

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Fields v. Hill

Fields v. Hill · No. 1:25-cv-00688-SKO · Decided June 13, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of California screened a pro se complaint filed by Catheryn D. Fields and concluded that it failed to state any cognizable claims. The court identified pleading deficiencies, including shotgun pleading, failure to link individual defendants to specific constitutional violations, potential Heck and Younger barriers, and apparent statute-of-limitations problems. The order gives Plaintiff thirty days to file a first amended complaint or notify the court that she wishes to stand on the existing complaint.

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	June 13, 2025
DOCKET	1:25-cv-00688-SKO
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Pro se plaintiff proceeding in forma pauperis filed a civil-rights complaint under 42 U.S.C. §§ 1983, 1985, and 1986. The magistrate judge screened the complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2), found that it failed to state a cognizable claim, and ordered plaintiff either to file a first amended complaint or notify the court that she wished to stand on the original complaint.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2), an in forma pauperis action must be dismissed at any time if it is frivolous, malicious, fails to state a claim, or seeks monetary relief from an immune defendant. Failure to state a claim is evaluated under the Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 8(a) pleading standard, accepting well-pleaded factual allegations as true, liberally construing pro se pleadings, and disregarding legal conclusions. The complaint must contain sufficient factual matter to state a plausible claim for relief.

PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished
PARTIES	Catheryn D. Fields v. Jeff Hill, Harold Collins, John Henderson, Brian Henderson, Rob Bonta, John/Jane Doe, Doe Defendants 1-10

TOPICS

pleadings civil procedure section 1983 statute of limitations venue

PRACTICE AREAS

civil rights civil procedure constitutional law

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the complaint stated a cognizable claim under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 when it grouped defendants together and failed to allege each defendant's personal participation in a specific constitutional deprivation.
2. Whether the complaint stated a claim under 42 U.S.C. § 1985(3) by alleging a conspiracy without specific facts showing an agreement, concerted action, or discriminatory animus against a protected class.
3. Whether a claim under 42 U.S.C. § 1986 could proceed absent a cognizable underlying conspiracy under § 1983 or § 1985.
4. Whether claims challenging convictions, sentences, or ongoing state criminal proceedings were barred by *Heck v. Humphrey* or *Younger v. Harris*.
5. Whether the claims appeared barred by the applicable statutes of limitations.
6. Whether the complaint satisfied Rule 8 and alleged facts establishing proper venue in the Eastern District of California.

HOLDINGS

1. The complaint fails to satisfy Rule 8 because it is an impermissible shotgun pleading that lumps defendants and claims together without identifying which defendant took which action or how specific facts support each claim.
2. A § 1983 claim requires allegations that each individual defendant acted under color of state law and personally participated in the deprivation of a constitutional or federal right.
3. A § 1985(3) claim requires plausible allegations of a conspiracy, an agreement or meeting of the minds to deprive a person or class of equal protection or equal privileges and immunities, an act in furtherance of the conspiracy, resulting injury, and class-based discriminatory animus.
4. A § 1986 claim requires a cognizable underlying conspiracy under § 1983 or § 1985(3), along with knowledge of the impending conspiracy, power to prevent it, and failure to act.

5. Claims under §§ 1983 and 1985 are subject to California's two-year personal-injury limitations period, while § 1986 claims are subject to a one-year limitations period; claims based on the 2002-2007 events appeared facially time-barred.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Upon review, the Court concludes that the complaint fails to state any cognizable claims.” (at 1)

“The majority of Plaintiff’s complaint is an impermissible “shotgun” pleading.” (at 8)

“Plaintiff must clearly identify which defendant(s) she believes is or are responsible for each violation of her constitutional rights and set forth the supporting factual basis so that the complaint places each defendant on notice of Plaintiff’s claims against him or her.” (at 10)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff alleged that events in Oklahoma in 2002 led to criminal charges, a coerced plea, and loss or restriction of parental rights. She also alleged later assaults, theft, missing police reports, and related misconduct in Washington State. Plaintiff further alleged that in Fresno in 2007 she was arrested after officers approached her while she sat in a parked car, that officers conducted a warrantless blood draw, and that a prosecutor coerced her into pleading guilty to felony DUI. The complaint named numerous defendants across multiple jurisdictions and attributed broad constitutional and conspiracy violations to them without clearly linking particular facts to particular defendants.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff filed the action and an application to proceed in forma pauperis on June 6, 2025. The application was granted on June 10, 2025. After screening the complaint, the court concluded that no cognizable claims were stated, granted thirty days to amend or stand on the complaint, and warned that failure to comply could result in a recommendation of dismissal.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Calhoun v. Stahl, 254 F.3d 845 (9th Cir. 2001)
- Cato v. United States, 70 F.3d 1103, 1106 (9th Cir. 1995)
- Barren v. Harrington, 152 F.3d 1193 (9th Cir. 1998)
- Lopez v. Smith, 203 F.3d 1122, 1126-30 (9th Cir. 2000) (en banc)
- Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009)
- Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 555-57 (2007)
- Balistreri v. Pacifica Police Dep’t, 901 F.2d 696, 699 (9th Cir. 1990)
- Brazil v. U.S. Dep’t of the Navy, 66 F.3d 193, 199 (9th Cir. 1995)

- *McKeever v. Block*, 932 F.2d 795, 798 (9th Cir. 1991)
- *Erickson v. Pardus*, 551 U.S. 89, 94 (2007)
- *Nurre v. Whitehead*, 580 F.3d 1087, 1092 (9th Cir. 2009)
- *Long v. Cnty. of Los Angeles*, 442 F.3d 1178, 1185 (9th Cir. 2006)
- *Jones v. Williams*, 297 F.3d 930, 934 (9th Cir. 2002)
- *Crowley v. Nevada ex rel. Nevada Sec’y of State*, 678 F.3d 730, 734 (9th Cir. 2012)
- *Graham v. Connor*, 490 U.S. 386, 393-94 (1989)
- *Vance v. Peters*, 97 F.3d 987, 991 (7th Cir. 1996)
- *Preschooler II v. Clark Cnty. Sch. Bd. of Trs.*, 479 F.3d 1175, 1183 (9th Cir. 2007)
- *Johnson v. Duffy*, 588 F.2d 740, 743 (9th Cir. 1978)
- *Hebbe v. Pliler*, 627 F.3d 338, 342 (9th Cir. 2010)
- *United Brotherhood of Carpenters, Local 610 v. Scott*, 463 U.S. 825 (1983)
- *Gillespie v. Civiletti*, 629 F.2d 637, 641 (9th Cir. 1980)
- *Sever v. Alaska Pulp Corp.*, 978 F.2d 1529, 1536 (9th Cir. 1992)
- *Dyess ex rel. Dyess v. Tehachapi Unified Sch. Dist.*, 2010 WL 3154013, at *8 (E.D. Cal. Aug. 6, 2010)
- *Dixon v. City of Lawton*, 898 F.2d 1443, 1449 n. 6 (10th Cir. 1990)
- *Klingele v. Eikenberry*, 849 F.2d 409, 413 (9th Cir. 1988)
- *Cohen v. Norris*, 300 F.2d 24, 27-28 (9th Cir. 1962)
- *Hopper v. Hayes*, 573 F. Supp. 1368, 1371 (D. Idaho 1983)
- *Powell*, 2020 WL 1932169, at *8
- *Karim-Panahi v. Los Angeles Police Dep’t*, 839 F.2d 621, 626 (9th Cir. 1988)
- *Bray v. Alexandria Women’s Health Clinic*, 506 U.S. 263, 267-68 (1993)
- *Huling v. City of Los Banos*, 869 F. Supp. 2d 1139, 1144-45 (E.D. Cal. 2012)
- *Lac du Flambeau Bank of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians v. Stop Treaty Abuse-Wisconsin, Inc.*, 759 F. Supp. 1339, 1352 (W.D. Wis. 1991)
- *Heck v. Humphrey*, 512 U.S. 477, 487-88 (1994)
- *Sperl v. Deukmejian*, 642 F.2d 1154, 1154 (9th Cir. 1981)
- *Leslie v. City Prosecutor of Long Beach*, 51 F.3d 280 (9th Cir. 1995)
- *Younger v. Harris*, 401 U.S. 37 (1971)
- *Jones v. Buckman*, No. 2:18-cv-0054-MCE-EFB, 2019 WL 1227921, at *2 (E.D. Cal. Mar. 15, 2019)
- *Mann v. Jett*, 781 F.2d 1448, 1449 (9th Cir. 1986)
- *Fink v. Shedler*, 192 F.3d 911, 914, 916 (9th Cir. 1999)
- *Jones v. Blanas*, 393 F.3d 918, 927-28 (9th Cir. 2004)
- *McDougal v. County of Imperial*, 942 F.2d 668, 674 (9th Cir. 1991), overruled on other grounds by *Lingle v. Chevron U.S.A., Inc.*, 544 U.S. 528 (2005)
- *Lingle v. Chevron U.S.A., Inc.*, 544 U.S. 528 (2005)
- *Olsen v. Idaho State Bd. of Medicine*, 363 F.3d 916, 926 (9th Cir. 2004)

- TwoRivers v. Lewis, 174 F.3d 987, 991 (9th Cir. 1999)
- Tafoya v. City of Hanford, 2020 WL 1083823, at *5 (E.D. Cal. Mar. 6, 2020)
- Cervantes v. City of San Diego, 5 F.3d 1273, 1276 (9th Cir. 1993)
- Kelly v. Islam, 2018 WL 2670661, at *2 (E.D. Cal. June 1, 2018)
- El-Shaddai v. Stainer, 2016 WL 7261230, at *21 (C.D. Cal. Dec. 13, 2016)
- Lantzy v. Centex Homes, 31 Cal. 4th 363, 370 (2003)
- Kelly v. Qualitest Pharmaceuticals, Inc., 2006 WL 2536627, at *8 (E.D. Cal. Aug. 31, 2006)
- Pecoraro v. Sky Ranch for Boys, Inc., 340 F.3d 558, 563 (8th Cir. 2003)
- Gulf Ins. Co., 417 F.3d at 357
- Jenkins Brick Co. v. Bremer, 321 F.3d 1366, 1371 (3d Cir. 2003)
- Cottman Transmission Sys., Inc. v. Martino, 36 F.3d 291, 294 (3d Cir. 1994)
- George v. Smith, 507 F.3d 605, 607 (7th Cir. 2007)
- Lacey v. Maricopa County, 693 F.3d 896, 907 n.1 (9th Cir. 2012) (en banc)