
- 10 what's clear, isn't it, this is the -- you said
- 11 that there is questions as to whether he asked for
- 12 funding or didn't ask for funding. What's clear is that
- 13 he asked for a hearing, isn't that right?
- 14 MS. BURNS: He did ask for a hearing. But
- 15 to get a hearing, again, you have to meet a threshold.
- 16 And I might add to the Court that it would have been, as
- in many other cases, a relatively simple matter to go
- 18 back, to have approached Dr. Bolter, Dr. Jordan, Dr.
- 19 Guin and just said, look, a case named Atkins has come
- 20 out in 2002. You have previously evaluated this
- 21 defendant; would it now make any difference to you, in
- 22 view of the holding in that case, would you, just say in
- 23 a letter --
- JUSTICE ALITO: Well, often in -- often, in
- 25 order to obtain, a hearing a party whom is moving for a

- 1 hearing has to make a proffer of what will be shown at
- 2 the hearing. It makes no sense to say we're going to
- 3 have a hearing and I want a hearing and I have the
- 4 burden of proving at the hearing that I'm entitled to
- 5 something, but I don't have any evidence to prove the --
- 6 the point that I need to prove.
- 7 MS. BURNS: And my --
- 8 JUSTICE ALITO: So it does seem to come down
- 9 to funding, unless there is something in the -- in the
- 10 record, and maybe you or your counsel can point to
- 11 something in the record that shows that he wanted a
- 12 hearing, even if he wasn't going to have funding.
- MS. BURNS: He proceeded with the hearing
- 14 that day with -- without making any type of objection
- 15 and proceeded to the merits. He -- he, first of all,
- 16 did not file any separate Ake claim. I -- I'd consider
- 17 that very important, because that -- that was the
- 18 procedure that was followed --
- 19 JUSTICE SCALIA: You're saying he doesn't
- 20 want funding. He didn't want funding, you're saying,
- 21 right?
- 22 MS. BURNS: No. He -- he made a nebulous
- 23 claim for funding, and said, Well, you know I'm
- 24 reviewing this, I don't know what experts I --
- 25 JUSTICE SCALIA: You say he proceeded

- 1 without it, so --
- 2 MS. BURNS: Yes, he did.
- 3 JUSTICE SCALIA: So he didn't want funding.
- 4 Ms. BURNS: He --
- 5 JUSTICE SCALIA: That doesn't help your
- 6 case. It hurts your case.
- 7 MS. BURNS: He proceeded to the hearing that
- 8 day.
- 9 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Counsel, in looking
- 10 at the record, what are we supposed to do with
- 11 Dr. Jordan's report?
- 12 MS. BURNS: Might I -- might I direct this
- 13 Court to the magistrate judge's recommendation which is
- 14 found -- it's document 37, page 17, footnote 7, where
- she references a certain page of Dr. Jordan's report.
- 16 And it's -- we don't know. It -- it is a defendant's
- 17 burden when we file for discovery to at least file
- 18 whatever reports are going to be used --
- 19 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Counsel, that's a bit of
- 20 a copout. You're the prosecutor. Was it admitted at
- 21 trial -- at the sentencing?
- 22 MS. BURNS: It was not admitted --
- 23 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: At the sentencing
- 24 hearing?
- 25 MS. BURNS: -- as evidence.

- 1 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Right.
- 2 MS. BURNS: But she had a copy of it and as
- 3 Dr. --
- 4 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: But it was not before
- 5 the State court?
- 6 MS. BURNS: Apparently it -- it was viewed
- 7 by the judge. You can still have -- if it's not
- 8 introduced as evidence by either party during the trial,
- 9 it can still be filed as part of an answer and be part
- 10 of that trial record which the court reviews.
- 11 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: There was -- it was
- 12 discussed during -- I gather, during cross-examination
- 13 several times. What is the status of documents that are
- 14 the subject of cross-examination under Louisiana law?
- 15 Are they part of the record? Are they simply extraneous
- 16 material that can be consulted? What -- what are they?
- 17 MS. BURNS: If -- of course, the rule -- the
- 18 rule is, if someone has relied upon a report as both
- 19 Dr. Bolter and -- and Dr. Guin did in this case, and the
- 20 report had been tendered to maybe -- the Jordan report,
- 21 we had the right --
- 22 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: The report had been
- 23 tendered what?
- MS. BURNS: The report had been tendered to
- 25 the State, after -- after much argument. They did not

- 1 want to tender that report. But we had a copy of it,
- 2 because I very -- I think, very repletely cross-examined
- 3 Dr. Guin.
- 4 JUSTICE SCALIA: I'm waiting for the last
- 5 half of your sentence. If -- right? -- if a witness
- 6 testified about it and if it was tendered to the court,
- 7 then what is the conclusion?
- 8 MS. BURNS: You can -- you can, of course,
- 9 use that report.
- 10 JUSTICE SCALIA: And it becomes part of the
- 11 record?
- MS. BURNS: Yes, it does.
- 13 JUSTICE SCALIA: Okay.
- MS. BURNS: Absolutely. Absolutely.

- 16 JUSTICE GINSBURG: We were told that the
- 17 three reasons given by the State habeas court, that all
- 18 of those, the three, were wrong. That's what the
- 19 counsel for the Petitioner told us.
- 20 And what is your -- your response to that?
- 21 75, we know that it isn't an absolute, that you can have
- 22 a 75 score and still be intellectually disabled.
- 23 MS. BURNS: 75 is, of course, within the
- 24 range, and what's noticeably been -- been absent from
- 25 this record in reply brief is that everything's been

- 1 taken down the five points by the SEM. But we never
- 2 hear in these cases that truly are argued that the SEM
- 3 can go up the five points. The first test that this
- 4 defendant was administered, when he was 11, which was a
- 5 WISC, there was -- there was no number put down, but the
- 6 doctor opined that it was a dull normal, which would be
- 7 an 80 to an 89, which is more consistent, if we took the
- 8 five points up from -- from the 75 that Dr. --
- 9 Dr. Jordan -- Dr. Bolter did.
- 10 And additionally, we also -- well, there
- 11 was -- there was additional evidence, of course, at the
- 12 Federal hearing that would put it more in that upper
- 13 range, I believe.
- 14 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: All right. Could I go
- 15 back to your answer to Justice Scalia?
- 16 It -- I've practiced elsewhere, and if
- 17 anything's made a part of the record, you give it an
- 18 evidence number. Louisiana is different; it's not --
- 19 it's not introduced into evidence?
- 20 MS. BURNS: No.
- 21 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: You just --
- 22 MS. BURNS: No. Not necessarily. No. The
- 23 Guin report was not introduced by the defense into
- 24 evidence. I will refer to coroner's reports, crime lab
- 25 reports. I do not necessarily file them into evidence.

- 1 What I do is, as part of the answer to discovery, we
- 2 attach them. They are part of the record. That is --
- 3 that is Louisiana procedure.
- 4 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: As the answer -- but how
- 5 do we know the trial judge read it?
- 6 MS. BURNS: Because he said so. First of
- 7 all, under Harrington v. Richter, it is the ultimate
- 8 conclusion, the factual conclusion reached by the court,
- 9 not necessarily the language that he used. It does not
- 10 require that each and every ground that he relied on be
- 11 articulated.
- 12 And the court stated in his rulings that, I
- 13 have examined this record. It says, I've looked at the
- 14 application, the response, the record, which in this
- 15 case, just to educate the Court as to Louisiana habeas
- 16 procedure, if a habeas judge is reviewing, he would get
- 17 the 16 initial volumes of the case. There were four
- 18 additional supplemental volumes. That includes
- 19 everything from indictment to pretrial discovery, any
- 20 answers, documents that were filed in answer to that.
- 21 It includes the testimony during any suppression or
- 22 funding hearings. It includes the voir dire, which in
- 23 this case was 13 days. It includes the guilt phase,
- 24 which was six days. And the penalty phase --
- 25 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Can we go back to --

- 1 you're answering my question, and then -- and you told
- 2 me the 75 IQ, but there were two others.
- 3 MS. BURNS: Yes.
- 4 JUSTICE GINSBURG: There was nothing on
- 5 adaptive behavior, but in fact, there was evidence --
- 6 some evidence of adaptive behavior. And then the third
- 7 point, antisocial behavior, there's nothing inconsistent
- 8 about being antisocial and having an intellectual
- 9 disability.
- 10 MS. BURNS: There is. And it was simply --
- 11 I think -- I don't think you can necessarily fault the
- 12 court for saying that. He's just simply reciting that
- 13 there was a finding in this case, because every
- 14 doctor -- every --
- 15 JUSTICE GINSBURG: But the finding is
- 16 perfectly consistent with -- with intellectual
- 17 disability.
- 18 MS. BURNS: This individual was examined
- 19 five times prior to the age of 18. He was given a WISC.
- 20 Nobody found the words "intellectual disability." In
- 21 fact --
- 22 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Because Atkins wasn't
- 23 decided?
- MS. BURNS: No. Mental -- mental
- 25 retardation has existed since the beginning of time. It

- 1 does not require the Atkins case to come into play.
- 2 Nobody found him to be intellectually
- 3 disabled. What they did find was conduct disorder,
- 4 hyperactivity, under-socialized, aggressive, and then as
- 5 an adult, that morphed into antisocial personality
- 6 behavior. They are two -- also two separate and
- 7 distinct items. And that is -- that is contained in the
- 8 Louisiana statute on intellectual disability, that
- 9 certain things like learning disabilities,
- 10 environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage,
- 11 emotional stress in the home or school, difficulty in
- 12 adjusting to school, behavioral disorders, and other
- 13 mental types of behavior, psychoses, are not necessarily
- 14 indicative.
- 15 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.
- Mr. DeSanctis, you have two minutes
- 17 remaining.
- 18 MS. BURNS: Thank you, Your Honor.
- 19 REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF MR. DeSANCTIS
- 20 ON BEHALF OF PETITIONER
- 21 MR. DeSANCTIS: Thank you, Mr. Chief
- 22 Justice.
- 23 First, the -- Dr. Jordan's report was not in
- 24 the record, and that is made clear at the Petition
- 25 Appendix 39a, note 13, where the court noted that

- 1 counsel recognized that it was not in the record.
- 2 Second, counsel articulated that there were
- 3 scores -- IO scores in the -- in the 80s and 90s.
- 4 That's not correct. Federal -- volume I of the Federal
- 5 hearing at page 57 shows that there were two other
- 6 tests: One a 75, and one a 54.
- 7 Finally, I want to emphasize that this Court
- 8 recently recognized that it's unconstitutional to create
- 9 an unacceptable risk that persons with intellectual
- 10 disability will be executed. The State court's
- 11 determination of the facts in this case created
- 12 precisely that risk. And now that we're here, it's not
- 13 just risk; it's certainty. The only court to provide
- 14 Mr. Brumfield with a hearing found that he is
- intellectually disabled, and unless this Court reverses
- 16 the Fifth Circuit's erroneous ruling, an intellectually
- 17 disabled person will be executed.
- 18 Thank you.
- 19 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.
- 20 The case is submitted.
- 21 (Whereupon, at 11:03 a.m., the case in the
- 22 above-entitled matter was submitted.)

23

24

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