

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF MICHIGAN
SOUTHERN DIVISION

HAYWARD EUGENE WELCH,

Petitioner,

Case No. 1:09-cv-409

v.

Honorable Janet T. Neff

CARMEN D. PALMER,

Respondent.

OPINION

This is a habeas corpus action brought by a state prisoner pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 2254. Promptly after the filing of a petition for habeas corpus, the Court must undertake a preliminary review of the petition to determine whether “it plainly appears from the face of the petition and any exhibits annexed to it that the petitioner is not entitled to relief in the district court.” Rule 4, RULES GOVERNING § 2254 CASES; *see* 28 U.S.C. § 2243. If so, the petition must be summarily dismissed. Rule 4; *see Allen v. Perini*, 424 F.2d 134, 141 (6th Cir. 1970) (district court has the duty to “screen out” petitions that lack merit on their face). A dismissal under Rule 4 includes those petitions which raise legally frivolous claims, as well as those containing factual allegations that are palpably incredible or false. *Carson v. Burke*, 178 F.3d 434, 436-37 (6th Cir. 1999). After undertaking the review required by Rule 4, the Court concludes that the petition must be dismissed because it fails to raise a meritorious federal claim.

Factual Allegations

Petitioner is incarcerated in the Michigan Reformatory. On October 11, 2007, he pleaded guilty in the Kent County Circuit Court to one count of armed robbery. (Plea Transcript (P. Tr.), 8, Attach. B, docket #1-5.) In exchange for his plea, the prosecutor dismissed the fourth habitual offender supplement and agreed not to charge Petitioner with first-degree home invasion and being a felon in possession of a firearm. (*Id.*) During the plea hearing, Petitioner admitted that he held a pistol while his co-defendant took a cell phone and clothing from a third person. (P. Tr., 9-11.) Petitioner did not say anything during the robbery but admitted that, by holding the gun, he was trying to send a message that the victim should comply with his co-defendant's demands. (P. Tr., 11.) The trial court sentenced Petitioner on December 11, 2007, to imprisonment of nine to twenty-five years. (Sentencing Transcript (S. Tr.), 8, Attach. B, docket #1-5.) The Michigan Court of Appeals and the Michigan Supreme Court denied his applications for leave to appeal on November 21, 2008 and March 23, 2009, respectively.

Petitioner now raises the following grounds for habeas corpus relief:

- I. THE TRIAL COURT UNLAWFULLY DEPRIVED THE DEFENDANT OF HIS DUE PROCESS EQUAL PROTECTION, AND OTHER PROTECTED RIGHTS UNDER THE UNITED STATES AND MICHIGAN CONSTITUTIONS WHEN IT SCORED [10] POINTS ON OV [4].
- II. THE TRIAL COURT UNLAWFULLY DEPRIVED THE DEFENDANT OF HIS DUE PROCESS, EQUAL PROTECTION, AND OTHER PROTECTED RIGHTS UNDER THE UNITED STATES AND MICHIGAN CONSTITUTIONS WHEN IT FAILED TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT ALL MITIGATING EVIDENCE IN SENTENCING DEFENDANT.
- III. THE TRIAL COURT UNLAWFULLY VIOLATED THE UNITED STATES AND MICHIGAN CONSTITUTIONS IN SENTENCING THE DEFENDANT TO A PRISON TERM OF 9-25 YEARS ON THE ARMED ROBBERY CONVICTION.

IV. DEFENDANT WAS DENIED HIS STATE AND FEDERAL RIGHTS TO THE EFFECTIVE ASSISTANCE OF COUNSEL AT HIS TRIAL.

(Pet., Attach. A, docket #1-2.)

Standard of Review

This action is governed by the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act, PUB. L. 104-132, 110 STAT. 1214 (AEDPA). See *Penry v. Johnson*, 532 U.S. 782, 792 (2001). The AEDPA “prevents federal habeas ‘retrials’” and ensures that state court convictions are given effect to the extent possible under the law. *Bell v. Cone*, 535 U.S. 685, 693-94 (2002). The AEDPA has “drastically changed” the nature of habeas review. *Bailey v. Mitchell*, 271 F.3d 652, 655 (6th Cir. 2001). An application for writ of habeas corpus on behalf of a person who is incarcerated pursuant to a state conviction cannot be granted with respect to any claim that was adjudicated on the merits in state court unless the adjudication: “(1) resulted in a decision that was contrary to, or involved an unreasonable application of, clearly established federal law as determined by the Supreme Court of the United States; or (2) resulted in a decision that was based upon an unreasonable determination of the facts in light of the evidence presented in the state court proceeding.” 28 U.S.C. § 2254(d).

The AEDPA limits the source of law to cases decided by the United States Supreme Court. 28 U.S.C. § 2254(d). A decision of the state court may only be overturned if (1) it applies a rule that contradicts the governing law set forth by the Supreme Court, (2) it confronts a set of facts that are materially indistinguishable from a decision of the Supreme Court and nevertheless arrives at a different result; (3) it identifies the correct governing legal rule from the Supreme Court precedent but unreasonably applies it to the facts of the case; or (4) it either unreasonably extends a legal principle from Supreme Court precedent to a new context where it should not apply or unreasonably refuses to extend a principle to a context where it should apply. *Bailey*, 271 F.3d at

655 (citing *Williams v. Taylor*, 529 U.S. 362, 413 (2000)); *see also Bell*, 535 U.S. at 694; *Lancaster v. Adams*, 324 F.3d 423, 429 (6th Cir. 2003). A federal habeas court may not find a state adjudication to be “unreasonable” “simply because that court concludes in its independent judgment that the relevant state-court decision applied clearly established federal law erroneously or incorrectly.” *Williams*, 529 U.S. at 411; *accord Bell*, 535 U.S. at 699. Rather, the issue is whether the state court’s application of clearly established federal law is “objectively unreasonable.” *Williams*, 529 U.S. at 410.

Where the state court has not articulated its reasoning, the federal courts are obligated to conduct an independent review to determine if the state court’s result is contrary to federal law, unreasonably applies clearly established law, or is based on an unreasonable determination of the facts in light of the evidence presented. *See Harris v. Stovall*, 212 F.3d 940, 943 (6th Cir. 2000); *McKenzie v. Smith*, 326 F.3d 721, 727 (6th Cir. 2003). Where the circumstances suggest that the state court actually considered the issue, the review is not *de novo*. *Onifer v. Tyszkiewicz*, 255 F.3d 313, 316 (6th Cir. 2001). The review remains deferential because the court cannot grant relief unless the state court’s result is not in keeping with the strictures of the AEDPA. *Harris*, 212 F.3d at 943. However, the Sixth Circuit has clarified that where the state court clearly did not address the merits of a claim, “there are simply no results, let alone reasoning, to which [the] court can defer.” In such circumstances, the court conducts *de novo* review. *McKenzie*, 326 F.3d at 727 (limiting *Harris* to those circumstances in which a result exists to which the federal court may defer); *see also Wiggins v. Smith*, 539 U.S. 510, 534 (2003) (reviewing habeas issue *de novo* where state courts had not reached the question); *Maples v. Stegall*, 340 F.3d 433, 437 (6th Cir. 2003) (recognizing that *Wiggins* established *de novo* standard of review for any claim that was not addressed by the state courts).

Discussion

I. Scoring of Offense Variable 4

Petitioner claims that the trial court violated his constitutional rights by scoring ten points on Offense Variable (OV) 4, which concerns psychological injury to a victim. Petitioner maintains that there is nothing in the record to prove that the victim suffered serious psychological injury that required professional treatment. Under MICH. COMP. LAWS § 777.34(1)(a), ten points are scored when “[s]erious psychological injury requiring professional treatment occurred to a victim.” The statute further provides, “[s]core 10 points if the serious psychological injury **may** require professional treatment. In making this determination, **the fact that treatment has not been sought is not conclusive.** MICH. COMP. LAWS § 777.34(2) (emphasis added).

Federal courts normally do not review a sentence for a term of years that falls within the limits prescribed by the state legislature. *See Hutto v. Davis*, 454 U.S. 370, 373-74 (1982). Under Michigan’s armed robbery statute, MICH. COMP. LAWS § 750.529, a defendant may be sentenced to a maximum term of life or any term of years. Thus, Petitioner’s maximum sentence of twenty-five years did not exceed the prescribed statutory maximum for the offense. Moreover, Petitioner’s minimum sentence of nine years was at the bottom of the sentencing guidelines, which were 108 to 180 months. Claims concerning the improper scoring of sentencing guidelines are state-law claims and typically are not cognizable in habeas corpus proceedings. *Austin v. Jackson*, 213 F.3d 298, 301-02 (6th Cir. 2000) (alleged violation of state law with respect to sentencing is not subject to federal habeas relief); *Cheatham v. Hosey*, No. 93-1319, 1993 WL 478854, at *2 (6th Cir. Nov. 19, 1993) (departure from sentencing guidelines is an issue of state law, and, thus, not cognizable in federal habeas review).

Although state law errors generally are not reviewable in a federal habeas proceeding, an alleged violation of state law “could, potentially, ‘be sufficiently egregious to amount to a denial of equal protection or of due process of law guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment.’” *Koras v. Robinson*, 123 F. App’x 207, 213 (6th Cir. Feb. 15, 2005) (citing *Bowling v. Parker*, 344 F.3d 487, 521 (6th Cir. 2003)). *See also Doyle v. Scutt*, 347 F. Supp. 2d 474, 485 (E.D. Mich. 2004) (a habeas court “will not set aside, on allegations of unfairness or an abuse of discretion, terms of a sentence that is within state statutory limits unless the sentence is so disproportionate to the crime as to be completely arbitrary and shocking.”) (citation omitted). A sentence may violate due process if it is based upon material “misinformation of constitutional magnitude.” *Koras*, 123 F. App’x at 213 (quoting *Roberts v. United States*, 445 U.S. 552, 556 (1980)); *see also United States v. Tucker*, 404 U.S. 443, 447 (1972); *Townsend v. Burke*, 334 U.S. 736, 741 (1948). To prevail on such a claim, the petitioner must show (1) that the information before the sentencing court was materially false, and (2) that the court relied on the false information in imposing the sentence. *Tucker*, 404 U.S. at 447; *United States v. Polselli*, 747 F.2d 356, 358 (6th Cir. 1984); *Koras*, 123 F. App’x at 213 (quoting *United States v. Stevens*, 851 F.2d 140, 143 (6th Cir. 1988)). A sentencing court demonstrates actual reliance on misinformation when the court gives “explicit attention” to it, “found[s]” its sentence “at least in part” on it, or gives “specific consideration” to the information before imposing sentence. *Tucker*, 404 U.S. at 444, 447.

Petitioner’s sentence clearly is not so disproportionate to the crime as to be arbitrary or shocking. *Doyle*, 347 F. Supp. 2d at 485. Further, Petitioner does not even argue that the facts found by the court at sentencing were either materially false or based on false information. *Tucker*, 404 U.S. at 447. Instead, Petitioner argues only that the court’s sentencing findings were not

sufficiently supported. Such claims clearly fall far short of the sort of egregious circumstances implicating due process. Moreover, it was entirely reasonable for the trial court to conclude that the victim of an armed robbery suffered serious psychological injury that may require professional treatment. The state-court's rejection of Petitioner's claim was not based on an unreasonable determination of the facts and was neither contrary to nor an unreasonable application of established Supreme Court precedent. 28 U.S.C. § 2254(d).

Petitioner further argues that the trial court increased his sentence based upon facts, i.e., that he caused the victim serious psychological injury requiring professional treatment, that were not admitted to or found by a jury beyond a reasonable doubt. Petitioner bases his argument largely on the United States Supreme Court holding in *Blakely v. Washington*, 542 U.S. 296 (2004). *Blakely* concerned the State of Washington's determinate sentencing system, which allowed a trial judge to elevate the maximum sentence permitted by law on the basis of facts not found by the jury but by the judge. Applying the Washington mandatory sentencing guidelines, the trial judge found facts that increased the maximum sentence faced by the defendant. The Supreme Court found that this scheme offended the Sixth Amendment, because any fact that increases or enhances a penalty for the crime beyond the prescribed statutory maximum for the offense must be submitted to the jury and proven beyond a reasonable doubt. *Blakely*, 542 U.S. at 301 (citing *Apprendi v. New Jersey*, 530 U.S. 466, 490 (2000)).

Unlike the State of Washington's determinate sentencing system, the State of Michigan has an indeterminate sentencing system in which the defendant is given a sentence with a minimum and a maximum term. The maximum sentence is not determined by the trial judge, but is set by law. See *People v. Drohan*, 715 N.W.2d 778, 789-92 (Mich. 2006) (citing MICH. COMP. LAWS § 769.8). Only the minimum sentence is based on the applicable sentencing guideline range.

Id.; and see *People v. Babcock*, 666 N.W.2d 231, 237 n.7 (Mich. 2003) (citing MICH. COMP. LAWS § 769.34(2)). Therefore, under Michigan law, the trial judge sets the minimum sentence (within a certain range), but can never exceed the maximum sentence. *Drohan*, 715 N.W.2d at 789.

Because the trial court can never exceed the maximum sentence set by statute, Michigan's indeterminate sentencing scheme, unlike the determinate sentencing scheme at issue in *Blakely*, does not infringe on the province of the finder of fact, and, thus, does not run afoul of *Blakely*. See *Blakely*, 542 U.S. at 304-05, 308-09. Because the trial court in the present case sentenced Petitioner well within the parameters of Michigan's indeterminate sentencing scheme, it did not violate his Sixth Amendment rights. See *Tironi v. Birkett*, 252 F. App'x 724, 725 (6th Cir. 2007) (affirming district court's dismissal of prisoner's claim under *Blakely v. Washington* because it does not apply to Michigan's indeterminate sentencing scheme); see also *Gray v. Bell*, No. 1:06-cv-611, 2007 WL 172519, at *3 (W.D. Mich. Jan. 19, 2007); *Pettiway v. Palmer*, No. 1:06-cv-132, 2006 WL 1430062, at *1 (W.D. Mich. May 23, 2006); *Stanley v. Jones*, No. 1:06-cv-49, 2006 WL 1459832, at *2 (W.D. Mich. May 23, 2006); *Jones v. Trombley*, No. 2:07-cv-10139, 2007 WL 405835, at *3 (E.D. Mich. Jan. 31, 2007); *Mays v. Trombley*, No. 2:06-cv-14043, 2006 WL 3104656, at *3 (E.D. Mich. Oct. 31, 2006); *Worley v. Palmer*, No. 2:06-cv-13467, 2006 WL 2347615, at *2 (E.D. Mich. Aug. 11, 2006); *George v. Burt*, No. 2:04-cv-74968, 2006 WL 156396, at *5 (E.D. Mich. Jan. 20, 2006); *Walton v. McKee*, No. 2:04-cv-73695, 2005 WL 1343060, at *3 (E.D. Mich. June 1, 2005).

II. Failure to Consider Mitigating Evidence

In his second ground for habeas corpus relief, Petitioner contends that the trial court violated his constitutional rights by failing to consider all mitigating evidence in determining his sentence. In support of his claim that the trial court must consider all mitigating evidence, Petitioner

relies upon a line of Supreme Court cases, including *Lockett v. Ohio*, 438 U.S. 586 (1978), which concern sentencing in capital cases. However, there is no constitutional right to individualized sentencing in non-capital cases. *Harmelin v. Michigan*, 501 U.S. 957, 995 (1991); *United States v. Thomas*, 49 F.3d 253, 261 (6th Cir. 1995); *see also Lockett*, 438 U.S. at 604-05 (in a case holding that mitigating factors must be fully considered in death penalty cases, the Court noted: “We recognize that, in noncapital cases, the established practice of individualized sentences rests not on constitutional commands, but on public policy enacted into statutes.”). Because Petitioner’s conviction and sentence were for a non-capital offense, he had no constitutional right to an individualized sentence. To the extent that Petitioner complains that he was sentenced based upon inaccurate information, the Court addressed his claim above.

III. Length of Sentence

In his third ground for habeas corpus relief, Petitioner argues that the trial court never stated on the record how it arrived at a sentence of nine to twenty-five years and failed to explain the reasons why the sentence was proportionate to the offense and the offender. In support of his proportionality claim, Petitioner cites *People v. Lemons*, 562 N.W.2d 447 (Mich. 1997), in which the Michigan Supreme Court relied upon its previous decision in *People v. Milbourn*, 461 N.W.2d 1 (Mich. 1990). Under *Milbourn*, the sentencing court must exercise its discretion within the bounds of Michigan’s legislatively prescribed sentence range and pursuant to the intent of Michigan’s legislative scheme of dispensing punishment according to the nature of the offense and the background of the offender. *Milbourn*, 461 N.W.2d at 9-10; *People v. Babcock*, 666 N.W.2d 231, 236 (Mich. 2003). It is plain that *Milbourn* was decided under state, not federal, principles. *See Lunsford v. Hofbauer*, No. 94-2128, 1995 WL 236677, at *2 (6th Cir. Apr. 21, 1995); *Atkins v. Overton*, 843 F. Supp. 258, 260 (E.D. Mich. 1994). As previously discussed, a federal court may

grant habeas relief solely on the basis of federal law and has no power to intervene on the basis of a perceived error of state law. 28 U.S.C. § 2254(a); *Bradshaw v. Richey*, 546 U.S. 74, 76 (2005); *Pulley v. Harris*, 465 U.S. 37, 41 (1984). Thus, Petitioner’s claim is not cognizable in a habeas corpus action.

To the extent Petitioner argues that he was sentenced in violation of the Eighth Amendment, the United States Constitution does not require strict proportionality between a crime and its punishment. *Harmelin*, 501 U.S. at 965; *United States v. Marks*, 209 F.3d 577, 583 (6th Cir. 2000). “Consequently, only an extreme disparity between crime and sentence offends the Eighth Amendment.” *Marks*, 209 F.3d at 583; *see also Lockyer v. Andrade*, 538 U.S. 63, 77 (2003) (gross disproportionality principle applies only in the extraordinary case); *Ewing v. California*, 538 U.S. 11, 36 (2003) (principle applies only in “the rare case in which a threshold comparison of the crime committed and the sentence imposed leads to an inference of gross disproportionality”) (quoting *Rummel v. Estelle*, 445 U.S. 263, 285 (1980)). A sentence that falls within the maximum penalty authorized by statute “generally does not constitute ‘cruel and unusual punishment.’” *Austin v. Jackson*, 213 F.3d 298, 302 (6th Cir. 2000) (quoting *United States v. Organek*, 65 F.3d 60, 62 (6th Cir. 1995)). Ordinarily, “[f]ederal courts will not engage in a proportionality analysis except in cases where the penalty imposed is death or life in prison without possibility of parole.” *United States v. Thomas*, 49 F.3d 253, 261 (6th Cir. 1995). Petitioner was not sentenced to death or life in prison without the possibility of parole, and his sentence falls within the maximum penalty under state law. Petitioner’s sentence does not present the extraordinary case that runs afoul of the Eighth Amendment’s ban of cruel and unusual punishment.

IV. Ineffective Assistance of Counsel¹

In his fourth ground for relief, Petitioner claims that his trial counsel was ineffective for failing to object to or raise the sentencing issues raised in Petitioner's previous four claims. In *Strickland v. Washington*, 466 U.S. 668, 687-88 (1984), the Supreme Court established a two-prong test by which to evaluate claims of ineffective assistance of counsel. To establish a claim of ineffective assistance of counsel, the petitioner must prove: (1) that counsel's performance fell below an objective standard of reasonableness; and (2) that counsel's deficient performance prejudiced the defendant resulting in an unreliable or fundamentally unfair outcome. A court considering a claim of ineffective assistance must "indulge a strong presumption that counsel's conduct falls within the wide range of reasonable professional assistance." *Id.* at 689. The defendant bears the burden of overcoming the presumption that the challenged action might be considered sound trial strategy. *Id.* (citing *Michel v. Louisiana*, 350 U.S. 91, 101 (1955)); *see also Nagi v. United States*, 90 F.3d 130, 135 (6th Cir. 1996) (holding that counsel's strategic decisions were hard to attack). The court must determine whether, in light of the circumstances as they existed

¹Before the court may grant habeas relief to a state prisoner, the prisoner must exhaust remedies available in the state courts. 28 U.S.C. § 2254(b)(1); *O'Sullivan v. Boerckel*, 526 U.S. 838, 842 (1999). To fulfill the exhaustion requirement, a petitioner must have fairly presented his federal claims to all levels of the state appellate system, including the state's highest court. *Duncan v. Henry*, 513 U.S. 364, 365-66 (1995); *Silverburg v. Evitts*, 993 F.2d 124, 126 (6th Cir. 1993). While Petitioner argued that his trial counsel was ineffective in the body of his brief in the Michigan Court of Appeals, he did not include the claim in the statement of questions involved. The Michigan Court of Appeals only will consider on appeal those claims included in the statement of questions involved section of the appellate brief. *See* MICH. CT. R. 7.212(C)(5); *see also Lansing v. Hartsuff*, 539 N.W.2d 781, 787 (Mich. Ct. App. 1995) (An issue is not preserved for appellate review unless it is raised in the statement of questions involved); *People v. Mackle*, 617 N.W.2d 339, 350 n.4 (Mich. Ct. App. 2000) (issue that was not included in the "statement of questions involved" section of the defendant's brief on appeal is waived and not subject to appellate review). Consequently, Petitioner failed to properly exhaust his claim of ineffective assistance of counsel in the Michigan Court of Appeals. However, the Court may dismiss the petition notwithstanding Petitioner's failure to exhaust his state-court remedies. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 2254(b)(2).

at the time of counsel's actions, "the identified acts or omissions were outside the wide range of professionally competent assistance." *Strickland*, 466 U.S. at 690. Even if a court determines that counsel's performance was outside that range, the defendant is not entitled to relief if counsel's error had no effect on the judgment. *Id.* at 691. A claim of ineffective assistance of counsel presents a mixed question of law and fact. Accordingly, the Court must apply the "unreasonable application" prong of § 2254(d)(1). *See Barnes v. Elo*, 339 F.3d 496, 501 (6th Cir. 2003).

At the sentencing hearing, counsel objected to the scoring of Prior Record Variable (PRV) 5, which concerns the scoring of prior misdemeanor convictions. Counsel's objection resulted in a five-point reduction of the PRV, which produced a final guidelines range of 108 to 180 months. (S. Tr., 3-5.) Before handing down Petitioner's sentence, the trial court explained that it had carefully considered Petitioner's sentence and planned to give him a minimum sentence of twelve years. (S. Tr., 8.) However, during a conference just before the sentencing hearing, counsel shared information with the court that convinced the court to go to the bottom of the guideline range and sentence Petitioner to a minimum term of nine years. (*Id.*) Thus, it is apparent from the record that trial counsel effectively advocated for his client at the sentencing stage of the proceedings. The trial court's comments refute Petitioner's contention that defense counsel failed to present, and the trial court failed to consider, mitigating factors. Moreover, I concluded above that Petitioner's claims for habeas corpus relief are without merit. Trial counsel's failure to make meritless objections or arguments does not constitute ineffective assistance of counsel. *See Chegwidden v. Kapture*, 92 F. App'x 309, 311 (6th Cir. 2004); *United States v. Silverman*, 976 F.2d 1502, 1512 (6th Cir.1992) (en banc); *Krist v. Foltz*, 804 F.2d 944, 946-47 (6th Cir. 1986). Petitioner, therefore, cannot establish that his counsel's performance fell below an objective standard of reasonableness or that he was prejudiced by counsel's performance.

Conclusion

In light of the foregoing, the Court will summarily dismiss Petitioner's application pursuant to Rule 4 because it fails to raise a meritorious federal claim.

Certificate of Appealability

Under 28 U.S.C. § 2253(c)(2), the Court must determine whether a certificate of appealability should be granted. A certificate should issue if Petitioner has demonstrated a "substantial showing of a denial of a constitutional right." 28 U.S.C. § 2253(c)(2). This Court's dismissal of Petitioner's action under Rule 4 of the Rules Governing § 2254 Cases is a determination that the habeas action, on its face, lacks sufficient merit to warrant service. It would be highly unlikely for this Court to grant a certificate, thus indicating to the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals that an issue merits review, when the Court has already determined that the action is so lacking in merit that service is not warranted. *See Love v. Butler*, 952 F.2d 10 (1st Cir. 1991) (it is "somewhat anomalous" for the court to summarily dismiss under Rule 4 and grant a certificate); *Hendricks v. Vasquez*, 908 F.2d 490 (9th Cir. 1990) (requiring reversal where court summarily dismissed under Rule 4 but granted certificate); *Dory v. Comm'r of Corr. of the State of New York*, 865 F.2d 44, 46 (2d Cir. 1989) (it was "intrinsically contradictory" to grant a certificate when habeas action does not warrant service under Rule 4); *Williams v. Kullman*, 722 F.2d 1048, 1050 n.1 (2d Cir. 1983) (issuing certificate would be inconsistent with a summary dismissal).

The Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals has disapproved issuance of blanket denials of a certificate of appealability. *Murphy v. Ohio*, 263 F.3d 466 (6th Cir. 2001). Rather, the district court must "engage in a reasoned assessment of each claim" to determine whether a certificate is warranted. *Id.* at 467. Each issue must be considered under the standards set forth by the Supreme Court in *Slack v. McDaniel*, 529 U.S. 473 (2000). *Murphy*, 263 F.3d at 467. Consequently, this

Court has examined each of Petitioner's claims under the *Slack* standard. Under *Slack*, 529 U.S. at 484, to warrant a grant of the certificate, "[t]he petitioner must demonstrate that reasonable jurists would find the district court's assessment of the constitutional claims debatable or wrong." *Id.* "A petitioner satisfies this standard by demonstrating that . . . jurists could conclude the issues presented are adequate to deserve encouragement to proceed further." *Miller-El v. Cockrell*, 537 U.S. 322, 327 (2003). In applying this standard, the Court may not conduct a full merits review, but must limit its examination to a threshold inquiry into the underlying merit of Petitioner's claims. *Id.*

The Court finds that reasonable jurists could not conclude that this Court's dismissal of Petitioner's claims was debatable or wrong. Therefore, the Court will deny Petitioner a certificate of appealability.

A Judgment consistent with this Opinion will be entered.

Dated: June 15, 2009

/s/ Janet T. Neff
Janet T. Neff
United States District Judge