

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE CENTRAL DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Lawrence Reddick v. Officer Campbell, et al.

Reddick v. Campbell · No. 5:25-cv-02390-FLA-SSC · Decided December 2, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Central District of California screens Lawrence Reddick’s in forma pauperis civil-rights complaint against Officer Campbell and the San Bernardino Police Department. The court identifies potential Heck v. Humphrey, Rule 8, and municipal-liability deficiencies and orders Reddick to show cause by January 5, 2026, why the action should not be dismissed. The court permits voluntary dismissal or filing a first amended complaint curing the identified deficiencies.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Central District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Stephanie S. Christensen
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Central District of California
DECIDED	December 2, 2025
DOCKET	5:25-cv-02390-FLA-SSC
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	The court issued an order to show cause after screening Plaintiff's in forma pauperis civil-rights complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B). The court identified potentially curable deficiencies and permitted Plaintiff either to voluntarily dismiss the action or file an amended complaint.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B), the court must dismiss an in forma pauperis action that is frivolous, malicious, fails to state a claim, or seeks relief from an immune defendant. Review for failure to state a claim under § 1915(e)(2)(B)(ii) applies the same standard as Rule 12(b)(6): the court accepts well-pleaded factual allegations as true and draws reasonable inferences in the plaintiff's favor, but does not accept conclusory allegations, unwarranted factual deductions, or unreasonable inferences.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	nonprecedential

PARTIES

Lawrence Reddick v. Officer Campbell, San Bernardino Police Department

TOPICS

section 1983 civil procedure pleadings municipal liability federal habeas corpus

PRACTICE AREAS

civil rights civil procedure municipal liability prisoner civil rights post-conviction relief

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the complaint was potentially barred by *Heck v. Humphrey* because the requested relief and allegations necessarily implicated the validity of an ongoing criminal prosecution or conviction.
2. Whether the complaint stated a claim under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 and complied with Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 8(a)'s short-and-plain-statement requirement.
3. Whether the complaint adequately alleged municipal liability against the San Bernardino Police Department or an official-capacity claim against Officer Campbell under *Monell*.

HOLDINGS

1. A § 1983 claim that necessarily implies the invalidity of a conviction or sentence may not proceed unless the conviction or sentence has been invalidated through the recognized appellate, executive, state, or federal habeas mechanisms. The court further stated that *Heck* applies to claims seeking monetary or equitable relief. Because the complaint appeared to challenge charges for which Plaintiff was currently being prosecuted, the action appeared to be *Heck*-barred.
2. The complaint failed to comply with Rule 8 because it did not identify the constitutional amendments allegedly violated and contained only cursory allegations concerning Defendants' conduct. A § 1983 complaint must provide fair notice of the particular claim, the defendant being sued, the theory of liability, and the relief sought.
3. A municipality cannot be held liable under § 1983 on a respondeat superior theory. The plaintiff must allege that the constitutional deprivation resulted from a municipal policy or custom, including through a qualifying act of commission, omission, or ratification. Reddick alleged no policy, custom, or policy-related decision and therefore failed to state a municipal-liability claim against the police department.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“The Court is required to screen any civil action in which a plaintiff proceeds in forma pauperis and dismiss any claims that are frivolous, malicious, fail to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, or seek monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief.”

“To state a claim for municipal liability, a plaintiff must show how the alleged constitutional deprivation resulted from a municipal policy or custom rather than the independent acts of individual municipal employees.”

“Known as Monell liability, a plaintiff can establish local government liability in one of three ways.”

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Reddick alleged that Officer Campbell and an unidentified fellow officer arrested him to conceal a robbery and fraudulently used his personal and business accounts. The complaint sought dismissal and erasure of his criminal case and records, as well as \$10 million in damages. The court understood the complaint to indicate that Reddick was currently being prosecuted on the charges he claimed were improperly brought.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Reddick filed a § 1983 action against the San Bernardino Police Department and Officer Campbell in both individual and official capacities and applied to proceed in forma pauperis. The court screened the complaint, found that the allegations potentially implicated the Heck bar, failed to satisfy Rule 8, and did not plead a basis for municipal liability. Rather than immediately dismissing the action, the court ordered Plaintiff to show cause by January 5, 2026, why dismissal should not occur and allowed amendment.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Watison v. Carter, 668 F.3d 1108 (9th Cir. 2012)
- Mendiondo v. Centinela Hospital Medical Center, 521 F.3d 1097 (9th Cir. 2008)
- Sprewell v. Golden State Warriors, 266 F.3d 979 (9th Cir. 2001)
- Wilkinson v. Dotson, 544 U.S. 74 (2005)
- Heck v. Humphrey, 512 U.S. 477 (1994)
- Nonnette v. Small, 316 F.3d 872 (9th Cir. 2003)
- Edwards v. Balisok, 520 U.S. 641 (1997)
- Whitaker v. Garcetti, 486 F.3d 572 (9th Cir. 2007)
- Thai v. County of Los Angeles, 127 F.4th 1254 (9th Cir. 2025)
- Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544 (2007)
- McHenry v. Renne, 84 F.3d 1172 (9th Cir. 1996)
- Exmundo v. Kane, 553 F. App'x 742 (9th Cir. 2014)
- Board of County Commissioners v. Brown, 520 U.S. 397 (1997)
- Kirkpatrick v. County of Washoe, 843 F.3d 784 (9th Cir. 2016) (en banc)
- Moodian v. County of Alameda Social Services Agency, 206 F. Supp. 2d 1030 (N.D. Cal. 2002)
- Monell v. Department of Social Services, 436 U.S. 658 (1978)
- Clouthier v. County of Contra Costa, 591 F.3d 1232 (9th Cir. 2010)
- Castro v. County of Los Angeles, 833 F.3d 1060 (9th Cir. 2016) (en banc)
- Kentucky v. Graham, 473 U.S. 159 (1985)

- Vance v. County of Santa Clara, 928 F. Supp. 993 (N.D. Cal. 1996)
- Garmon v. County of Los Angeles, 828 F.3d 837 (9th Cir. 2016)

OPINION

CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA CIVIL MINUTES – GENERAL Case No. 5:25-cv-02390-FLA-SSC Date: December 2, 2025 Title Lawrence Reddick v. Officer Campbell, et al. Present: The Honorable Stephanie S. Christensen, U.S. Magistrate Judge Teagan Snyder n/a Deputy Clerk Court Reporter / Recorder Attorneys Present for Plaintiffs: Attorneys Present for Defendants: None Present None Present Proceedings: (IN CHAMBERS) Order to Show Cause Lawrence Reddick has applied to proceed in forma pauperis in this civil-rights action.

(ECF 2.) He sues the San Bernardino Police Department and one of its officers, the latter in both the officer’s individual and official capacities.¹ (ECF 1.) The factual allegations are sparse. He alleges that the officer and an unspecified “fellow officer” arrested Plaintiff “for the sole purpose of hiding a robbery” and using his personal and business account for fraud.

(Id. at 5.) He seeks to have his criminal case dismissed and erased from his records, and \$10 million. (Id. at 6.) ¹ This is the first of two civil-rights lawsuits Plaintiff filed in September 2025. The other is Case No. 5:25-cv-02465-FLA-SSC. CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA CIVIL MINUTES – GENERAL Case No. 5:25-cv-02390-FLA-SSC Date: December 2, 2025 Title Lawrence Reddick v. Officer Campbell, et al. THE STATUTORY SCREENING REQUIREMENT The Court is required to screen any civil action in which a plaintiff proceeds in forma pauperis and dismiss any claims that are frivolous, malicious, fail to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, or seek monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief.

28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B). Review for failure to state a claim under § 1915(e)(2)(B)(ii) uses the same standard as that which is applied under Rule 12(b)(6) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure. Watison v. Carter, 668 F.3d 1108, 1112 (9th Cir. 2012). A complaint may be dismissed under Rule 12(b)(6) for failure to state a claim for two reasons: (1) lack of a cognizable legal theory or (2) insufficient facts under a cognizable legal theory.

Mendondo v. Centinela Hosp. Med. Ctr., 521 F.3d 1097, 1104 (9th Cir. 2008). In determining whether a plaintiff has stated a claim, courts accept as true the factual allegations contained in the complaint and view all inferences in a light most favorable to the plaintiff. Sprewell v. Golden State Warriors, 266 F.3d 979, 988 (9th Cir. 2001). A court does not, however, “accept as true allegations that are merely conclusory, unwarranted deductions of fact, or unreasonable inferences.” Id. DEFICIENCIES I The exclusive method for challenging the fact or duration of a plaintiff’s confinement is by filing a petition for a writ of habeas corpus.

Wilkinson v. Dotson, 544 U.S. 74, 78 (2005). Under the doctrine announced in Heck v. Humphrey, 512 U.S. 477 (1994), a claim that “necessarily implie[s] the invalidity of [a] conviction or sentence

[may] not be maintained under § 1983 unless the [plaintiff] prove[s] ‘that the CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA CIVIL MINUTES – GENERAL Case No. 5:25-cv-02390-FLA-SSC Date: December 2, 2025 Title Lawrence Reddick v. Officer Campbell, et al. conviction or sentence has been reversed on direct appeal, expunged by executive order, declared invalid by a state tribunal authorized to make such determination[s], or called into question by a federal court’s issuance of a writ of habeas corpus.’” *Nonnette v. Small*, 316 F.3d 872, 875 (9th Cir.

2002) (quoting *Heck*, 512 U.S. at 486–87); *Wilkinson*, 544 U.S. at 81–82. *Heck* applies regardless whether the plaintiff seeks monetary or equitable relief. *Wilkinson*, 544 U.S. at 81–82; *Edwards v. Balisok*, 520 U.S. 641, 648 (1997); *Whitaker v. Garcetti*, 486 F.3d 572, 583–85 (9th Cir. 2007).

Here, it appears from the alleged facts that Plaintiff is currently being prosecuted on the charges he claims were improperly brought. If so, the suit is *Heck*-barred. II Section 1983 creates a cause of action against a person who, acting “under color of any statute... of any State[,]” deprives another of rights guaranteed under the Constitution. 42 U.S.C. § 1983; see *Thai v. County of Los Angeles*, 127 F.4th 1254, 1257 (9th Cir.

2025) (same). Rule 8 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure requires that a complaint contain a short and plain statement of the claim showing that the pleader is entitled to relief. Fed. R. Civ. P. 8(a). While Rule 8 does not require detailed factual allegations, at a minimum, a complaint must allege sufficient facts to provide “fair notice” of both the particular claim being asserted and “the grounds upon which [the particular claim] rests[.]” *Bell Atl.*

Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 555 & n.3 (2007) (citation modified). If a complaint does not clearly and concisely set forth factual allegations sufficient to provide defendants with notice of which defendant is being sued, on which theory, and what relief is being sought against them, the complaint fails to comply with Rule 8. See, CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA CIVIL MINUTES – GENERAL Case No. 5:25-cv-02390-FLA-SSC Date: December 2, 2025 Title Lawrence Reddick v. Officer Campbell, et al. e.g., *McHenry v. Renne*, 84 F.3d 1172, 1177–78 (9th Cir.

1996) (a complaint must make clear “who is being sued, for what relief, and on what theory, with enough detail to guide discovery”); *Exmundo v. Kane*, 553 F. App’x 742, 743 (9th Cir. 2014) (affirming district court dismissal of § 1983 claims where plaintiff’s allegations “were unclear as to the timing and nature of [the defendant’s] actions”).

Here, the complaint violates Rule 8 because it fails to identify which constitutional amendments were allegedly violated, and contains only cursory allegations regarding Defendants’ actions. III Although he sues both the police department and the officer in his official capacity,² Plaintiff has failed to state a claim for municipal liability.

To state a claim for municipal liability, a plaintiff must show how the alleged constitutional deprivation resulted from a municipal policy or custom rather than the independent acts of individual municipal employees. See *Bd. of Cnty. Comm’rs v. Brown*, 520 U.S. 397, 403 (1997) (a county may not be held responsible for the acts of its employees under a respondeat superior theory of liability); *Kirkpatrick 2* Official-capacity suits “generally represent only another way of pleading an action against an entity of which an officer is an agent.” *Kentucky v. Graham*, 473 U.S. 159, 165 (1985) (quoting *Monell v. Dep’t of Soc.*

Servs., 436 U.S. 658, 690 n.55 (1978)). Accordingly, official- capacity claims against municipal officials in their official capacities are duplicative of claims against the municipality itself. *Vance v. County of Santa Clara*, 928 F. Supp. 993, 996 (N.D. Cal. 1996). CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA CIVIL MINUTES – GENERAL Case No. 5:25-cv-02390-FLA-SSC Date: December 2, 2025 Title Lawrence Reddick v. Officer Campbell, et al. v. County of Washoe, 843 F.3d 784, 793 (9th Cir.

2016) (en banc) (to state a § 1983 claim against a municipal entity, “a plaintiff must go beyond the respondeat superior theory of liability and demonstrate that the alleged constitutional deprivation was the product of a policy or custom of the local governmental unit”); see also *Moodian v. County of Alameda Social Services Agency*, 206 F. Supp. 2d 1030, 1037 (N.D.

Cal. 2002) (applying municipal liability standard in § 1983 case against county social services agency and county social workers based on removal of children from parent’s custody). Known as Monell liability, a plaintiff can establish local government liability in one of three ways.

First, by commission, “when implementation of its official policies or established customs inflicts [a] constitutional injury.” *Monell*, 436 U.S. at 708 (Powell, J., concurring); *Clouthier v. County of Contra Costa*, 591 F.3d 1232, 1249 (9th Cir. 2010) (noting that this category of conduct giving rise to municipal liability is sometimes referred to as “acts of commission”), overruled on other grounds by *Castro v. County of Los Angeles*, 833 F.3d 1060 (9th Cir.

2016) (en banc). Second, by omission, “when [the municipality’s] omissions amount to the local government’s own official policy.” *Clouthier*, 591 F.3d at 1249. And third, by ratification, when “the individual who committed the constitutional tort was an official with final policy-making authority or such an official ratified a subordinate’s unconstitutional decision or action and the basis for it.” *Id.* at 1250 (citation modified).

None of Plaintiff’s allegations in the complaint is based on a policy or custom, or a policy-related decision. Accordingly, he has failed to state a claim for relief against the police department under Monell. CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA CIVIL MINUTES – GENERAL Case No. 5:25-cv-02390-FLA-SSC Date: December 2, 2025 Title Lawrence Reddick v. Officer Campbell, et al. ORDER For all these reasons, Plaintiff is ORDERED TO SHOW CAUSE no later than January

5, 2026, why this action should not be dismissed—in whole or in part—based on the deficiencies outlined above.

Plaintiff may satisfy this order by voluntarily dismissing this action using the attached form CV-09. Alternatively, Plaintiff may file an amended complaint containing only well-pleaded, actionable claims that fix the curable deficiencies. Plaintiff is advised that any amended complaint entirely replaces the prior complaint in this action. Any amended complaint must: (a) be labeled “First Amended Complaint”; (b) be complete in and of itself and not refer in any manner to the original complaint, i.e., it must include all of the claims on which Plaintiff seeks to proceed, (see L.R.

15-2); (c) contain a “short and plain” statement of the claim(s) for relief, Fed. R. Civ. P. 8(a); (d) make each allegation “simple, concise, and direct,” Fed. R. Civ. P. 8(d)(1); (e) set forth clearly the sequence of events (including specific relevant dates) which allegedly gives rise to the claim(s) for relief, including how each defendant’s specific conduct injured Plaintiff; and CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA CIVIL MINUTES – GENERAL Case No. 5:25-cv-02390-FLA-SSC Date: December 2, 2025 Title Lawrence Reddick v. Officer Campbell, et al. (f) not add defendants or claims, except as contemplated by this order.

Plaintiff is cautioned, though, that he may be denied further leave to amend if he cannot “state a viable claim without contradicting any of the allegations of his original complaint.” *Garmon v. County of Los Angeles*, 828 F.3d 837, 846 (9th Cir. 2016) (citation modified). Plaintiff is further cautioned that failure to file a timely response to this order to show cause will result in a recommendation to the district judge to dismiss this case for failure to comply with a court order.

See Fed. R. Civ. P. 41(b); L.R. 41-1. IT IS SO ORDERED. Initials of Preparer ts