

IN THE COURT OF CRIMINAL APPEALS OF TENNESSEE
AT JACKSON

Assigned on Briefs October 6, 2026

FILED

10/20/2026

Clerk of the
Appellate Courts

STATE OF TENNESSEE v. JASON COOPER

Appeal from the Criminal Court for Shelby County

No. 24-03185

Carolyn W. Blackett, Judge

No. W2026-00584-CCA-R3-CD

The Defendant, Jason Cooper, appeals his Shelby County Criminal Court conviction of aggravated burglary, for which he received a sentence of fifteen years' incarceration. On appeal, the Defendant challenges the sufficiency of the evidence supporting the conviction. Discerning no error, we affirm.

**Tenn. R. App. P. 3 Appeal as of Right;
Judgment of the Criminal Court Affirmed**

STEVEN W. SWORD, J., delivered the opinion of the court, in which ROBERT L. HOLLOWAY, JR., and MATTHEW J. WILSON, JJ., joined.

Jerri Green, District Public Defender; Barry W. Kuhn, Assistant District Public Defender (on appeal); and C. Alex Jones and Phillip Logan Wyatt (at trial), Memphis, Tennessee, for the appellant, Jason Cooper.

Jonathan Skrmetti, Attorney General and Reporter; Leslie Renee Byrd, Assistant Attorney General; Steven J. Mulroy, District Attorney General; and J.D. Hamblen and Dijahanua Jones, Assistant District Attorneys General, for the appellee, State of Tennessee.

OPINION

I. FACTUAL AND PROCEDURAL HISTORY

On August 22, 2024, a Shelby County grand jury returned an indictment charging the Defendant with one count of aggravated burglary arising from events occurring on May 6, 2024. The Defendant's case proceeded to trial on September 30, 2025.

Sandra Gonzalez Ramirez¹ testified that on May 6, 2024, she lived at a residence in Shelby County with her three-year-old child. Ms. Gonzalez stated that on the morning of May 6, 2024, she did not feel well and left her home with her child in her vehicle to get breakfast. About five minutes after leaving her residence, she received a notification on her phone from her Ring surveillance camera indicating motion at her residence. She testified that she pulled over, opened the Ring application on her cell phone, and viewed video recordings of her residence. After viewing the video recordings, she called the police and drove back to her residence. When she arrived, she saw a car parked in her driveway; she then exited her vehicle without closing her door and took photographs of the car and its license plate. Ms. Gonzalez then got back into her vehicle and slammed the door shut.

Ms. Gonzalez then observed a person exiting her residence. The person told Ms. Gonzalez he was there to visit someone and stated that his cousin was in the residence. Ms. Gonzalez testified that she told the person that it was “impossible because nobody lives there but me and my child who are in the car.” She testified that she had never seen the person who exited her residence before. She stated that the person told her that someone was in the residence before getting into his car and driving off. Ms. Gonzalez testified that she then waited for the police to arrive and that some of her family also came to her residence. She identified the Defendant as the person who exited her residence.

Ms. Gonzalez identified both photographs and video recordings from her Ring camera that she provided to the prosecution. The video recordings included eight clips from various Ring cameras placed both outside and inside the house: four from an outdoor camera and four from different indoor cameras. The first clip showed a forward-facing vehicle in the driveway of Ms. Gonzalez’s residence and a black man knocking on the front door. The second clip showed the same man continuing to knock on the front door while looking into the residence. The third clip showed the vehicle backing into the driveway and the same man kicking in the front door of her residence. The fourth clip showed the same man, on an indoor camera, entering the house after kicking in the door and leaving it open. The fifth clip showed the same man holding his cell phone while he looked around the living room before walking down a hallway. The sixth clip showed the same man entering a bedroom, with his cell phone flashlight on, looking around the room, and opening a dresser drawer. The seventh clip returned to the indoor front door area and showed the same man leaving through the front door and leaving the door open. The eighth and final clip returned to the outdoor camera and showed the same man quickly moving toward his car and Ms. Gonzalez blocking his vehicle with hers.

¹ The victim testified that she preferred to be called “Ms. Gonzalez,” thus we have referred to her by Ms. Gonzalez throughout this opinion.

On May 8, 2024, Ms. Gonzalez went to the Memphis Police Department (MPD) to give a statement and to view a photographic lineup. She agreed that a photograph of the Defendant was included in the photographic lineup, but she could not identify anyone when it was presented to her. She stated that she had been nervous and anxious when she was shown the photographic lineup. She recalled that the Ring camera footage depicted a man with a beard and no hair on the sides of his face, and that the person she saw in front of her residence had some “baldness and a beard.” Ms. Gonzalez stated that the photographs in the photographic lineup did not show any balding or bald individuals. She stated she had never previously met or known the Defendant or his cousin, whom the Defendant alleged was inside her residence when he spoke to her.

On cross-examination, Ms. Gonzalez testified that she had five surveillance cameras, not hidden, both inside and outside her residence. She stated the video recordings showed the Defendant opening a dresser drawer, but she agreed that nothing was missing from her residence.

MPD Officer Benjamin Jayroe testified that on May 6, 2024, he responded to a burglary call at Ms. Gonzalez’s residence. There, he spoke with Ms. Gonzalez and discovered that the suspect was no longer at the residence. Officer Jayroe testified that Ms. Gonzalez told him an alarm had gone off at her home, so she returned to find the suspect still there. Ms. Gonzalez told Officer Jayroe that she blocked the suspect’s car in the driveway; when the suspect ran out and reentered his car, he had to maneuver it and drive out through the yard. Officer Jayroe further testified that Ms. Gonzalez showed him video recordings of the suspect kicking in the door, looking in a dresser drawer, and then running out. He testified that pieces of the front door frame were inside the residence where the suspect kicked in the door. He described Ms. Gonzalez as very upset. He stated he took a burglary report for Ms. Gonzalez and then left the scene. Officer Jayroe stated his partner was also present at the scene. Officer Jayroe took photographs and forwarded everything to the investigator assigned to the case. He agreed nothing had been taken from the residence.

MPD Sergeant Steven Theriac testified that he was the only investigator for the burglary at Ms. Gonzalez’s residence on May 6, 2024, and that he did not visit Ms. Gonzalez’s residence. He testified that the victim provided video surveillance from her residence, as well as photographs she had taken of the vehicle in her driveway and of its license plate. He testified that he generated a citywide “be on the lookout,” or “BOLO,” notice that included photographs of the suspect kicking in the front door, Ms. Gonzalez’s bedroom, and the suspect’s vehicle, including the license plate. Sergeant Theriac stated that the suspect was later identified as the Defendant, and he identified the Defendant in court. He agreed that Ms. Gonzalez could not identify the Defendant in the photographic lineup.

MPD Detective Quintin Fox testified that on May 8, 2024, he was on patrol when he received information from the MPD's database technology center related to the May 6, 2024 BOLO, stating that a vehicle matching the description provided had been detected. Detective Fox began investigating the area where the vehicle had been detected and located it in a McDonald's drive-through line. Detective Fox and other officers converged on the drive-through to initiate a takedown of the vehicle. He testified that the driver and vehicle matched the photographs in the BOLO. On cross-examination, Detective Fox agreed that the Defendant was arrested without incident, but on redirect examination, he explained that the Defendant had attempted to flee before being boxed in by law enforcement vehicles.

The State rested. After a *Momon* colloquy, the Defendant elected not to testify and presented no additional proof. Upon this evidence, the jury convicted the Defendant as charged. Following a sentencing hearing, the trial court imposed a sentence of fifteen years' incarceration, as a Range III, persistent offender at one hundred percent service. The Defendant filed a timely, but unsuccessful, motion for a new trial. This timely appeal followed.

II. ANALYSIS

On appeal, the Defendant challenges the sufficiency of the convicting evidence, arguing that there is insufficient proof that he had the intent to commit theft when he entered the victim's residence. The State responds that the evidence is sufficient. We agree with the State.

"Findings of guilt in criminal actions . . . shall be set aside if the evidence is insufficient to support the findings by the trier of fact of guilt beyond a reasonable doubt." Tenn. R. App. P. 13(e). The standard of appellate review on a challenge to the sufficiency of the evidence is "whether, after viewing the evidence in the light most favorable to the prosecution, *any* rational trier of fact could have found the essential elements of the crime beyond a reasonable doubt." *Jackson v. Virginia*, 443 U.S. 307, 319 (1979) (emphasis in original) (citations omitted); *see also State v. Williams*, 558 S.W.3d 633, 638 (Tenn. 2018).

"A jury conviction removes the presumption of innocence with which a defendant is initially cloaked and replaces it with one of guilt, so that on appeal a convicted defendant has the burden of demonstrating that the evidence is insufficient." *State v. Tuggle*, 639 S.W.2d 913, 914 (Tenn. 1982); *see also State v. Thomas*, 687 S.W.3d 223, 249 (Tenn. 2024) (citing *State v. Carruthers*, 35 S.W.3d 516, 557-58 (Tenn. 2000)). "On appeal, the State is entitled to the strongest legitimate view of the evidence and all reasonable and legitimate inferences which may be drawn therefrom." *State v. Wilson*, 211 S.W.3d 714, 718 (Tenn. 2007) (citing *State v. Hall*, 8 S.W.3d 593, 599 (Tenn. 1999)). "We do not

reweigh the evidence . . . because questions regarding witness credibility, the weight to be given the evidence, and factual issues raised by the evidence are resolved by the jury as the trier of fact[.]” *State v. Curry*, 705 S.W.3d 176, 183 (Tenn. 2025) (citations omitted). The same standard of review applies “whether the conviction is predicated on direct or circumstantial evidence, or a combination of both.” *Williams*, 558 S.W.3d at 638 (first citing *State v. Dorantes*, 331 S.W.3d 370, 379 (Tenn. 2011); and then citing *State v. Brown*, 551 S.W.2d 329, 331 (Tenn. 1977)).

“It is well established that ‘[i]ntent is rarely proven by direct evidence, and the trier of fact may deduce or infer intent from the character and nature of the offense and the circumstances surrounding the offense.’” *State v. King*, No. M2004-00548-CCA-R3-CD, 2005 WL 1252624, at *4 (Tenn. Crim. App. May 25, 2005) (quoting *State v. Jones*, No. E2003-01565-CCA-R3-CD, 2004 WL 1541309, at *8 (Tenn. Crim. App., July 9, 2004), *perm. app. denied* (Tenn. Dec. 6, 2004)), *perm. app. denied* (Nov. 7, 2005). “In the context of reviewing an aggravated burglary conviction, ‘[o]ne’s actions are circumstantial evidence of his intent.’” *State v. Spencer*, No. W2013-00657-CCA-R3-CD, 2014 WL 1767109, at *4 (Tenn. Crim. App. Apr. 29, 2014) (quoting *State v. Barker*, 642 S.W.2d 735, 737 (Tenn. Crim. App. 1982)), *no perm. app. filed*. “In addition, the circumstances surrounding the entry must also be viewed in determining intent.” *State v. Holland*, 860 S.W.2d 53, 59 (Tenn. Crim. App. 1993).

The Defendant was charged and convicted of one count of aggravated burglary. As relevant to this appeal, a person commits aggravated burglary “who, without the effective consent of the property owner” and “with the intent to commit a . . . theft” enters a habitation. Tenn. Code Ann. §§ 39-13-1002(a)(1), -1003(a). “A person commits theft of property if, with intent to deprive the owner of property, the person knowingly obtains or exercises control over the property without the owner’s effective consent.” Tenn. Code Ann. § 39-14-103(a).

The Defendant asserts that the evidence adduced at trial, even when viewed in the light most favorable to the State, is insufficient to prove his intent to commit a theft when he entered the victim’s residence. To support this argument, he contends that he was only there to visit someone, that nothing was taken from the residence, and that the videos show only the Defendant walking through the residence and then leaving.

We disagree. From the evidence adduced at trial, the jury could infer the Defendant’s intent to commit a theft by proof of his entering the residence uninvited, his peering through windows before kicking the door of the empty residence in, his rummaging through the residence using the flashlight on his phone, his beginning to search the dresser drawer, and his concluding his search of the residence by leaving only after hearing Ms. Gonzalez’s vehicle’s door slam. In addition, when the Defendant hurriedly exited the

residence, he fled by driving his vehicle through the yard after the victim blocked his driveway exit with her own vehicle. Viewed in the light most favorable to the State, the proof was sufficient to convict the Defendant of aggravated burglary. The Defendant is not entitled to relief.

III. CONCLUSION

Following our review of the record and based upon the foregoing analysis, we affirm the judgment of the trial court.

s/ *STEVEN W. SWORD*

STEVEN W. SWORD, JUDGE