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Alison Syre

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PADILLA V. KENTUCKY: BENDING OVER BACKWARD FOR FAIRNESS IN NONCITIZEN CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS

Alison Syré*

INTRODUCTION

Zhong Lin was born in China, but has lived in the United States for most of his adult life.¹ Until 2007, Mr. Lin lived with his wife and two children, ages eleven and nine, all three of whom are United States citizens.² He had strong business interests in the United States, as well as family and community ties, but never became a U.S. citizen.³ Mr. Lin considers himself to be entirely American, and sees China merely his place of birth.⁴ In 2007, Mr. Lin was charged with one count of conspiracy to commit tax fraud.⁵ Upon the advice of his attorney, he entered into a plea agreement, under which he agreed to plead guilty in exchange for a sentence of one year of probation, restitution payments to the IRS, and a fine.⁶ Mr. Lin fulfilled each element of his sentence, but his attorney failed to

* J.D. Candidate, Brooklyn Law School, 2013; B.A. University of Wisconsin–Madison, 2008. The author would like to thank her family and friends for their support during the writing process. She also wholeheartedly thanks the members of the Journal of Law & Policy for their stellar efforts in preparing this Note for publication, and James Fox, Esq. for sparking her interest in this topic.

² Id. at *1, *3.
³ Id. at *3.
⁴ See id.
⁵ Id. at *1.
⁶ Id. at *1, *3.
tell him one very important thing: his guilty plea would render him deportable.\footnote{See id. at *2 (crediting Lin’s testimony that he “entered into his plea agreement based upon mistaken legal advice only recently revealed”).}

Roselva Chaidez’s story has many similarities. Ms. Chaidez is a lawful permanent resident from Mexico, who entered the United States in 1971.\footnote{Brief of Defendant-Appellee at *3, Chaidez v. United States, 655 F.3d 684 (7th Cir. 2011) (No. 10-3623).} She is a fifty-four-year-old grandmother of three, all United States citizens.\footnote{Id.} In 2003, she had been living in northern Illinois for more than twenty-five years.\footnote{Id.} That year, Ms. Chaidez was charged with multiple counts of mail fraud.\footnote{Id.} With the advice of counsel, she pled guilty to two of the counts, and was sentenced to four years probation and ordered to pay restitution and a fine.\footnote{Id.} In 2009, Ms. Chaidez’s citizenship petition was denied, and the Department of Homeland Security placed her in removal proceedings based on her mail fraud conviction.\footnote{Id.} For her plea, Ms. Chaidez “forfeited her right to a trial and ultimately her privilege of remaining a free and lawful permanent resident, living in the only society she knows.”\footnote{Id. at *8–9.} Like Mr. Lin, Ms. Chaidez’s attorney did not inform her that her plea would render her deportable.\footnote{Id. at *7–8.}

Mr. Lin and Ms. Chaidez both challenged their guilty pleas following the Supreme Court’s 2010 decision in \textit{Padilla v. Kentucky},\footnote{See generally United States v. Chaidez, 730 F. Supp. 2d 896, 898 (N.D. Ill. 2010), rev’d 654 F.3d 684 (7th Cir. 2011); Motion to Withdraw Plea of Guilty and Set Aside Judgment of Conviction and Sentence, United States v. Zhong Lin, No. 07CR00044, 2010 WL 6510225 (W.D. Ky. Nov. 19, 2010) [hereinafter Motion to Withdraw Plea].} which held that the failure to inform a defendant of the potential immigration consequences of pleading guilty
constitutes ineffective assistance of counsel.\textsuperscript{17} Despite their nearly identical circumstances, however, the courts hearing their petitions came to vastly different outcomes due to a difference in opinion regarding whether \textit{Padilla} applied retroactively.\textsuperscript{18} Mr. Lin filed a writ of \textit{coram nobis} to challenge his federal conviction in the Western District of Kentucky.\textsuperscript{19} Judge Heyburn of that court determined that \textit{Padilla} applied retroactively and, accordingly, could provide relief for Mr. Lin, even though it was decided after Mr. Lin’s conviction became final.\textsuperscript{20} Judge Heyburn granted Mr. Lin’s petition for \textit{coram nobis}, and Mr. Lin is now free to continue living in the United States.\textsuperscript{21} Ms. Chaidez also filed a writ of \textit{coram nobis},\textsuperscript{22} which was initially granted by Judge Gottschall in the Northern District of Illinois.\textsuperscript{23} On appeal in the Seventh Circuit, however, a two-judge majority found \textit{Padilla} did not apply retroactively, making relief unavailable to individuals such as Ms. Chaidez, whose convictions had already become final.\textsuperscript{24} The ruling maintained Ms. Chaidez’s conviction, as well as her deportable status. One can imagine that, had Ms. Chaidez been living in Western Kentucky, rather than Northern Illinois, her case may have turned out very differently.

Deportation may be the most severe part of the penalty that can be imposed on noncitizen defendants.\textsuperscript{25} Yet, until \textit{Padilla},

\textsuperscript{17} Padilla v. Kentucky, 130 S. Ct. 1473, 1483 (2010).
\textsuperscript{19} See generally Motion to Withdraw Plea, supra note 16.
\textsuperscript{20} Id. at *1–2.
\textsuperscript{21} Id. at *3.
\textsuperscript{22} United States v. Chaidez, 730 F. Supp. 2d 896, 898 (N.D. Ill. 2010), rev’d, 654 F. 3d 684 (7th Cir. 2011).
\textsuperscript{23} Id. at 904.
\textsuperscript{24} Id. at 694. Judge Williams dissented, framing \textit{Padilla} as an application of an old rule (\textit{Strickland}) to new facts. Id. at 694–96 (Williams, J., dissenting). Since Judge Williams was one of only three judges considering Ms. Chaidez’ petition, the result was essentially dictated by the fact that one way of framing \textit{Padilla}’s rule got one more vote than another. See id.
\textsuperscript{25} Padilla v. Kentucky, 130 S. Ct. 1473, 1480 (2010).
most courts considered deportation a “collateral consequence” of a guilty plea, which an attorney had no duty to discuss with her client. It is clear that, post-Padilla, defendants who do not receive immigration advice from counsel before entering a guilty plea have a viable claim with which they may challenge their conviction. It is unclear, however, whether defendants whose convictions became final before Padilla (such as Mr. Lin and Ms. Chaidez), will also reap the benefit of the Padilla decision. The Supreme Court has yet to address the issue of the retroactive application of Padilla, and it appears unlikely that it will do so in the near future. Thus, it is imperative that lower courts correctly interpret Padilla to apply retroactively, as this interpretation is most accurate and helps correct the injustice suffered by ill-informed and uninformed noncitizen defendants.

This Note argues that an accurate application of Padilla requires courts to properly frame the rule of Padilla so as to apply the decision retroactively. Part IA provides an overview of recent changes to the relationship between criminal and immigration law, as well as a summary of the Supreme Court’s decision in Padilla v. Kentucky. Part IB explores the question of Padilla’s retroactive applicability and the potentially substantial consequences of the slight variation in courts’ framing of Padilla’s rule. Part IC examines the reasoning of courts that have arrived at contradictory interpretations of the rule. Part II recommends two ways for courts to properly apply Padilla to ensure that defendants whose convictions became final

26 See infra Part I.
29 See infra Part IA.
30 See infra Part IB.
31 See infra Part IC.
before the decision realize the benefits of Padilla. Part IIA gives several reasons why it is more appropriate for courts to frame Padilla’s rule as “the right to effective counsel”; Part IIB discusses state courts’ unique ability to give broader effect to Padilla, even if it is deemed “nonretroactive” under federal standards; and Part IIC assures that neither option will greatly disrupt interests of finality. The Note concludes that it is incumbent upon courts to apply Padilla retroactively and to correct the harm to noncitizens whose lives have been upended by their counsels’ failure.

I. THE Padilla LANDSCAPE AND THE QUESTION OF RETROACTIVITY

Before 2010, most courts recognized a distinction between the criminal and civil consequences of criminal convictions in the case of a non-citizen defendant. The specific elements of a defendant’s sentence were considered criminal or “direct” consequences, whereas the deportation implications of a criminal conviction were considered civil or “collateral” consequences. The latter were considered outside the scope of representation required by the Sixth Amendment. Thus, the failure of a defense attorney to advise his or her client of any civil consequence of a criminal conviction was not grounds for an ineffective counsel claim.


32 See infra Part II.
34 Id.
35 United States v. Fry, 322 F.3d 1198, 1200 (9th Cir. 2003).
36 Id.
“IIRIRA”)—created even more overlap between criminal law and civil immigration law. Both dramatically expanded the list of deportable criminal offenses and eliminated judicial discretion over certain types of deportation orders. In the wake of this legislation, deportation is often a virtually automatic result of criminal conviction. Additionally, AEDPA and IIRIRA apply retroactively, rendering deportable countless noncitizens that were charged and convicted at a time when deportation was less than a remote possibility. These results have led many to complain that the laws are unduly harsh.

A. Padilla v. Kentucky

In its 2010 decision in Padilla v. Kentucky, the United States Supreme Court took a significant step in addressing the overlap between criminal and civil consequences, acknowledging the unworkable nature of the “direct” versus “collateral”

41 See Morawetz, supra note 39, at 97, 99; see also Andrew Moore, Criminal Deportation, Post-Conviction Relief and the Lost Cause of Uniformity, 22 GEO. IMMIGR. L.J. 665, 708–09 (2008) (“[D]ue to the retroactive nature of the grounds of deportation expanded in 1996, noncitizens who pled guilty many years ago will now face immigration consequences if the government becomes aware of their past offenses.”).
distinction.\textsuperscript{44} In that case, Jose Padilla, a native of Honduras and a Vietnam War veteran, who had been a lawful permanent resident of the United States for more than forty years, pled guilty to drug charges.\textsuperscript{45} As a result, Padilla faced mandatory deportation under U.S. immigration law.\textsuperscript{46} In post-conviction proceedings, Padilla alleged that his counsel had “not only failed to advise him of [deportation consequences] prior to entering his plea, but also told him that he ‘did not have to worry about immigration status since he had been in the country so long.’”\textsuperscript{47} Padilla claimed that, were it not for his counsel’s erroneous advice, he would have insisted on going to trial,\textsuperscript{48} and he thereby challenged the plea’s validity under the ineffective counsel test of\textit{ Strickland v. Washington}.\textsuperscript{49} According to\textit{ Strickland}, a defendant may challenge the validity of his guilty plea on the basis of ineffective assistance of counsel by showing “that counsel made errors so serious that counsel was not functioning as the ‘counsel’ guaranteed the defendant by the Sixth Amendment. . . [And] that the deficient performance prejudiced the defense.”\textsuperscript{50}

The Supreme Court found that, under\textit{ Strickland}, the failure of Padilla’s counsel to inform Padilla of the immigration consequences of pleading guilty rendered counsel’s performance constitutionally deficient.\textsuperscript{51} The Court found the distinction between “direct” and “collateral” consequences ill suited for the case because of the close connection between deportation and the criminal process.\textsuperscript{52} Writing for the majority, Justice Stevens explained that defense counsel had an obligation to inform

\begin{itemize}
  \item See id. at 1482.
  \item Id. at 1477.
  \item Padilla, 130 S. Ct. at 1478 (citing Padilla v. Kentucky, 253 S.W.3d 482, 483 (Ky. 2008)).
  \item Id.
  \item Id. at 687.
  \item Padilla, 130 S. Ct. at 1482–83.
  \item Id. at 1482.
\end{itemize}
clients of the possible deportation consequences of their plea. Failure to do so, the Court held, provided the defendant the basis for a claim of ineffective counsel under Strickland. In arriving at this conclusion, the Court considered the changing landscape of federal immigration law over the last ninety years, and noted that

[w]hile once there was only a narrow class of deportable offenses and judges wielded broad discretionary authority to prevent deportation, immigration reforms over time have expanded the class of deportable offenses and limited the authority of judges to alleviate the harsh consequences of deportation. The “drastic measure” of deportation or removal is now virtually inevitable for a vast number of noncitizens convicted of crimes.

In light of these changes, the Court considered deportation consequences to be “an integral part—indeed, sometimes the most important part—of the penalty that may be imposed on noncitizen defendants who plead guilty to specified crimes.”

The Court further noted that professional norms already supported the view that defense counsel was obligated to inform her client of the risk of deportation. These professional standards strongly indicated that counsel’s failure to inform her client rendered her performance ineffective, since, under Strickland, the evaluation of whether counsel’s performance is

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53 Id. at 1483.
54 See id. at 1482.
55 Id. at 1478 (citing Fong Haw Tan v. Phelan, 333 U.S. 6, 10 (1948)).
56 Id. at 1480.
constitutionally deficient is “necessarily linked to practice and expectations of the legal community.”

B. Retroactivity and the Problem of Framing

*Padilla* has been lauded by many in the legal community as a great step towards preventing avoidable and wrongful deportations. The decision provides a new avenue of post-conviction relief for noncitizen criminal defendants. Many courts are now struggling, however, with the question of whether the relief secured by *Padilla* is available to a defendant whose conviction became final before *Padilla*, but who is still awaiting the deportation resulting from that conviction. Courts are greatly divided on the issue of retroactivity.

Under *Teague v. Lane*—the seminal case on the retroactive application of new decisions dealing with constitutional criminal

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58 Id.


procedure—“an old rule applies both on direct and collateral review, but a new rule is generally applicable only to cases that are still on direct review.” A new rule may apply retroactively, however, if “(1) the rule is substantive or (2) the rule is a ‘watershed rule’ of criminal procedure implicating the fundamental fairness and accuracy of the criminal proceeding.”

Padilla did not place “certain kinds of primary, private individual conduct beyond the power of the criminal law-making authority to proscribe,” and therefore did not create a substantive rule. A watershed decision is one that “requires the observance of ‘those procedures that . . . are implicit in the concept of ordered liberty.’” The exception is based on the idea that “time and growth in social capacity, as well as judicial perceptions of what we can rightly demand of the adjudicatory process, will [at times] properly alter our understanding of the bedrock procedural elements that must be found to vitiate the fairness of a particular conviction.” This exception, however, is very narrow and neither the courts nor this Note advocate its application to Padilla.

The Court in Teague admitted the difficulty in determining whether a case announces a new rule but gave limited guidance, explaining that “a case announces a new rule when it breaks new ground or imposes a new

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64 Id. (citing Saffle v. Parks, 494 U.S. 484, 495 (1990)).
66 Teague, 489 U.S. at 311 (quoting Mackey v. United States, 401 U.S. 667, 693 (1971)).
67 Id. (quoting Mackey, 401 U.S. at 693-94) (internal quotation marks omitted).
obligation on the States or the Federal Government,” or “if the result was not dictated by precedent existing at the time the defendant’s conviction became final.”

Courts faced with petitions for post-conviction relief relying on a retroactive application of Padilla are all faced with the same question: Does Teague prohibit retroactive application of Padilla? Although the question is the same, courts are coming to starkly different answers; much of the variation may be attributed to a difference in rule framing. In the course of their Teague analyses, courts are framing Padilla’s rule one of two ways—the right to effective counsel or counsel’s requirement to inform clients of the potential immigration consequences. A court’s choice as to how to frame Padilla’s rule effectively determines whether a defendant will be permitted to stay in the country or be removed.

Courts rarely announce a rule in explicit terms; in fact, courts determining whether Padilla created a new rule for Teague purposes appear hesitant to directly identify what exactly Padilla’s rule is. Even in the absence of a clear announcement, however, the way these courts frame Padilla’s rule can be deduced from the language and reasoning they use.

In Doan v. United States, the Eastern District of Virginia considered Justice Alito’s suggestion in his concurrence that defense counsel merely be required to inform clients that a conviction may have immigration consequences, without attempting to explain what those consequences may be. The Doan court described Justice Alito’s recommendation as a “different rule than the one adopted by the majority.” From this, it can be inferred that the Doan court interpreted Padilla’s

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70 Teague, 489 U.S. at 301.
71 See Wright v. West, 505 U.S. 277, 311 (1992) (“The crux of the analysis when Teague is invoked . . . is identification of the rule on which the claim for [post-conviction] relief depends.”).
74 Id. (emphasis added).
majority rule as requiring counsel to inform clients of the potential immigration consequences of a conviction. After framing the rule as such, the Doan court found that Padilla created a new rule, and was therefore not retroactive.\textsuperscript{75} The District Court of New Jersey was clearer about what it determined Padilla’s rule to be in U.S. v. Gilbert.\textsuperscript{76} The Gilbert court concluded that the “Padilla decision requiring counsel to advise a non-citizen client of deportation consequences is a new constitutional rule and should not be applied retroactively to Plaintiff’s 2006 sentence.”\textsuperscript{77} Like the Doan court, the Gilbert court framed Padilla’s rule in a narrow, fact-specific way. The rule, as characterized by the Gilbert court, was a departure from prior case law and professional norms and was worthy of the “new rule” label.\textsuperscript{78}

Courts applying Padilla retroactively, on the other hand, have framed the rule very differently. In Commonwealth v. Clarke, for instance, the Supreme Court of Massachusetts found guidance in previous United States Supreme Court decisions explaining that the Strickland test “is one which of necessity requires a case-by-case examination of the evidence,”\textsuperscript{79} and that “application of Strickland in [a] novel context [does] not create [a] new rule.”\textsuperscript{80} The Clarke court concluded, “Padilla is not a ‘new rule’ but merely an application of Strickland,”\textsuperscript{81} and consequently applied retroactively under Teague.\textsuperscript{82} Other courts applying Padilla retroactively use similar reasoning, demonstrating a common choice in framing.\textsuperscript{83}

\textsuperscript{75} Id. at 605–06.
\textsuperscript{77} Id. at *3 (emphasis added).
\textsuperscript{78} See id. (ruminating on the lack of Third Circuit or Supreme Court rulings on whether “an attorney must make a client aware of possible future immigration proceedings . . . ”).
\textsuperscript{80} Id. (quoting Osagiede v. United States, 543 F.3d 399, 408 n.4 (7th Cir. 2008)).
\textsuperscript{81} Id. at 901.
\textsuperscript{82} Id. at 904.
\textsuperscript{83} See, e.g., People v. Garcia, 907 N.Y.S.2d 398, 404 (Sup. Ct. 2010).
The framing in Doan and Gilbert is typical of courts that have declined to apply Padilla retroactively. These courts framed Padilla’s rule as counsel’s duty to inform clients of deportation consequences of pleas. Since this rule was not “dictated by precedent existing at the time the defendant’s conviction became final,” it is necessarily a new rule and may not be applied retroactively unless it qualifies for one of Teague’s very narrow exceptions. In contrast, courts that have applied Padilla retroactively, such as the Clarke court, frame the rule as the right to effective counsel, as explained in Strickland. According to those courts, the right to counsel does not “break[] new ground or impose[] a new obligation on the State or Federal Government”; rather, it is an old rule and must apply retroactively. As these cases demonstrate, the way that a particular court frames Padilla’s rule effectively dictates the eventual outcome of its retroactivity analysis.

C. Split Among the Courts

Following Padilla, various courts have applied the Teague doctrine to allegations involving plea deals entered into pre-Padilla, and have come to opposite conclusions regarding the retroactive application of the Padilla decision. This variation

(concluding Padilla merely “applied its Strickland precedents to a new set of facts”).


Although a few writers advocate application of Teague’s “watershed rule” exception to Padilla, this view is not generally supported. See infra Part I.C.


Teague, 489 U.S. at 301.

See cases cited supra note 61 (listing cases applying Padilla retroactively and cases not applying Padilla retroactively, all using the Teague retroactivity analysis).
may be due to a difference in framing. Through an examination of specific reasons courts have provided in their retroactivity analysis, it is apparent that the difference in rule framing pervasively dictates results.

Courts that have applied Padilla retroactively have identified Padilla’s rule as the right to effective counsel, as explained in Strickland. Such framing produces an “old rule” for Teague purposes, and therefore requires retroactive application. Some courts have found further support for this conclusion in language from the Padilla opinion. Courts that have declined to apply Padilla retroactively have identified Padilla’s rule as counsel’s requirement to inform clients of the potential immigration consequences of a guilty plea. Such framing produces a “new rule” for Teague purposes, and therefore prohibits retroactive application. These courts have found that neither of the exceptions to Teague’s rule that new rules of criminal procedure do not apply retroactively apply to Padilla.

The majority of opinions applying Padilla retroactively have found that the decision did not create a new rule. The Third Circuit took this approach in United States v. Orocio. In Orocio, the court held that Padilla recognized “that a plea agreement’s immigration consequences constitute the sort of information an alien defendant needs” in order to make decisions “affecting the outcome of the plea process.” Thus, according to the Orocio court, the requirement that counsel inform his or her client of immigration consequences provides nothing new, as “the Court had long required effective assistance of counsel on all ‘important decisions,’ in plea bargaining that could ‘affect[] the

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90 See supra Part I.B.


92 Orocio, 645 F.3d at 638.
outcome of the plea process.’” 93 The court further noted, “[e]very Strickland claim requires a fact-specific inquiry, but it is not the case that every Strickland ruling on new facts requires the announcement of a ‘new rule.’” 94 Similarly, in United States v. Hubenig, the Eastern District of California noted that “[w]hen the Supreme Court applies a well-established rule of law in a new way based on the specific facts of a particular case, it does not generally establish a new rule.” 95 The Supreme Court of Massachusetts, in Commonwealth v. Clarke, similarly reasoned that Padilla did not create a new rule, but rather had applied “an established constitutional standard on a case-by-case basis, incorporating evolving professional norms (on which the standard relies) to new facts.” 96 In other words, these courts considered Padilla to have simply “applied an old rule in a new context.” 97

Courts that have found that Padilla did not create a new rule have, in some instances, also had to grapple with the fact that Padilla overruled precedent in their jurisdiction, 98 which opponents of Padilla’s retroactive application argue shows that “the result [of Padilla] was not dictated by precedent existing at the time the defendant’s conviction became final,” and is therefore a new rule under the limited guidance of Teague. 99 Addressing that argument in Hubenig, the Eastern District of California found the existence of conflicting precedent “not dispositive of whether [Padilla] established a new rule for Teague purposes,” because “the standard for determining when a case establishes a new rule is ‘objective,’ and the mere

93 Id. (citing Hill v. Lockhart, 474 U.S. 52, 59 (1985); Strickland v. Washington, 466 U.S. 668, 688 (1984)).
94 Id. at 640.
98 See Chaidez v. United States, 655 F.3d 684, 690 (7th Cir. 2011) (“Prior to Padilla, the lower federal courts, including at least nine Courts of Appeals, had uniformly held that the Sixth Amendment did not require counsel to provide advice concerning any collateral (as opposed to direct) consequences of a guilty plea.”).
99 See id. at 688–91.
existence of conflicting authority does not necessarily mean a rule is new.”

Courts that have found that Padilla relief should not be made retroactively available to defendants whose conviction pre-dates Padilla have argued that the decision created a new rule. In United States v. Chapa, the Northern District of Georgia found that Padilla’s result “was not dictated by precedent existing at the time [that a pre-Padilla defendant’s] conviction became final,” because existing precedent nation-wide “dictated the opposite result.” Additionally, in United States v. Perez, the District of Nebraska pointed out that it was not the “prevailing professional norm” to inform a defendant of immigration consequences of his guilty plea.

Other courts have cited Alito’s concurrence and Scalia’s dissent in Padilla as support for classifying Padilla as having announced a new rule. For instance, in Mendoza v. United States, the Eastern District of Virginia pointed to the very existence of Padilla’s concurrence (by Justice Alito) and dissent (by Justice Scalia) as evidence of a new rule. The court highlighted language from Justice Alito’s opinion, noting that the majority “effectively overruled ‘the longstanding and unanimous position of the federal courts . . . that reasonable defense counsel generally need only advise a client about the direct

100 Hubenig, 2010 WL 2650625, at *7 (quoting Williams v. Taylor, 529 U.S. 362, 410 (2000)).


104 Perez, 2010 WL 4643033, at *2 (citing Wiggins v. Smith, 539 U.S. 510, 521 (2003)).

105 Mendoza, 774 F. Supp. 2d at 797.
consequences of a criminal conviction.”

Similarly, in United States v. Chang Hong, the Tenth Circuit determined that Padilla created a new rule, finding support for their conclusion in Justice Scalia’s argument that, before Padilla, the Supreme Court “had limited the Sixth Amendment to advice directly related to defense against criminal prosecutions,” and does not require advice on collateral consequences of convictions.

These separate opinions, these courts argue, show that “reasonable jurists did not find the rule in Padilla compelled or dictated by the Court’s prior precedent.”

A few academics have taken the position that Padilla created a new rule, but that it qualifies for retroactive application under the “watershed decision” exception to Teague. They reason that, without Padilla’s requirement to inform a defendant of the deportation consequences of his guilty plea, innocent defendants who are pessimistic about their chances at trial will be more likely to submit false guilty pleas in exchange for favorable plea bargains. Thus, “the likelihood of an accurate criminal conviction is seriously diminished.” The watershed exception is extremely narrow, however, and the majority of courts that have found that Padilla created a new rule have refused to classify it as watershed rule.

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108 Id.; Mendoza, 774 F. Supp. 2d at 797.


110 See Holahan & Kieffer, supra note 109.

111 Id. at 27.

112 See Beard v. Banks, 542 U.S. 406, 407 (2004) (“[The Supreme Court] has repeatedly emphasized the limited scope of the . . . exception—for ‘watershed rules of criminal procedure . . . ’—which ‘is clearly meant to apply only to a small core of rules requiring observance of those procedures that . . . are implicit in the concept of ordered liberty.’” (citations omitted) (quoting O’Dell v. Netherland, 521 U.S. 151, 157 (1997))).

113 E.g., United States v. Chang Hong, No. 10-6294, 2011 WL 3805763,
Courts that have held that *Padilla* created a new rule, before declining to apply it retroactively, have had to determine that it is not a “watershed rule of criminal procedure implicating the fundamental fairness and accuracy of the criminal proceedings.” In *Chang Hong*, the court pointed out the narrowness of the “watershed” exception, and noted that “the [Supreme] Court has rejected every attempt to fit a case within the exception.” In *Llanes v. United States*, the Middle District of Florida found that *Padilla*’s requirement that counsel provide immigration advice is less significant than what the Supreme Court envisioned as qualifying as a watershed rule. These courts, and many others, have found that *Padilla* does not “alter [the Court’s] understanding of bedrock procedural elements essential to the fairness of a proceeding,” and, therefore, does not qualify for *Teague*’s exception to the general rule that new rules of criminal procedure do not apply retroactively.

Although the *Padilla* Court did not make an explicit holding on retroactivity, many lower courts interpreting *Padilla* have pointed to certain language in the Supreme Court’s opinion to

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116 *Llanes*, 2011 WL 2473233, at *2 (noting *Padilla*’s notification requirement is “far different from *Gideon*’s establishment of the right to counsel”).


119 Absence of an explicit holding of retroactivity by the Supreme Court does not indicate the Court does not intend retroactive application, as the Court may “[e]stablish principles of retroactivity and [l]eave the application of those principles to lower courts.” *Tyler*, 533 U.S. at 663.
support its retroactive application.\textsuperscript{120} Most persuasive, perhaps, has been the Court’s response to the Solicitor General’s concern that its decision would open the “floodgates.”\textsuperscript{121} The Court stated:

It seems unlikely that our decision today will have a significant effect on those convictions already obtained as the result of plea bargains. For at least the past 15 years, professional norms have generally imposed an obligation on counsel to provide advice on the deportation consequences of a client’s plea.\textsuperscript{122}

According to the court in \textit{Hubenig}, the Supreme Court’s “floodgates” discussion “signaled that it understood its holding in \textit{Padilla} would apply retroactively.”\textsuperscript{123} If the Supreme Court did not intend retroactive application of \textit{Padilla}, the \textit{Hubenig} court reasoned, the “floodgates” discussion would have been unnecessary.\textsuperscript{124} Likewise, in \textit{People v. Garcia}, the Kings County Supreme Court noted the Supreme Court’s treatment of the “floodgate” issue was “reason[] in [itself] to apply \textit{Padilla} retroactively.”\textsuperscript{125}

\section*{II. The Need for Retroactive Application}

Defendants have very few feasible options following a denial of collateral post-conviction relief; thus, collateral proceedings become paramount. In cases where courts determine that \textit{Padilla} may not be applied retroactively to finalized convictions, petitioners may theoretically still have recourse through a petition for habeas corpus.\textsuperscript{126} In reality, however, the “great

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{120} See, \textit{e.g.}, United States v. Hubenig, No. 6:03-mj-040, 2010 WL 2650625, at *7 (E.D. Cal. July 1, 2010); People v. Garcia, 907 N.Y.S.2d 398, 402 (Sup. Ct. 2010).
  \item \textsuperscript{121} \textit{Padilla} v. Kentucky, 130 S. Ct. 1473, 1484–85 (2010).
  \item \textsuperscript{122} \textit{Id.}
  \item \textsuperscript{123} \textit{Hubenig}, 2010 WL 2650625, at *7.
  \item \textsuperscript{124} \textit{Id.}; \textit{see also} People v. De Jesus, 30 Misc. 3d 1203(A) (N.Y. Sup. Ct. 2010) (unpublished table decision).
  \item \textsuperscript{125} \textit{Garcia}, 907 N.Y.S.2d at 402.
  \item \textsuperscript{126} 28 U.S.C. § 2241(a) (2006).
\end{itemize}
writ” is unlikely to provide relief in these cases.\textsuperscript{127} In order to obtain habeas relief, except in extraordinary cases,\textsuperscript{128} a petitioner must first exhaust all remedies available in state court.\textsuperscript{129} This may include a variety of collateral attacks available through state statutes.\textsuperscript{130} Additionally, AEDPA imposes a one-year statute of limitations for filing habeas petitions.\textsuperscript{131} The statute begins running when a defendant’s judgment becomes final by the conclusion of direct review.\textsuperscript{132} Furthermore, individuals may be deported before their habeas petitions are reviewed,\textsuperscript{133} and in such cases, are often barred from habeas relief.\textsuperscript{134} Thus, “few


\textsuperscript{128} See, e.g., Lee v. Stickman, 357 F.3d 338, 343–44 (3d Cir. 2004) (exhaustion requirement excused because unresolved petition challenging conviction pended in state court for eight years). But see, e.g., Williams v. Sims, 390 F.3d 958, 963 (7th Cir. 2004) (exhaustion requirement not excused though state delayed because petitioner’s habeas petition was untimely).

\textsuperscript{129} § 2254(b)(1)(A).

\textsuperscript{130} See, e.g., N.Y. CRIM. PROC. LAW § 440.10 (McKinney 2005) (motion to vacate judgment).

\textsuperscript{131} § 2244(d)(1). AEDPA additionally greatly restricts habeas relief by limiting it to cases that have been adjudicated in state court “contrary to, or [in] an unreasonable application of, clearly established Federal law, as determined by the Supreme Court of the United States.” 2254(d)(1). See generally Ursula Bentele, The Not So Great Writ: Trapped in the Narrow Holdings of Supreme Court Precedents, 14 LEWIS & CLARK L. REV. 741 (2010).

\textsuperscript{132} § 2244(d)(1)(A). If a defendant unsuccessfully petitions for certiorari in the highest state court or the Supreme Court of the United States, his petition becomes “final by the conclusion of direct review” on the day certiorari is denied, with that day counting as the first day of the one-year limitation. Lisa L. Bellamy, Playing for Time: The Need for Equitable Tolling of the Habeas Corpus Statute of Limitations, 32 AM. J. CRIM. L. 1, 13 (2004).

\textsuperscript{133} See Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1252(b)(3)(B) (1999) (“Service of the petition on the officer or employee does not stay the removal of an alien pending the court’s decision on the petition, unless the court orders otherwise.”).

\textsuperscript{134} Some courts find petitions from deported individuals are moot. See,
will navigate this procedural minefield successfully.” 135
Therefore, for defendants seeking the protection of Padilla, post-conviction challenges may provide the last chance to avoid deportation.

Additionally, there may be a substantial length of time between when a noncitizen’s criminal conviction becomes final and the time he or she is removed. There is a tremendous backlog of cases in immigration courts. 136 In September 2011, 297,551 cases were pending in immigration courts, 137 24,661 of which involved individuals rendered deportable by criminal convictions. 138 The average length of time criminal immigration cases had been pending was 403 days. 139 The wait in some courts, however, is significantly longer. 140 The time courts take to render decisions is also very long. Courts took, on average, 166 days to render removal decisions issued in September 2011. 141 Immigration courts in New York City took an average

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137 Immigration Court Backlog Tool, TRAC IMMIGR., http://trac.syr.edu/phptools/immigration/court_backlog/ (select “Pending Cases” under “What to graph”; then select “All Charges” under “Charge Type”) (last visited Feb. 24, 2012).
138 Id. (select “Pending Cases” under “What to graph”; then select “Criminal/Nat. Sec./Terror” under “Charge Type”). The number of pending criminal immigration cases also includes individuals allegedly deportable on national security or terrorism grounds. Id.
139 Id. (select “Average Days” under “What to tabulate”; then select “Criminal/Nat. Sec./Terror” under “Charge Type”).
140 In Los Angeles, for example, criminal immigration cases pending in September 2011 had been pending, on average, for 699 days. Id.
141 Immigration Court Processing Time by Outcome, TRAC IMMIGR.,
of 623 days to process removal decisions. This data reveals that criminal immigration proceedings often involve convictions finalized more than a year and a half earlier, and in some cities, such as New York and Los Angeles, three or more years earlier. Thus, the potential class of claimants affected by the retroactivity of Padilla remains huge.

The following section explains why an accurate application of Padilla requires courts to frame its rule as the right to effective counsel. Courts inaccurately framing the rule as counsel’s requirement to inform clients of the potential immigration consequences improperly deny petitioners access to Padilla’s benefits.

A. Courts Must Frame Padilla’s Rule as the Right to Effective Counsel, as explained in Strickland

A proper application of Padilla requires courts to frame Padilla’s rule as the right to effective counsel, and thereby apply the decision retroactively. Strickland is a rule of general application, which is seldom likely to create a “new rule” for Teague purposes. While application of Strickland to new facts may yield a novel result, as was the case in Padilla, such a result does imply creation of a “new rule.” Rather, a case’s fact-specific novel result may be its holding, which courts should not mistake for the case’s broader rule.

1. A Rule of General Application

In his concurring opinion, Justice Alito claimed that the imposition of a duty to inform clients of immigration consequences “marks a major upheaval in Sixth Amendment

[142] Immigation Court Processing Time by Outcome, supra note 141.
law,”143 and pointed out an absence of precedent “holding that criminal defense counsel’s failure to provide advice concerning the removal consequences of a criminal conviction violates a defendant’s Sixth Amendment right to counsel.”144 Several courts have pointed to this language as evidence that Padilla created a new rule.145 This reasoning, however, ignores the nature of Strickland’s inquiry into whether counsel’s performance was constitutionally effective.

Strickland calls for a fact-centered analysis, requiring “a case-by-case examination of the evidence . . . .”146 It created a rule of general application, “establish[ing] a broad and flexible standard for the review of an attorney’s performance in a variety of factual circumstances.”147 In his concurring opinion in Wright v. West, Justice Kennedy explained the unlikelihood of a rule of general application creating a new rule for Teague purposes: “If the rule in question is one which of necessity requires a case-by-case examination of the evidence, then we can tolerate a number of specific applications without saying that those applications themselves create a new rule . . . .”148 Justice Kennedy made it clear that, in the application of such rules, “it will be the infrequent case that yields a result so novel that it forges a new rule, one not dictated by precedent.”149 Therefore, rules that rely on case-by-case examinations, such as Strickland, may be applied in a variety of circumstances without establishing a new rule for Teague purposes.150

144 Id.
147 Newland v. Hall, 527 F.3d 1162, 1197 (11th Cir. 2008).
148 Wright, 505 U.S. at 308 (Kennedy, J., concurring).
149 Id. at 309.
150 Id. at 308–09.
Justice Kennedy’s point is well illustrated by several Supreme Court decisions applying Strickland to various fact patterns, none of which have been deemed to have created a new rule for Teague purposes. In Williams v. Taylor, the Court applied Strickland to determine that counsel’s failure to introduce known evidence regarding defendant’s borderline mental retardation and troubled childhood constituted ineffective assistance of counsel. Three years later, in Wiggins v. Smith, the Court applied Strickland to counsel’s failure to investigate their defendant’s dysfunctional background, finding such conduct to constitute ineffective assistance. Yet again, in Rompilla v. Beard, the Court applied Strickland to find that defense counsel’s failure to sufficiently investigate aggravating factors in the sentencing phase of a defendant’s capital murder trial constituted ineffective assistance, despite suggestions by the defendant’s family that mitigating factors were not present. Despite the fact that these cases created or imposed on defense counsel a set of increased obligations, not one of the cases has been found to have created a new rule. They are, rather, applications of Strickland’s articulation of the right to effective counsel, which “can hardly be said [to]... ‘break[s] new ground or impose[s] a new obligation on the States.’”

Padilla is another in a long line of Strickland cases applying an old rule of general application to new circumstances: counsel’s failure to inform a client of deportation consequences following significant changes in immigration law. Padilla’s

154 Id. at 523–27.
156 Id. at 383.
157 Williams, 529 U.S. at 391 (quoting Teague v. Lane, 489 U.S. 288, 301 (1989)).
158 See supra Part I (discussing the changes to immigration law brought by AEDPA and IIRIRA); see also Padilla v. Kentucky, 130 S. Ct. 1473, 1480 (2010) (“[AEDPA and IIRIRA’s] changes to our immigration law have dramatically raised the stakes of a noncitizen’s criminal conviction.”).
pronouncement that an attorney’s failure to inform his or her client of a plea’s deportation consequences constitutes ineffective counsel may have differed from any previous applications of Strickland, but considering the nature of Strickland inquiries, did not establish a new rule. Some courts have argued that Padilla’s application of Strickland is exceptional, as it imposes a duty on defense counsel to advise on collateral consequences. As the Court noted in Padilla, however, “[w]e . . . have never applied a distinction between direct and collateral consequences to define the scope of constitutionally ‘reasonable professional assistance’ required under Strickland.” Padilla simply involved another instance of the familiar pattern of a rule of general application: an old rule applied to new facts, yielding new results.

2. Wide Rules, Narrow Holdings

Courts framing Padilla’s rule as counsel’s requirement to inform clients of immigration consequences of a conviction may be failing to distinguish the case’s “rule” from its holding. Black’s Law Dictionary defines a “legal ruling” as “a ruling on a point of law . . . reached by the judge as a necessary step in the decision,” and a holding as “1. A court’s determination of a matter of law pivotal to its decision,” and “2. A ruling on evidence or other questions presented at trial.” Although these may sound similar, there are meaningful differences between the two. A holding is attached to a particular case, and is often fact-specific. Rules, on the other hand, can be synthesized

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159 Padilla, 130 S. Ct. at 1483.
161 Padilla, 130 S. Ct. at 1481 (citing Strickland v. Washington, 466 U.S. 668, 689 (1984)).
162 BLACK’S LAW DICTIONARY 629 (3d pocket ed. 2006).
163 Id. at 331.
165 Bentele, supra note 131, at 744 (“[D]efining the holding of a case is less straightforward; those seeking to expand the reach of a precedent will characterize the decision broadly, while one who disapproves of the previous
from multiple cases, and, therefore, often have wider or more general application than holdings. Particularly in the context of Teague’s retroactivity analysis, “rules of law may be sufficiently clear for habeas purposes even when they are expressed in terms of a generalized standard rather than as a bright-line rule.” With this framework in mind, it appears reasonable, if not necessary, to characterize Padilla’s rule as the more general principle of “the right to counsel,” and its holding as the more fact-specific principle that counsel’s failure to inform clients of deportation consequences constitutes ineffective assistance.

The difference between a case’s holding and its rule for Teague purposes is well illustrated in Lewis v. Johnson. In 1987, Charles Lewis pled guilty to six counts of robbery and nine other criminal offenses in the Pennsylvania Court of Common Pleas, and was sentenced to thirty to sixty years in prison. In the eight years following his conviction, Lewis filed two petitions in Pennsylvania state court for post-conviction relief, alleging that his court-appointed trial counsel was ineffective on a number of grounds, including for failing to file a direct appeal. Both petitions were denied. The court found that relief was precluded by Pennsylvania case law that had held “trial counsel cannot be found ineffective for failing to file a direct appeal when not requested to do so.” In August 2000, Lewis filed a petition for writ of habeas corpus in the District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania, but his petition was denied. Lewis appealed, relying on Roe v. Flores-Ortega, decided by the Supreme Court two months before he had filed his habeas petition, in which the Court used the

outcome will narrow it to its specific facts.”).

166 Tennant, supra note 164, at 72.
169 Id. at 649.
170 Id. at 650–51.
171 Id.
172 Id. at 650.
173 Id. at 651.
175 Lewis, 359 F.3d at 651.
*Strickland* test to find that “counsel had a constitutionally imposed duty to consult with the defendant about an appeal when there is reason to think either (1) that a rational defendant would want to appeal . . . or (2) that this particular defendant reasonably demonstrated to counsel that he was interested in appealing.”

Since *Flores-Ortega* was decided after Lewis’ conviction became final, the Third Circuit conducted a *Teague* analysis to determine whether the decision applied retroactively.177 The court framed *Flores-Ortega*’s rule as “the *Strickland* standard,” and, thus, found it to be an “old rule,” which applied retroactively.178 Applying the *Flores-Ortega* decision to Lewis’ case, the Third Circuit reversed and remanded, instructing the district court to grant Lewis’ petition conditioned upon the Commonwealth’s reinstatement of his right of first appeal.179 The court characterized *Flores-Ortega* as holding that “criminal defense attorneys have a constitutional duty to consult and advise defendants of their appellate rights.”180 Although this holding was contrary to state case law, the court properly recognized that *Strickland*, as a rule of general application, may produce novel results, but is, by no means, a new rule.181 It further noted that “case law need not exist on all fours to allow for a finding under *Teague* that the rule at issue was dictated by Supreme Court precedent.”182 Had the court mistaken *Flores-Ortega*’s holding (criminal defense attorneys have a constitutional duty to advise defendants of their appellate rights) for its rule (the right to effective counsel), Lewis would probably not have found habeas relief.

In the last fifteen years, it has become even more important that courts differentiate between rules and holdings during *Teague* retroactivity inquiries. In addition to imposing a one-

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176 *Flores-Ortega*, 528 U.S. at 480.
177 *Lewis*, 359 F.3d at 652–57.
178 See *id.* at 655 (“*Flores-Ortega*’s application of the *Strickland* standard was dictated by precedent and merely clarified the law as it applied to the particular facts of that case.”).
179 *Id.* at 662.
180 *Id.* at 652.
181 *Id.* at 655.
182 *Id.*
year statute of limitations on habeas filing, AEDPA has greatly limited the claims on which relief may be granted. AEDPA included an amendment to the habeas corpus statute providing:

(d) An application for a writ of habeas corpus on behalf of a person in custody pursuant to the judgment of a State court shall not be granted with respect to any claim that was adjudicated on the merits in State court proceedings unless the adjudication of the claim—

(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 . . . .

In recent years, “clearly established Federal law, as determined by the Supreme Court” has been interpreted as Supreme Court holdings, and often in a manner narrowly tailored to the facts of the case. Thus, unless a habeas petitioner presents a claim with a substantially similar fact pattern as a case previously decided by the Supreme Court, district courts will likely find that the state court conviction was not “contrary to” or “an unreasonable application of, clearly established federal law” and that habeas relief, therefore, cannot be granted.

However, a small oasis in this restricted habeas jurisprudence may be found for petitioners relying on decisions announced after their convictions became final. In Williams v. Taylor, the Supreme Court stated, “whatever would qualify as an old rule under our Teague jurisprudence will constitute ‘clearly established Federal law, as determined by the Supreme

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183 See supra Part II (discussing AEDPA’s statute of limitations for filing petitions for habeas corpus).


186 Bentele, supra note 131, at 741.

187 See id. at 751–54.

188 § 2254(d)(1)–(2).

189 Bentele, supra note 131, at 746.
Court of the United States’ under [AEDPA].” According to this instruction, if a habeas petitioner relies on a Supreme Court decision announced after his conviction became final, and if the court entertaining the petition finds the rule of the relied upon case is old, the petitioner may reap the benefits of the case even if the facts of his case are not substantially similar. In contrast, if the same petitioner relied on the same Supreme Court case, but the case had been decided before his conviction became final, he could only realize the protections of its holding, which might require the facts of the two cases to be substantially similar. It appears that retroactively applied decisions may offer wider habeas relief. When a court mistakes a holding for a rule in its Teague analysis, however, it extinguishes this opportunity.

Courts that have declined to apply Padilla retroactively failed to appreciate Strickland’s nature as a rule of general applicability. These courts inaccurately identified Padilla’s rule, perhaps confusing it with the case’s holding. Their incorrect application of Padilla deprived petitioners of what may have been their last opportunity to maintain their lives in the United States.

**B. Alternatively, State Courts Should Use Their Power Under Danforth v. Minnesota to Give Broader Effect to New Rules**

A proper appreciation for the Strickland rule’s nature as a rule of general application, as well as for the distinction between Padilla’s “rule” and its “holding,” compel courts to frame Padilla’s rule as the right to effective counsel—an old rule which thus requires retroactive application.\(^{191}\) State courts that remain unconvinced, however, have an alternative means by which they may give Padilla retroactive effect. Even after concluding that Padilla created a new rule, and that it therefore does not apply retroactively under Teague, state courts may give Padilla retroactive effect through their power under Danforth v. Minnesota.\(^{192}\)

\(^{190}\) Williams v. Taylor, 529 U.S. 362, 412 (2000) (quoting § 2254(d)(1)).

\(^{191}\) See supra Part II.A.

The Supreme Court’s 2008 decision in Danforth v. Minnesota greatly altered retroactivity jurisprudence. The Court examined “whether Teague constrains the authority of state courts to give broader effect to new rules of criminal procedure than is required by that opinion.” The majority concluded that it did not; instead, according to the Court, Teague “limits the kinds of constitutional violations that will entitle an individual to relief on federal habeas, but does not in any way limit the authority of a state court, when reviewing its own state criminal convictions, to provide a remedy for a violation that is deemed ‘nonretroactive’ under Teague.” Thus, under Danforth, a state may design its own retroactivity standards for federal constitutional rules in excess of the federal minimum set by Teague. State courts have already begun using their power under Danforth to design their own retroactivity principles.

In the Padilla context, if the highest state court determines that Padilla created a new rule, and is thus not retroactively applicable under Teague, the court may apply its own retroactivity principles in a manner allowing for retroactive application of Padilla. Padilla applications provide a perfect opportunity for state courts to revise their retroactivity principles in a way that provides greater post-conviction relief in the wake of AEDPA’s constriction of federal habeas relief.

194 Danforth, 552 U.S. at 266.
195 Id. at 282.
196 Id. at 288.
198 See supra Part II.
C. Finality Interests

Since “retroactive application may affect defendants whose trials are long since over,” it involves important finality concerns.199 These concerns are especially relevant in the retroactive application of Padilla, which may affect a large number of final convictions. In Barrios Cruz v. State, the court concluded that a retroactive application of Padilla “would undermine the perceived and actual finality of criminal judgments,” and declined to apply Padilla retroactively.200 Many other courts express similar finality concerns.201

However, applying Padilla retroactively will not significantly hamper interests of finality, because defendants permitted to benefit from Padilla still face a significant hurdle. A successful claim of ineffective counsel under Strickland requires that a defendant prove not only that his counsel’s performance was deficient, but also that he was prejudiced by the deficient performance.202

In Padilla, the majority “[gave] serious consideration to the concerns . . . regarding the importance of protecting the finality of convictions obtained through guilty pleas,” but explained, “[s]urmounting Strickland’s high bar is never an easy task . . . . [T]o obtain relief on this type of claim, a petitioner must convince the court that a decision to reject the plea bargain would have been rational under the circumstances.”203 The majority predicted that “lower courts—now quite experienced with applying Strickland—[could] effectively and efficiently use its framework to separate specious claims from those with substantial merit.”204 This prediction appears to have been

204 Id. at 1485.
accurate, as some courts have applied Padilla retroactively, but found that claims did not warrant relief because defendants failed to show prejudice. Others avoided the retroactivity analysis altogether by first determining that a defendant was not prejudiced. Accurate application of Strickland’s prejudice requirement ensures that retroactive application of Padilla will only disturb the finality of meritorious claims.

CONCLUSION

Certain criminal acts render a lawful permanent resident deportable in an instant. Even misdemeanors, such as possession of thirty-one grams of marijuana or distribution of obscene material, can lead to removal. The Padilla Court carefully considered the “[changing] landscape of federal immigration law” and recognized that “deportation is an integral part... of the penalty that may be imposed on noncitizen defendants.” Based on these considerations, it found that an attorney has a duty to advise her client of deportation consequences of a guilty plea, and failure to do so is grounds for a claim of ineffective counsel.

Padilla was a victory for many, but that victory was diminished by some jurisdictions’ refusal to apply Padilla retroactively. The stark division among courts as to whether

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208 See, e.g., N.Y. PENAL LAW § 221.10 (McKinney 2008).
209 See, e.g., N.Y. PENAL LAW § 235.05 (McKinney 2008).
212 Id. at 1484.
213 See Naima Said & Laila Said-Alam, Preserving Right to U.S.
Padilla created a new rule for Teague purposes, and thus could not be applied retroactively, effectively leaves a noncitizen defendant’s fate to the happenstance of his or her location of conviction. 214 Courts that have found that Padilla created a new rule did so because they framed Padilla’s rule as an attorney’s duty to provide immigration advice. 215 Framing the rule in this way, however, ignores Strickland’s nature as a rule of general application, as well as the distinction between Padilla’s rule and holding. 216 By mischaracterizing Padilla’s rule, courts not only apply Padilla inaccurately, but they also miss an opportunity to correct great harm to uninformed or ill-informed noncitizen defendants and the families and communities from which they are removed. 217 In contrast, framing Padilla’s rule as the right to effective counsel allows courts to address these harms without greatly disturbing interests of finality. 218 State courts have the additional option of giving Padilla retroactive effect, even if they find it “nonretroactive” under Teague. 219 Padilla has the potential to be a victory for accuracy and fairness in criminal proceedings, but it is up to the courts to fulfill its promise.

214 See supra Introduction (demonstrating the impact of different jurisdictions’ opposite conclusions on the issue of Padilla’s retroactivity).

215 See supra Part I.B.

216 See supra Part II.A.

217 See Said & Said-Alam, supra note 213, at 13 (“By narrowly construing Padilla, the Maryland Court of Appeals missed an opportunity to correct egregious harm to Maryland’s youngest citizens facing the unquantifiable social cost of permanent separation from what could be the sole breadwinning parent.”).

218 See supra Part II.C.

219 See supra Part II.B (discussing states’ power under Danforth v. Minnesota to give broader effect to new rules).