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**Sundiata Acoli Legal Case Backgrounder**

Sundiata Acoli, birth name Clark Edward Squire, was convicted of first-degree murder in 1974 and sentenced to life, with the possibility of parole in 1999. He has been eligible for parole since 1993 but denied it eight times. He has not had a single disciplinary infraction in over 25 years.

The New Jersey State Parole Board denied parole to Sundiata in 2011 and issued a Future Eligibility Term (FET) of 120 months or 10 years.

In 2014, the appellate division unanimously reversed that decision. In 2016, the Board said it had not conducted a testimonial hearing before judicial review. A hearing was held, and the Board denied parole for near-identical reasons as the 2011 denial.

In 2019, the New Jersey Supreme Court reversed the 2014 reversal, upholding the denial of parole.

At the end of 2020, an Appellate Brief was filed on Sundiata's behalf in support of his appeal as of right to the New Jersey Supreme Court. It is based on the opinion of the Hon. Garry S. Rothstadt, J.A.D., who dissented from the Court's 2019 decision. Judge Rothstadt dissented on the ground that there was no evidence to support the continued denial of parole.

**In the state of New Jersey, the burden of proof rests on the state to prove that the defendant poses a risk to public safety or presents a substantial risk of recidivism and therefore cannot be eligible for parole.**

On Monday, Aug. 23, 2021, six amicus briefs were filed with the Supreme Court of New Jersey, Docket No. 083980. An additional brief will be filed on Monday, Aug. 30, 2021.

Amicus Curiae is the Latin phrase that means "friend of the court." Plural is "amici curiae." Frequently, a person or group who is not a party to an action, but has a strong interest in the matter, will petition the court for permission to submit a brief in the action with the intent of influencing the court's decision. Such briefs are called "amicus briefs."

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