

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Denzell Magic Metcalf v. John Doe, Warden

Metcalf v. John Doe · No. 1:25-cv-00607-SKO (HC) · Decided May 27, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of California recommends dismissing Denzell Magic Metcalf’s 28 U.S.C. § 2254 habeas petition without prejudice because he did not exhaust available state-court remedies. The magistrate judge also directs the Clerk of Court to assign a district judge and provides a twenty-one-day deadline for objections.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Sheila K. Oberto
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
DECIDED	May 27, 2025
DOCKET	1:25-cv-00607-SKO (HC)
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Petitioner's state habeas petition under 28 U.S.C. § 2254 was screened under Rule 4, and the magistrate judge recommended dismissal without prejudice for failure to exhaust state remedies.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Under Rule 4 of the Rules Governing Section 2254 Cases, a district court may dismiss a habeas petition when it plainly appears from the petition and attached exhibits that the petitioner is not entitled to relief.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unknown; findings and recommendation by a magistrate judge, with no reporter citation or final adoption shown in the source.
PARTIES	Denzell Magic Metcalf v. John Doe, Warden

TOPICS

- [federal habeas corpus](#) [post-conviction relief](#) [pleadings](#) [civil procedure](#)

PRACTICE AREAS

- [Federal habeas corpus](#) [Post-conviction relief](#) [Prison disciplinary proceedings](#)

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the petition could be dismissed at preliminary screening under Rule 4 of the Rules Governing Section 2254 Cases.
2. Whether the federal habeas petition should be dismissed without prejudice because petitioner had not exhausted available state-court remedies.

HOLDINGS

1. A federal habeas petition may be dismissed under Rule 4 when it plainly appears from the petition and attached exhibits that the petitioner is not entitled to relief in the district court.
2. A federal habeas petition must be dismissed without prejudice when the petitioner has not presented the federal claims to the state courts, including the state's highest court, before seeking federal relief.
3. A state prisoner has not fairly presented a federal claim unless the state court was specifically alerted that the claim was based on federal law, through citation to federal law or decisions of federal courts or an equivalent explicit indication.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“The exhaustion of available state remedies is a prerequisite to a federal court’s consideration of claims sought to be presented in habeas corpus proceedings.” (at 2)

“Because Petitioner has not presented his claims for federal relief to the state courts prior to filing the instant federal habeas petition, the Court must dismiss the petition.” (at 3)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Petitioner is a California state prisoner who challenged a prison disciplinary hearing through a federal habeas petition. He reported that he had sought only administrative relief and had not presented his claims to the California courts, including the California Supreme Court. The court therefore determined that the claims had not been exhausted in state court.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Metcalf, a state prisoner proceeding pro se and in forma pauperis, filed a federal habeas petition challenging a prison disciplinary hearing. He stated that he had pursued only administrative relief and had not presented his claims to the California courts, including the California Supreme Court. The magistrate judge directed the Clerk to assign a district judge and recommended dismissal without prejudice for lack of exhaustion, subject to a twenty-one-day objection period.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- *Herbst v. Cook*, 260 F.3d 1039 (9th Cir. 2001)

- Rose v. Lundy, 455 U.S. 509 (1982)
- Coleman v. Thompson, 501 U.S. 722, 731 (1991)
- Duncan v. Henry, 513 U.S. 364, 365-366 (1995)
- Kenney v. Tamayo-Reyes, 504 U.S. 1, 112 S. Ct. 1715, 1719 (1992)
- Picard v. Connor, 404 U.S. 270, 275 (1971)
- Shumway v. Payne, 223 F.3d 982, 987-988 (9th Cir. 2000)
- Gatlin v. Madding, 189 F.3d 882, 889 (9th Cir. 1999)
- Anderson v. Harless, 459 U.S. 4, 7 (1982)
- Hiivala v. Wood, 195 F.3d 1098, 1106-1107 (9th Cir. 1999)
- Johnson v. Zenon, 88 F.3d 828, 830-831 (9th Cir. 1996)
- Lyons v. Crawford, 232 F.3d 666, 668-669 (9th Cir. 2000), as amended by Lyons v. Crawford, 247 F.3d 904, 904-905 (9th Cir. 2001)
- Raspberry v. Garcia, 448 F.3d 1150, 1154 (9th Cir. 2006)
- Jiminez v. Rice, 276 F.3d 478, 481 (9th Cir. 2001)
- Wilkerson v. Wheeler, 772 F.3d 834, 838-839 (9th Cir. 2014)

OPINION

(HC) Metcalf v. John Doe

PER CURIAM.

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8 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

9 FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

10

11 DENZELL MAGIC METCALF, No. 1:25-cv-00607-SKO (HC)

12 Petitioner, ORDER DIRECTING CLERK OF COURT

TO ASSIGN DISTRICT JUDGE

13 v.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION

14 TO SUMMARILY DISMISS

JOHN DOE, Warden, UNEXHAUSTED PETITION 15 Respondent. [TWENTY-ONE DAY
OBJECTION

16 DEADLINE]

17 18 Petitioner is a state prisoner proceeding pro se and in forma pauperis with a petition for 19
writ of habeas corpus pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 2254. Petitioner filed the instant habeas petition on
20 May 9, 2025, challenging a prison disciplinary hearing. Because the petition appears to be
21 unexhausted, the Court will recommend it be DISMISSED.

22 DISCUSSION

23 A. Preliminary Review of Petition

24 Rule 4 of the Rules Governing Section 2254 Cases allows a district court to dismiss a
25 petition if it “plainly appears from the petition and any attached exhibits that the petitioner is
not 26 entitled to relief in the district court” Rule 4 of the Rules Governing Section 2254
Cases. 27 The Advisory Committee Notes to Rule 8 indicate that the court may dismiss a petition
for writ of 28 habeas corpus, either on its own motion under Rule 4, pursuant to the respondent’s
motion to 1 dismiss, or after an answer to the petition has been filed. *Herbst v. Cook*, 260 F.3d
1039 (9th Cir. 2 2001). 3 B. Exhaustion 4 The exhaustion of available state remedies is a
prerequisite to a federal court’s 5 consideration of claims sought to be presented in habeas corpus
proceedings. See 28 U.S.C. § 6 2254(b); see also *Rose v. Lundy*, 455 U.S. 509 (1982). The
exhaustion doctrine is based on 7 comity to the state court and gives the state court the initial
opportunity to correct the state’s 8 alleged constitutional deprivations. *Coleman v. Thompson*, 501
U.S. 722, 731 (1991); *Rose*, 455 9 U.S. at 518. 10 A petitioner can satisfy the exhaustion
requirement by providing the highest state court 11 with a full and fair opportunity to consider
each claim before presenting it to the federal court. 12 *Duncan v. Henry*, 513 U.S. 364, 365 (1995).
A federal court will find that the highest state court 13 was given a full and fair opportunity to hear
a claim if the petitioner has presented the highest 14 state court with the claim’s factual and legal
basis. *Duncan*, 513 U.S. at 365 (legal basis); *Kenney 15 v. Tamayo-Reyes*, 504 U.S. 1, 112 S.Ct.
1715, 1719 (1992) (factual basis). 16 Additionally, the petitioner must have specifically told the
state court that he was raising a 17 federal constitutional claim. *Duncan*, 513 U.S. at 365-66. In
Duncan, the United States Supreme 18 Court reiterated the rule as follows: 19 In *Picard v. Connor*,
404 U.S. 270, 275 . . . (1971), we said that exhaustion of state remedies requires that petitioners
“fairly presen[t]” federal claims to the state courts 20 in order to give the State the “opportunity to
pass upon and correct alleged violations of the prisoners’ federal rights” (some internal quotation
marks omitted). If state 21 courts are to be given the opportunity to correct alleged violations of
prisoners’ federal rights, they must surely be alerted to the fact that the prisoners are asserting 22
claims under the United States Constitution. If a habeas petitioner wishes to claim that an
evidentiary ruling at a state court trial denied him the due process of law 23 guaranteed by the
Fourteenth Amendment, he must say so, not only in federal court, but in state court. 24 25 *Duncan*,
513 U.S. at 365-366. The Ninth Circuit examined the rule further, stating: 26 Our rule is that a
state prisoner has not “fairly presented” (and thus exhausted) his federal claims in state court
unless he specifically indicated to that court that those 27 claims were based on federal law. See
Shumway v. Payne, 223 F.3d 982, 987-88 (9th Cir. 2000). Since the Supreme Court’s decision in
Duncan, this court has held 28 that the petitioner must make the federal basis of the claim explicit
either by citing 1 federal law or the decisions of federal courts, even if the federal basis is “self-
evident,” *Gatlin v. Madding*, 189 F.3d 882, 889 (9th Cir. 1999) (citing *Anderson v. 2 Harless*, 459
U.S. 4, 7 . . . (1982), or the underlying claim would be decided under state law on the same
considerations that would control resolution of the claim on 3 federal grounds. *Hiiivala v. Wood*,
195 F.3d 1098, 1106-07 (9th Cir. 1999); *Johnson v. Zenon*, 88 F.3d 828, 830-31 (9th Cir. 1996); . . .

. 4 In Johnson, we explained that the petitioner must alert the state court to the fact that 5 the relevant claim is a federal one without regard to how similar the state and federal standards for reviewing the claim may be or how obvious the violation of federal 6 law is. 7 Lyons v. Crawford, 232 F.3d 666, 668-669 (9th Cir. 2000) (italics added), as amended by Lyons 8 v. Crawford, 247 F.3d 904, 904-5 (9th Cir. 2001). 9 Petitioner states he has only sought administrative relief. He indicates he has not 10 presented his claims to the California courts, including the California Supreme Court, as required 11 by the exhaustion doctrine. Because Petitioner has not presented his claims for federal relief to 12 the state courts prior to filing the instant federal habeas petition, the Court must dismiss the 13 petition. Raspberry v. Garcia, 448 F.3d 1150, 1154 (9th Cir. 2006); Jiminez v. Rice, 276 F.3d 14 478, 481 (9th Cir. 2001).

15 ORDER

16 IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that the Clerk of Court is DIRECTED to assign a District 17 Judge to the case.

RECOMMENDATION

18 Accordingly, the Court HEREBY RECOMMENDS that the habeas corpus petition be 19 DISMISSED WITHOUT PREJUDICE for lack of exhaustion. 20 This Findings and Recommendation is submitted to the United States District Court Judge 21 assigned to the case, pursuant to the provisions of 28 U.S.C. § 636 (b)(1)(B) and Rule 304 of the 22 Local Rules of Practice for the United States District Court, Eastern District of California. Within 23 twenty-one (21) days after being served with a copy of this Findings and Recommendation, a 24 party may file written objections with the Court and serve a copy on all parties. Id. The document 25 should be captioned, "Objections to Magistrate Judge's Findings and Recommendation" and shall 26 not exceed fifteen (15) pages, except by leave of court with good cause shown. The Court will not 27 consider exhibits attached to the Objections. To the extent a party wishes to refer to any 28 1 exhibit(s), the party should reference the exhibit in the record by its CM/ECF document and page 2 number, when possible, or otherwise reference the exhibit with specificity. Any pages filed in 3 excess of the fifteen (15) page limitation may be disregarded by the District Judge when 4 reviewing these Findings and Recommendations pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 636 (b)(1)(C). The 5 parties are advised that failure to file objections within the specified time may result in the waiver 6 of rights on appeal. Wilkerson v. Wheeler, 772 F.3d 834, 838-39 (9th Cir. 2014). This 7 recommendation is not an order that is immediately appealable to the Ninth Circuit Court of 8 Appeals. Any notice of appeal pursuant to Rule 4(a)(1), Federal Rules of Appellate Procedure, 9 should not be filed until entry of the District Court's judgment. 10 11 IT IS SO ORDERED. 12 Dated: May 23, 2025 /s/ Sheila K. Oberto .

13 UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE

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