

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Anthony L. Allen, Jr. v. Bryan D. Phillips

Allen v. Phillips · No. 2:22-cv-00011-DAD-DMC (HC) · Decided September 23, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of California adopted the magistrate judge’s findings and recommendations and denied Anthony L. Allen, Jr.’s third amended petition for a writ of habeas corpus under 28 U.S.C. § 2254. The court also declined to issue a certificate of appealability and directed the Clerk to close the action.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Dale A. Drozd
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
DECIDED	September 23, 2025
DOCKET	2:22-cv-00011-DAD-DMC (HC)
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Petitioner sought federal habeas relief under 28 U.S.C. § 2254. After a magistrate judge recommended denial of the third amended petition, petitioner filed objections. The district court conducted de novo review, adopted the findings and recommendations, denied the petition, declined to issue a certificate of appealability, and closed the action.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	De novo review of the magistrate judge's findings and recommendations under 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(C). For a certificate of appealability after a merits denial, the petitioner must make a substantial showing of the denial of a constitutional right, including a showing that reasonable jurists could debate the district court's resolution or that the issues deserve encouragement to proceed further.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unpublished federal district court order; precedential status not stated in the opinion.
PARTIES	Anthony L. Allen, Jr. v. Bryan D. Phillips

TOPICS

federal habeas corpus

post-conviction relief

pleadings

due process

PRACTICE AREAS

Federal habeas corpus

Post-conviction relief

Criminal procedure

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the third amended federal habeas petition should be denied because the two exhausted claims were unsupported by factual allegations.
2. Whether petitioner was entitled to a certificate of appealability after denial of the habeas petition on the merits.

HOLDINGS

1. The petition must be denied because petitioner failed to allege facts supporting either exhausted claim: the alleged denial of a fair Marsden hearing or the alleged denial of a fair trial based on the jury's ethnic background.
2. Petitioner was not entitled to a certificate of appealability because he failed to make the required substantial showing of the denial of a constitutional right, and reasonable jurists would not find the denial of the petition debatable or wrong.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“If a court denies a habeas petition on the merits, the court may only issue a certificate of appealability if ‘jurists of reason could disagree with the district court’s resolution of [the petitioner’s] constitutional claims or that jurists could conclude the issues presented are adequate to deserve encouragement to proceed further.’” (opinion at 2–3)

“Petitioner has not made the required substantial showing of the denial of a constitutional right.” (opinion at 3)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Allen is a state prisoner pursuing federal habeas relief. His two remaining claims alleged that a state trial court denied a Marsden motion without a fair hearing and that he was denied a fair trial by an unbiased jury because the selected jurors shared the alleged victims' ethnic background. The court relied on the absence of factual allegations supporting either claim, including the absence of facts supporting a Batson challenge or another basis for federal habeas relief.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Allen, a state prisoner proceeding pro se and in forma pauperis, proceeded on a third amended § 2254 petition containing two claims previously determined to be exhausted: denial of a fair hearing on a Marsden motion and an allegedly unfair trial by an allegedly ethnically homogeneous jury. The assigned magistrate judge

recommended denial because the claims were unsupported by factual allegations. Allen objected, but his objections did not challenge the magistrate judge’s analysis. The district court adopted the findings and recommendations in full, denied habeas relief, declined to issue a certificate of appealability, and directed the clerk to close the case.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Miller-El v. Cockrell, 537 U.S. 322 (2003)
- Slack v. McDaniel, 529 U.S. 473 (2000)

OPINION

Phillips

PER CURIAM.

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8 IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

9 FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

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11 ANTHONY L. ALLEN, JR., No. 2:22-cv-00011-DAD-DMC (HC)

12 Petitioner, ORDER ADOPTING FINDINGS AND

RECOMMENDATIONS AND DENYING

13 v. PETITION SEEKING FEDERAL HABEAS

RELIEF

14 BRYAN D. PHILLIPS,

(Doc. Nos. 23, 61) 15 Respondent. 16 17 Petitioner Anthony L. Allen, Jr. is a state prisoner proceeding pro se and in forma 18 pauperis with a petition for writ of habeas corpus pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 2254. This action now 19 proceeds on petitioner’s third amended petition for a writ of habeas corpus. (Doc. No. 23.) The 20 matter was referred to a United States Magistrate Judge pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(B) and 21 Local Rule 302. 22 On July 18, 2025, the assigned magistrate judge issued findings and recommendations 23 recommending that petitioner’s third amended federal habeas petition be denied. (Doc. No. 61.) 24 The magistrate judge examined the sole two claims for relief that the court previously determined 25 to be exhausted and upon which petitioner is proceeding in this action. (Id. at 6–10.) As to 26 petitioner’s claim that his Marsden motion was denied by the state trial court without a fair 27 hearing, the magistrate judge noted that, as was the case in state court, petitioner has not alleged 28 any facts in support of his claim for habeas relief. (Id. at 7.) Likewise, the magistrate observed 1 that petitioner had merely alleged in conclusory fashion that he did not receive a fair trial from an 2 unbiased jury because the jurors

selected at his trial were all of the same ethnic background as the 3 alleged victims. (Id. at 8.) However, petitioner had failed to allege any facts supporting a Batson 4 challenge or any other basis for federal habeas relief. (Id. at 9–10.) 5 The pending findings and recommendations were served upon the parties and contained 6 notice that any objections thereto were to be filed within fourteen (14) days after service. (Id. at 7 10.) On August 25, 2025, petitioner filed his objections to the pending findings and 8 recommendations. (Doc. No. 63.) In those objections petitioner simply states “I did not receive a 9 fair trial.” (Id. at 2.) In addition, petitioner generally expresses his concerns about the fairness of 10 his underlying criminal proceedings, including an assertion that he received ineffective assistance, 11 and noting that he is proceeding pro se and is making his best efforts in prosecuting this petition. 12 (Id.) Nonetheless, petitioner advances no argument that would call into question the magistrate 13 judge’s analysis of the only two claims for relief upon which he proceeds in this habeas action. 14 Indeed, as to his Marsden related claim, petitioner now affirmatively states that “I never said 15 there was no hearing” and otherwise concedes that he presented all the evidence he had in support 16 of his claim. (Id.) 17 In accordance with the provisions of 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(C), the court has conducted a 18 de novo review of the case. Having carefully reviewed the entire file, including petitioner’s 19 objections, the court finds the findings and recommendations to be supported by the record and 20 by proper analysis. 21 Having concluded that the pending petition must be denied, the court also declines to issue 22 a certificate of appealability. A petitioner seeking writ of habeas corpus has no absolute right to 23 appeal; he may appeal only in limited circumstances. See 28 U.S.C. § 2253; *Miller-El v. Cockrell*, 537 U.S. 322, 335–36 (2003). If a court denies a petitioner’s petition, the court may 25 only issue a certificate of appealability when a petitioner makes a substantial showing of the 26 denial of a constitutional right. 28 U.S.C. § 2253(c)(2). If a court denies a habeas petition on the 27 merits, the court may only issue a certificate of appealability if “jurists of reason could disagree 28 with the district court’s resolution of [the petitioner’s] constitutional claims or that jurists could 1 | conclude the issues presented are adequate to deserve encouragement to proceed further.” *Miller-El*, 537 U.S. at 327; see also *Slack v. McDaniel*, 529 U.S. 473, 484 (2000). While the petitioner 3 | is not required to prove the merits of his case, he must demonstrate “something more than the 4 | absence of frivolity or the existence of mere good faith on [his] .. . part.” *Miller-El*, 537 U.S. at 5 | 338. In the present case, the court concludes that reasonable jurists would not find the court’s 6 | determination that the petition should be denied to be debatable or wrong, or that the issues 7 || presented are deserving of encouragement to proceed further. Petitioner has not made the 8 || required substantial showing of the denial of a constitutional right. Therefore, the court will 9 | decline to issue a certificate of appealability. 10 Accordingly, 11 1. The findings and recommendations issued on July 18, 2025 (Doc. No. 61) are 12 ADOPTED in full; 13 2. The petition for writ of habeas corpus (Doc. No. 1) is DENIED; 14 3. The court DECLINES to issue the certificate of appealability referenced in 28 U.S.C 15 § 2253; and 16 4. The Clerk of the Court is directed to CLOSE this action. 17 IT IS SO ORDERED. ' | pated: _ September 23, 2025 Dae A.

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19 DALE A. DROZD

30 UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE

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