

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

Bonilla v. Anthony

Bonilla v. Anthony · No. 25-cv-2864-PJH; 25-cv-3953-PJH; 25-cv-3955-PJH; 25-cv-3957-PJH; 25-cv-4376-PJH · Decided May 28, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Northern District of California dismissed multiple pro se civil rights actions filed by condemned prisoner Steven Wayne Bonilla. The court concluded that the complaints did not establish imminent danger for purposes of the in forma pauperis exception and that the claims would be barred by doctrines including Heck, Younger, Demos, and Mullis; the cases were dismissed with prejudice.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Northern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Phyllis J. Hamilton
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Northern District of California
DECIDED	May 28, 2025
DOCKET	25-cv-2864-PJH; 25-cv-3953-PJH; 25-cv-3955-PJH; 25-cv-3957-PJH; 25-cv-4376-PJH
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Multiple pro se civil rights complaints under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 were dismissed with prejudice at the pleading stage.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court screened the complaints and assessed whether plaintiff could proceed in forma pauperis and whether the claims were legally cognizable or barred by established doctrines.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished and nonprecedential

TOPICS

- section 1983
- prisoners rights
- federal habeas corpus
- civil procedure
- affirmative defenses

PRACTICE AREAS

- civil rights
- prisoner litigation
- federal habeas corpus
- civil procedure

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Bonilla could proceed in forma pauperis despite his prior disqualification under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(g).
2. Whether the complaints were barred by *Heck v. Humphrey*, *Younger v. Harris*, *Demos v. U.S. District Court*, or *Mullis v. U.S. Bankruptcy Court*.
3. Whether the multiple complaints should be dismissed with prejudice.

HOLDINGS

1. Because Bonilla had been disqualified from proceeding in forma pauperis under § 1915(g) and his complaints did not show that he was under imminent danger of serious physical injury when he filed them, he could not proceed in forma pauperis.
2. Even if the in forma pauperis applications were granted, the lawsuits would be barred under *Heck v. Humphrey*, *Younger v. Harris*, *Demos v. U.S. District Court*, or *Mullis v. U.S. Bankruptcy Court*.
3. The multiple cases were dismissed with prejudice.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“unless he is “under imminent danger of serious physical injury” at the time he filed his complaint.” (at 1)

“The clerk shall return, without filing, any further documents plaintiff submits in these closed cases.” (at 2)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Bonilla is a condemned state prisoner who filed multiple nearly identical pro se § 1983 complaints against various federal and state officials. The complaints sought relief related to his underlying conviction and the manner in which state and federal courts handled his other proceedings. He had been disqualified from proceeding in forma pauperis under the three-strikes provision of 28 U.S.C. § 1915(g), and the complaints did not allege imminent danger of serious physical injury.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Steven Wayne Bonilla, a condemned state prisoner proceeding pro se, filed multiple substantially identical § 1983 complaints against federal and state officials, seeking relief concerning his conviction and the handling of his state and federal cases. The court determined that he was barred from proceeding in forma pauperis under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(g) absent imminent danger of serious physical injury, found no imminent-danger allegations, and further concluded that the actions would be barred by *Heck*, *Younger*, *Demos*, or *Mullis*. The court dismissed the cases with prejudice, terminated pending motions, closed the cases, and directed the clerk to return future filings without filing them.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Bonilla v. Ayers, Case No. 08-0471 YGR
- In re Bonilla, Case No. 20-2986 PJH, Docket No. 1 at 7
- In re Steven Bonilla, Case No. 11-3180 CW
- Bonilla v. Dawson, Case No. 13-0951 CW
- Heck v. Humphrey, 512 U.S. 477, 486-87 (1994)
- Younger v. Harris, 401 U.S. 37, 43-54 (1971)
- Demos v. U.S. District Court, 925 F.2d 1160, 1161-62 (9th Cir. 1991)
- Mullis v. U.S. Bankruptcy Court, 828 F.2d 1385, 1393 (9th Cir. 1987)

OPINION

Bonilla v. Anthony

PER CURIAM.

1 2 3

4 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

5 NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

6 7 STEVEN WAYNE BONILLA, Case Nos. 25-cv-2864-PJH Plaintiff, 25-cv-3953-PJH 8 25-cv-3955-PJH v. 9 25-cv-3957-PJH 10 25-cv-4376-PJH

COUNTY OF MONTEREY SUPERIOR

11 COURT et. al.,

ORDER DISMISSING MULTIPLE

12 Defendants. CASES WITH PREJUDICE 13 Plaintiff, a state prisoner, filed multiple pro se civil rights complaints under 42 14 U.S.C. § 1983. Plaintiff is a condemned prisoner who also has a pending federal habeas 15 petition in this court with appointed counsel. See Bonilla v. Ayers, Case No. 08-0471 16 YGR. Plaintiff is also represented by counsel in state court habeas proceedings. See In 17 re Bonilla, Case No. 20-2986 PJH, Docket No. 1 at 7. 18 Plaintiff presents nearly identical claims in these actions. He names as 19 defendants various federal and state officials. He seeks relief regarding his underlying 20 conviction or how his other cases were handled by the state and federal courts. 21 To the extent that plaintiff seeks to proceed in forma pauperis (IFP) in these cases, 22 he has been disqualified from proceeding IFP under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(g) unless he is 23 “under imminent danger of serious physical injury” at the time he filed his complaint. 28 24 U.S.C. 1915(g); In re Steven Bonilla, Case No. 11-3180 CW; Bonilla v. Dawson, Case 25 No. 13-0951 CW. 26 The allegations in these complaints do not show that plaintiff was in imminent 27 1 IFP application were granted, his lawsuits would be barred under Heck v. Humphrey, 512 2 U.S. 477, 486-87 (1994), Younger v. Harris, 401 U.S. 37, 43-54 (1971), Demos v. U.S. 3 District Court, 925 F.2d 1160, 1161-62 (9th Cir. 1991) or Mullis v. U.S. Bankruptcy Court, 4 828 F.2d 1385, 1393 (9th Cir. 1987). Accordingly, the cases are dismissed with 5 prejudice. The court notes that plaintiff has an extensive history of filing similar frivolous 6 cases.1 7 The clerk shall terminate all pending motions and close these cases. The clerk 8 shall

return, without filing, any further documents plaintiff submits in these closed cases. 9 IT IS SO ORDERED. 10 Dated: May 28, 2025 11 12 /s/ Phyllis J. Hamilton

PHYLLIS J. HAMILTON

13 United States District Judge 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 1 The undersigned is the fourth judge assigned cases filed by plaintiff. This is the 75th