

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF OREGON

Steven Craig Garfield v. Cathy Jezmans

No. 6:26-cv-00360-MTK (D. Or. Apr. 24, 2026) · No. 6:26-cv-00360-MTK · Decided April 24, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the District of Oregon grants Steven Craig Garfield’s application to proceed in forma pauperis but dismisses his civil-rights and Fair Housing Act claims concerning allegedly discriminatory living conditions and eviction. The Court holds that the claims are barred by claim preclusion, the Rooker-Feldman doctrine, and the statute of limitations, and that the complaint fails to state claims under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 or the Fair Housing Act. The dismissal is with leave to amend, and Garfield’s motion for appointment of counsel is denied.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the District of Oregon
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Mustafa T. Kasubhai
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the District of Oregon
DECIDED	April 24, 2026
DOCKET	6:26-cv-00360-MTK
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	A self-represented plaintiff proceeding in forma pauperis filed civil-rights and Fair Housing Act claims against private individuals arising from allegedly discriminatory living conditions and eviction. The court screened the complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2), granted in forma pauperis status, denied appointment of counsel, and dismissed the complaint with leave to amend.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Mandatory screening under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2); the court must dismiss an in forma pauperis action that is frivolous or malicious, fails to state a claim, or seeks monetary relief from an immune defendant. At screening, the court accepted well-pleaded allegations as true for purposes of determining whether a claim was stated and considered documents attached to the complaint and undisputed public court records.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district court opinion; persuasive authority only
PARTIES	Steven Craig Garfield v. Cathy Jezmans, Amy McKinney

TOPICS

civil procedure

res judicata

statute of limitations

section 1983

landlord tenant

PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure

civil rights

housing discrimination

landlord-tenant

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Garfield's claims were barred by claim preclusion because the same claims or claims arising from the same transaction had been litigated in the prior eviction proceeding.
2. Whether the Rooker-Feldman doctrine deprived the federal district court of jurisdiction to review the state-court eviction judgment.
3. Whether the claims were barred by the applicable two-year statutes of limitations.
4. Whether the complaint stated a claim under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 against private defendants who were not alleged to have acted under color of state law.
5. Whether the complaint stated a claim under the Fair Housing Act where the alleged dwelling appeared to fall within the statutory exemption for certain owner-occupied dwellings.
6. Whether appointment of counsel was warranted based on exceptional circumstances.

HOLDINGS

1. Claim preclusion barred Garfield from relitigating his claims against Jenman and McKinney because the claims had been finally adjudicated in the prior eviction proceeding, involved the same factual transaction, and McKinney was sufficiently in privity with the parties to that proceeding.
2. The district court lacked jurisdiction to review the Lane County Circuit Court's eviction judgment.
3. Garfield's Section 1983 and Fair Housing Act claims, as alleged, were barred by two-year statutes of limitations.
4. The complaint failed to state a claim under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 because it did not allege that Jenman or McKinney acted under color of state law.
5. The complaint failed to state a Fair Housing Act claim because its allegations did not establish that the Act applied to the dwelling or defendants.
6. Appointment of counsel was not warranted because exceptional circumstances did not exist.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"Claim preclusion prevents Garfield from seeking to re-litigate his claims against Jenman and McKinney here." (Discussion II.B.1)

"In accordance with the Rooker-Feldman doctrine, the Court lacks jurisdiction to review the Lane County Circuit Court's judgment evicting Garfield." (Discussion II.B.2)

“Unless it is absolutely clear that no amendment can cure the defect, . . . a pro se litigant is entitled to notice of the complaint’s deficiencies and an opportunity to amend prior to dismissal of the action.” (Discussion II.B.5)

“Garfield’s Complaint (ECF No. 1) is DISMISSED with leave to amend.” (Conclusion)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Garfield alleged that Cathy Jenman and Amy McKinney subjected him to poor living conditions, restricted his use of a toilet and shower, interfered with his mail, and evicted him because he is Black. The allegations arose from Garfield's occupancy of property owned by Jenman, where Jenman, McKinney, and Garfield's friend or girlfriend also lived. Garfield previously raised substantially the same discrimination and living-condition allegations in a Lane County eviction proceeding concerning the same property, which resulted in a final judgment against him on February 1, 2024.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Garfield filed a complaint on February 24, 2026, together with an application to proceed in forma pauperis and a motion for appointment of counsel. The complaint concerned the same property and substantially the same alleged discrimination previously litigated in a Lane County Circuit Court eviction proceeding, which resulted in a final judgment against Garfield. The district court concluded that the claims were barred by claim preclusion, the Rooker-Feldman doctrine, and the statute of limitations, and also failed to state claims under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 or the Fair Housing Act. The complaint was dismissed with leave to amend within 30 days; the IFP application was granted and the motion for counsel was denied.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- O’Neal v. Price, 531 F.3d 1146, 1151 (9th Cir. 2008)
- Lopez v. Smith, 203 F.3d 1122, 1129 (9th Cir. 2000) (en banc)
- Preciado v. Salas, No. 13-cv-0390, 2014 WL 127710, at *1 (E.D. Cal. Jan. 14, 2014)
- Marrese v. American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons, 470 U.S. 373, 380 (1985)
- Handam v. Wilsonville Holiday Partners, LLC, 221 Or. App. 493, 498 (2008)
- Lucas v. Lake County, 253 Or. App. 39, 53-54 (2012)
- Bloomfield v. Weakland, 339 Or. 504, 511 (2005)
- Swartz v. KPMG LLP, 476 F.3d 756, 763 (9th Cir. 2007)
- Harris v. County of Orange, 682 F.3d 1126, 1131-32 (9th Cir. 2012)
- Rooker v. Fidelity Trust Co., 263 U.S. 413, 415-16 (1923)
- District of Columbia Court of Appeals v. Feldman, 460 U.S. 462, 482 (1983)
- Plumeau v. School District No. 40, 130 F.3d 432, 438 (9th Cir. 1997)

- Long v. County of Los Angeles, 442 F.3d 1178, 1185 (9th Cir. 2006)
- Price v. Hawaii, 939 F.2d 702, 707-08 (9th Cir. 1991)
- Garity v. APWU National Labor Organization, 828 F.3d 848, 854 (9th Cir. 2016)
- Lucas v. Department of Corrections, 66 F.3d 245, 248 (9th Cir. 1995) (per curiam)
- United States v. 30.64 Acres of Land, 795 F.2d 796, 801 (9th Cir. 1986)
- Agyeman v. Corrections Corp. of America, 390 F.3d 1101, 1103 (9th Cir. 2004)
- Palmer v. Valdez, 560 F.3d 965, 970 (9th Cir. 2009)

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