

Case brief: brady v maryland

Business



Brady v Maryland, 373 US 83 Supreme Court (1963) Procedural History The Court of Appeal of Maryland was granted an order of certiorari to consider whether the petitioner had been deprived of a constitutional right when the Court of Appeal ordered a new murder trial restricted to the question of punishment only. The Appeals Court granted a retrial. There was however a second appeal to the Supreme Court where the ruling of the Court of Appeals was affirmed, with the Court holding that the evidence suppressed was material to the punishment of the defendant but couldn't have exculpated him. Facts The petitioner, Brady, and his companion, Boblit, had been tried and convicted of murder in the first degree. This murder had been committed in the perpetration of a robbery and the corresponding punishment in the state of Maryland was life imprisonment or death.

The trials were held separately and in his trial, Brady admitted to participating in the crime. He however averred that Boblit had done the actual killing. Prior to this, his legal counsel had requested permission to examine Boblit's extra-judicial statements but the prosecution, though disclosing some statements, specifically withheld the statement where Boblit had admitted committing the actual homicide. On appeal the Court of Appeals held that although the suppression of evidence denied the petitioner due process of the law, this only warranted a retrial on the question of punishment and not guilt. Legal Issue The issue arising was whether the Court of Appeal had erred in its decision to restrict the trial to the question of punishment and whether this action by the Court had deprived the petitioner of a constitutional right. Holding

Reasoning If the prosecution is allowed to withhold evidence that would exculpate the accused person or reduce his penalty, this restructures a trial to the disadvantage of the defendant. This does not conform to the standards of justice where it is a fundamental requirement for the law to protect an accused person with the same firmness it protects the society.

Disposition The Supreme Court affirmed the ruling of the Maryland Court of Appeals.