

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF UTAH

Blackwell v. Early Light Academy, et al.

Blackwell · No. 2:25-cv-00689-RJS-DBP · Decided February 12, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the District of Utah overruled Antonia Blackwell’s objections to a magistrate judge’s report and recommendation and adopted the recommendation to dismiss her Second Amended Complaint. The court concluded that the complaint failed to state plausible claims under civil RICO, 42 U.S.C. §§ 1983 and 1985, and related theories, and that the allegations were conclusory and insufficient under applicable pleading standards. The dismissal was with prejudice, and the remaining motions were denied as moot.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the District of Utah
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Robert J. Shelby
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the District of Utah
DECIDED	February 12, 2026
DOCKET	2:25-cv-00689-RJS-DBP
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	The district court reviewed a magistrate judge's report and recommendation recommending dismissal of a pro se plaintiff's second amended complaint following screening under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e). The court considered the plaintiff's timely objection de novo and reviewed the remaining portions of the recommendation for clear error.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Specific and timely objections to a magistrate judge's report and recommendation receive de novo review; unobjected-to portions are reviewed for clear error. The sufficiency of the complaint was evaluated under Rule 8, Rule 12(b)(6), and 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2).
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district court memorandum decision and order; persuasive rather than binding outside the case
PARTIES	Antonia Blackwell v. Early Light Academy, Stephanie Schmidt, Amy Bird, Erin Preston, Anne Trout, Marison Pizarro, Sarah Hyatt, Jordan Teuscher, Kirk Cullimore Jr., City of South Jordan, South Jordan

TOPICS

motions to dismiss

civil procedure

pleadings

section 1983

qualified immunity

PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure

civil rights

RICO

constitutional law

disability law

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Blackwell's objections to the magistrate judge's report and recommendation warranted de novo review and demonstrated error.
2. Whether the second amended complaint plausibly stated a civil RICO claim under 18 U.S.C. § 1964(c).
3. Whether the second amended complaint plausibly stated a conspiracy claim under 42 U.S.C. § 1985(3).
4. Whether the second amended complaint stated actionable claims under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 against the private parties, governmental entities, municipal defendants, and individual government officials.
5. Whether 18 U.S.C. § 241 provides a private civil cause of action.
6. Whether further amendment would be futile and dismissal with prejudice was appropriate.

HOLDINGS

1. The magistrate judge applied the proper pro se pleading and screening standards. Blackwell's temporary in forma pauperis status was not improperly reversed; it remained subject to screening, and dismissal of the action terminated the basis for proceeding without prepayment of fees.
2. The second amended complaint failed to plausibly state a civil RICO claim because it did not identify an enterprise, qualifying racketeering activity, two racketeering acts by each defendant, or conduct affecting interstate or foreign commerce.
3. The second amended complaint failed to state a § 1985(3) conspiracy claim because it did not plausibly allege discriminatory animus, an agreement among defendants, an act in furtherance of the conspiracy, or a resulting deprivation of rights.
4. The second amended complaint failed to state a § 1983 claim. The private defendants were not alleged to act under color of state law, the school and police department were not proper § 1983 persons or suable entities, the judge, prosecutors, and legislators were absolutely immune, Sergeant Anderson was entitled to qualified immunity on the allegations presented, and the claims against the City of South Jordan lacked factual allegations identifying a municipal policy or custom causing a constitutional deprivation.
5. The claim under 18 U.S.C. § 241 was not viable because § 241 is a criminal statute and does not create a private right of action enforceable through a civil lawsuit.
6. Dismissal with prejudice was appropriate because the second amended complaint remained deficient after multiple amendments and further amendment would be futile.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“pro se status “does not excuse the obligation . . . to comply with the fundamental requirements of the Federal Rules of Civil . . . Procedure.”” (Analysis § I.A)

“Allegations should provide enough information to put Defendants on notice of the “who,” “what,” “where,” “when,” and “why” of the asserted claims.” (Analysis § I.B.1)

“A clearly established right is one that is sufficiently clear that every reasonable officer would have understood that what he is doing violates that right.” (Analysis § I.B.3.iv)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Blackwell alleged that Early Light Academy and associated individuals made false reports concerning her and her disabled son, resulting in her son's expulsion and an ensuing investigation and criminal prosecution. She also alleged coordinated misconduct by school officials, police, prosecutors, legislators, defense counsel, and a state judge, asserting civil RICO, conspiracy, constitutional, and related claims. Her second amended complaint relied heavily on tables identifying defendants, purported acts, and legal violations, but the court found that the allegations largely stated conclusions without the factual details necessary to support them.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Blackwell filed an in forma pauperis civil action asserting civil RICO, 42 U.S.C. §§ 1983 and 1985, and 18 U.S.C. § 241 claims against school officials, private attorneys, legislators, law-enforcement personnel, prosecutors, a judge, and municipal defendants. After two amendments and an order identifying pleading deficiencies, she filed a second amended complaint. Magistrate Judge Pead recommended dismissal with prejudice because the pleading failed to state plausible claims, failed to satisfy pleading requirements, and asserted claims lacking an arguable basis in law or fact. The district court overruled Blackwell's objections, adopted the recommendation, dismissed the case with prejudice, and denied the remaining motions as moot.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Hall v. Bellmon, 935 F.2d 1106, 1110 (10th Cir. 1991)
- Ogden v. San Juan County, 32 F.3d 452, 455 (10th Cir. 1994)
- Nielsen v. Price, 17 F.3d 1276, 1277 (10th Cir. 1994)
- Whitney v. New Mexico, 113 F.3d 1170, 1173–74 (10th Cir. 1997)
- Lankford v. Wagner, 853 F.3d 1119, 1122 (10th Cir. 2017)
- United States v. One Parcel of Real Property, 73 F.3d 1057, 1059–60 (10th Cir. 1996)
- Moore v. United States, 950 F.2d 656, 659 (10th Cir. 1991)
- Zloza v. Industrial Co., No. 4:23-cv-17-RJS-PK, 2023 WL 2760784, at *1 (D. Utah Apr. 3, 2023)
- Tracy v. Simplifi Co., No. 2:21-cv-00444-RJS-CMR, 2022 WL 887294, at *3 (D. Utah Mar. 25, 2022)

- *Truman v. Orem City*, 1 F.4th 1227, 1235 (10th Cir. 2021)
- *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678, 681 (2009)
- *Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 555–57, 565 n.10 (2007)
- *Johnson v. Heath*, 56 F.4th 851, 858 (10th Cir. 2022)
- *George v. Urban Settlement Services*, 833 F.3d 1242, 1248 (10th Cir. 2016)
- *Robbins v. Oklahoma*, 519 F.3d 1242, 1248 (10th Cir. 2008)
- *Griffin v. Breckenridge*, 403 U.S. 88, 102 (1971)
- *Paris v. Southwestern Bell Telephone Co.*, 94 F. App'x 810, 815 (10th Cir. 2004)
- *Tilton v. Richardson*, 6 F.3d 683, 686 (10th Cir. 1993)
- *Miranda v. Arizona*, 384 U.S. 436, 477–78 (1966)
- *Schaffer v. Salt Lake City Corp.*, 814 F.3d 1151, 1155 (10th Cir. 2016)
- *Hinton v. Dennis*, 362 F. App'x 904, 907 (10th Cir. 2010)
- *Martinez v. Winner*, 771 F.2d 424, 444 (10th Cir. 1985)
- *Lindke v. Freed*, 601 U.S. 187, 194, 196 (2024)
- *Filarsky v. Delia*, 566 U.S. 377, 380–83, 392 (2012)
- *Imbler v. Pachtman*, 424 U.S. 409, 417–18, 427 (1976)
- *Segler v. Felfam Ltd. Partnership*, 324 F. App'x 742, 743 (10th Cir. 2009)
- *Andrews v. Heaton*, 483 F.3d 1070, 1076 (10th Cir. 2007)
- *Gagan v. Norton*, 35 F.3d 1473, 1475 (10th Cir. 1994)
- *Pahls v. Thomas*, 718 F.3d 1210, 1227 (10th Cir. 2013)
- *Anderson v. Creighton*, 483 U.S. 635, 638 (1987)
- *Ullery v. Bradley*, 949 F.3d 1282, 1291 (10th Cir. 2020)
- *Will v. Michigan Department of State Police*, 491 U.S. 58, 64, 67 (1989)
- *Monell v. Department of Social Services*, 436 U.S. 658, 690–91 (1978)
- *Owen v. City of Independence*, 445 U.S. 622, 633, 638 (1980)
- *Glaser v. City & County of Denver*, 557 F. App'x 689, 702 (10th Cir. 2014)
- *United States v. Claflin*, 97 U.S. 546, 547 (1878)
- *United States v. Stilley*, No. 24-5133, 2025 WL 2718277, at *2 (10th Cir. 2025)
- *United States v. Nickl*, 427 F.3d 1286, 1298 (10th Cir. 2005)
- *Sheldon v. Vermonty*, 269 F.3d 1202, 1207 n.5 (10th Cir. 2001)
- *Cameron v. EMW Women's Surgical Center, P.S.C.*, 595 U.S. 267, 292 (2022)
- *Browder v. Director, Department of Corrections of Illinois*, 434 U.S. 257, 264 (1978)
- *Stump v. Sparkman*, 435 U.S. 349, 356–57 (1978)