

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF
INDIANA, SOUTH BEND DIVISION

Cedric Thompson v. Martin et al.

Thompson · No. 3:25cv1021 DRL-SJF · Decided March 26, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Northern District of Indiana screened Cedric Thompson’s amended 42 U.S.C. § 1983 complaint. The court allowed claims to proceed against several correctional officers for excessive force, deliberate indifference to medical needs, and retaliation, while dismissing the nurses and other claims, including an equal protection claim based on an alleged racial slur.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Northern District of Indiana, South Bend Division
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Damon R. Leichty
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Northern District of Indiana, South Bend Division
DECIDED	March 26, 2026
DOCKET	3:25cv1021 DRL-SJF
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Screening of a prisoner's amended complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	At screening under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A, the court accepts well-pleaded allegations as true, liberally construes a pro se complaint, and dismisses claims that are frivolous, malicious, fail to state a claim, or seek monetary relief from an immune defendant. The complaint must contain sufficient factual matter to state a claim that is plausible on its face.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	nonprecedential
PARTIES	Cedric Thompson v. Martin, Torres, Bryant, Hodge, Campbell, Scott, Debbie

TOPICS

section 1983

prisoners rights

civil rights

first amendment

cruel and unusual punishment

PRACTICE AREAS

prisoner civil rights

constitutional litigation

federal civil procedure

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Thompson plausibly alleged an Eighth Amendment excessive-force claim against Officer Martin.
2. Whether Thompson plausibly alleged Eighth Amendment deliberate-indifference-to-medical-needs claims against the correctional officers and nurses.
3. Whether Thompson plausibly alleged a First Amendment retaliation claim based on allegedly labeling him a snitch because he filed grievances.
4. Whether Thompson's allegations of an isolated racial slur and related force supported a separate Fourteenth Amendment equal-protection claim.

HOLDINGS

1. Thompson plausibly alleged that Officer Martin used force maliciously and sadistically rather than in a good-faith effort to maintain or restore discipline by slamming a metal door on his hand without a legitimate security reason and breaking his finger.
2. Thompson plausibly alleged deliberate indifference to a serious medical need against Officer Torres, Sergeant Bryant, Sergeant Hodge, and Lieutenant Campbell.
3. Thompson failed to plausibly allege deliberate indifference against nurses Debbie and Scott, and those defendants were dismissed.
4. Thompson plausibly alleged First Amendment retaliation claims against Officer Martin and Sergeant Hodge based on allegedly identifying him as a snitch because he filed grievances.
5. Thompson was not permitted to proceed on a separate equal-protection claim because the alleged force was more appropriately analyzed under the Eighth Amendment and the isolated racial slur, standing alone, did not constitute an equal-protection violation.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“The “core requirement” for an excessive force claim is that the defendant “used force not in a good-faith effort to maintain or restore discipline, but maliciously and sadistically to cause harm.””

“To state a claim under the First Amendment, a plaintiff must allege “(1) he engaged in activity protected by the First Amendment; (2) he suffered a deprivation that would likely deter First Amendment activity in the future; and (3) the First Amendment activity was at least a motivating factor in the Defendants’ decision to take the retaliatory action.””

“The use of racially derogatory language, while unprofessional and deplorable, does not . . . deny a prisoner equal protection of the laws.”

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Thompson, an inmate at Miami Correctional Facility, alleged that Officer Martin slammed a cuff-port door on his hand without a legitimate security reason, breaking a finger, after Thompson objected to Martin opening a food wrapper. He alleged that Officer Torres, Sergeant Bryant, Sergeant Hodge, and Lieutenant Campbell saw the injury and refused to obtain medical care, while nurses Debbie and Scott promised to return but did not examine him. He further alleged that Martin and Hodge retaliated against him for filing grievances by telling other inmates that he was a snitch.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Cedric Thompson, an incarcerated plaintiff proceeding without counsel, filed an amended complaint under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 seeking money damages. The court screened the amended complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A, allowed certain Eighth Amendment excessive-force and denial-of-medical-care claims and First Amendment retaliation claims to proceed, dismissed the nurses and all other claims, and directed service on the remaining defendants.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 570 (2007)
- Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009)
- Erickson v. Pardus, 551 U.S. 89, 94 (2007)
- Hendrickson v. Cooper, 589 F.3d 887, 890-91 (7th Cir. 2009)
- Estelle v. Gamble, 429 U.S. 97, 104 (1976)
- Greeno v. Daley, 414 F.3d 645, 653 (7th Cir. 2005)
- Hildreth v. Butler, 960 F.3d 420, 425-26 (7th Cir. 2020)
- Thomas v. Blackard, 2 F.4th 716, 722 (7th Cir. 2021)
- Swanson v. Citibank, N.A., 614 F.3d 400, 403 (7th Cir. 2010)
- Peate v. McCann, 294 F.3d 879, 882 (7th Cir. 2002)
- Lewis v. Richards, 107 F.3d 549, 554 (7th Cir. 1997)
- Douglas v. Reeves, 964 F.3d 643, 646 (7th Cir. 2020)
- Holleman v. Zatecky, 951 F.3d 873, 879 (7th Cir. 2020)
- Perez v. Fenoglio, 792 F.3d 768, 783 (7th Cir. 2015)
- Dale v. Poston, 548 F.3d 563, 570 (7th Cir. 2008)
- Conner v. Schwenn, 821 F. App'x 633, 636 (7th Cir. 2020)
- Graham v. Connor, 490 U.S. 386, 395 (1989)
- Jaros v. Illinois Department of Corrections, 684 F.3d 667, 672 (7th Cir. 2012)
- Conyers v. Abitz, 416 F.3d 580, 586 (7th Cir. 2005)

- Vukadinovich v. Bartels, 853 F.2d 1387, 1391-92 (7th Cir. 1988)
- DeWalt v. Carter, 224 F.3d 607, 612 (7th Cir. 2000)
- Savory v. Cannon, 947 F.3d 409 (7th Cir. 2020)
- Nelson-El v. Elkins-Watts, No. 3:19cv300, 2019 WL 1992434, at *2 (N.D. Ind. May 6, 2019)
- Gutierrez v. City of Indianapolis, 886 F. Supp. 2d 984, 999 (S.D. Ind. 2012)

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