

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF MARYLAND

Marquis Copez v. Gary Drozda and Leon Goodrich

Copez v. Drozda · No. ELH-23-0465 · Decided December 5, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the District of Maryland dismissed Marquis Copez’s amended 42 U.S.C. § 1983 complaint against Gary Drozda and Leon Goodrich. The court held that allegations concerning a false or dismissed disciplinary report did not establish a federal constitutional violation and that Copez’s conclusory defamation allegations failed to state a claim under Maryland law. The court dismissed the amended complaint under 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2)(B)(ii) and 1915A(b)(1), and denied pending motions as moot.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the District of Maryland
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Ellen L. Hollander
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the District of Maryland
DECIDED	December 5, 2025
DOCKET	ELH-23-0465
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	The court screened a prisoner’s amended civil-rights complaint under 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2)(B) and 1915A and dismissed it for failure to state a claim.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Screening under 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2)(B) and 1915A requires dismissal if the complaint is frivolous or malicious, fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, or seeks monetary relief from an immune defendant. The court also applied the Rule 8 pleading standard.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	nonprecedential

TOPICS

- prisoners rights
- section 1983
- pleadings
- motions to dismiss
- defamation

PRACTICE AREAS

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the allegations that defendants wrote and approved a false disciplinary report stated a federal constitutional claim under 42 U.S.C. § 1983.
2. Whether the amended complaint adequately pleaded a defamation claim under Maryland law.
3. Whether the court should dismiss the amended complaint during statutory screening.

HOLDINGS

1. The amended complaint did not state a federal constitutional claim because it alleged only that defendants wrote and approved a disciplinary report that was later dismissed, without alleging retaliation, arbitrary conduct, or a denial of procedural due process at the disciplinary hearing.
2. The amended complaint failed to state a Maryland defamation claim because it did not identify the allegedly false statements, allege how they were defamatory, or allege that the statements were communicated to third parties who caused Copez harm.
3. The amended complaint was dismissed for failure to state a claim under 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2)(B)(ii) and 1915A(b)(1).

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Marquis Copez, a Maryland prisoner housed at North Branch Correctional Institution, alleged that he was assaulted on January 18, 2023, and then received a disciplinary ticket written by Leon Goodrich and approved by Gary Drozda. He alleged that he did nothing wrong, that Goodrich perjured himself, and that the ticket was later dismissed. He claimed defamation and alleged that he was subjected to racial slurs and fecal matter being thrown at him, but did not identify the allegedly false statements, explain how they were defamatory, or allege how they were communicated to persons who caused him harm.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Copez initially sued under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 after receiving a disciplinary ticket. The court previously granted summary judgment to Samuel Snoberger, dismissed the claims against Gary Drozda and Leon Goodrich, and granted leave to amend. After Copez filed an amended complaint, the court conducted statutory screening and dismissed the amended complaint; pending motions to dismiss or for summary judgment were denied as moot.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Lomax v. Ortiz-Marquez, 140 S. Ct. 1721 (2020)
- Wolff v. McDonnell, 418 U.S. 539, 540 (1974)

- Cole v. Holloway, 631 F. App'x 185, 186 (4th Cir. 2016)
- Freeman v. Rideout, 808 F.2d 949, 951 (2d Cir. 1986)
- Wildauer v. Frederick County, 993 F.2d 369, 373 (4th Cir. 1993)
- Siegert v. Gilley, 500 U.S. 226, 234-235 (1991)
- Paul v. Davis, 424 U.S. 693, 712 (1976)
- Shapiro v. Massengill, 105 Md. App. 743, 772, 661 A.2d 202, 216-217 (1995), cert. denied, 341 Md. 28, 668 A.2d 36 (Table) (1995)
- Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009)
- Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 555 (2007)

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