

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Gezo Edwards v. B. M. Trate

Edwards v. Trate · No. 2:24-CV-0887-DMC-P · Decided August 5, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of California addresses a federal prisoner’s 28 U.S.C. § 2241 petition seeking expungement of a prison disciplinary record. The magistrate judge recommends denying the petitioner’s motion for summary judgment, granting the respondent’s motion to dismiss, and declining to recharacterize the petition as a civil rights action. The court concludes that expungement would not necessarily result in earlier or immediate release because compassionate release is discretionary and therefore the claim does not fall within the core of habeas corpus.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Dennis M. Cota
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
DECIDED	August 5, 2025
DOCKET	2:24-CV-0887-DMC-P
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Federal prisoner proceeding pro se filed a petition for a writ of habeas corpus under 28 U.S.C. § 2241 challenging a prison disciplinary record and seeking expungement. Respondent moved to dismiss, and petitioner moved for summary judgment. The magistrate judge issued findings and recommendations recommending denial of petitioner's summary-judgment motion and dismissal of the habeas petition.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court applied the core-of-habeas-corpus standard to determine whether the requested relief could affect the fact or duration of confinement. It also applied Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 5(b)(2) (C) and Local Rule 135 to determine whether service was effective.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	nonprecedential
PARTIES	Gezo Edwards v. B. M. Trate

TOPICS

federal habeas corpus

prisoners' rights

due process

summary judgment

section 1983

PRACTICE AREAS

federal habeas corpus

prisoners' rights

civil procedure

constitutional law

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether service of respondent's motion to dismiss was complete when the motion was mailed to petitioner's last known address, notwithstanding petitioner's assertion that he did not receive it.
2. Whether a federal prisoner's request to expunge a disciplinary record, based on its possible effect on a discretionary compassionate-release motion, is cognizable in a § 2241 habeas action.
3. Whether the habeas action should be recharacterized as a civil-rights action under 42 U.S.C. § 1983.

HOLDINGS

1. Under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 5(b)(2)(C) and Local Rule 135, service was complete when respondent mailed the motion to dismiss to petitioner's last known address; petitioner's motion for summary judgment should therefore be denied.
2. A claim seeking expungement of a prison disciplinary record is not cognizable in habeas when success would not necessarily result in an earlier or immediate release from confinement. The possible effect of expungement on a discretionary compassionate-release motion did not bring the claim within the core of habeas corpus.
3. The action should not be recharacterized as a civil-rights action because petitioner named the warden rather than the individuals involved in the disciplinary hearing.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“service is complete upon mailing.” (at 2)

“The Court disagrees with Petitioner and finds compassionate release to be analogous to parole eligibility”
(at 4)

“As such, Petitioner’s claim “does not fall within ‘the core of habeas corpus,’” and is therefore not cognizable.” (at 4)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Gezo Edwards, a federal prisoner serving a life sentence, challenged a prison disciplinary record arising from an allegation that he possessed unauthorized food items on April 5, 2022. He alleged that the disciplinary process involved only one Unit Discipline Committee member, delayed notice of the incident report and decision, and denied him the opportunity to present witnesses and evidence. Edwards sought expungement, contending that the record could affect a future compassionate-release motion.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Petitioner challenged a disciplinary incident involving possession of unauthorized food items, alleging violations of due process. Respondent moved to dismiss on service, jurisdictional, and habeas-cognizability grounds; petitioner moved for summary judgment based principally on alleged failure to receive the motion to dismiss. The magistrate judge concluded that service was complete upon mailing, recommended denying summary judgment, recommended granting the motion to dismiss, and recommended declining to recharacterize the action as one under 42 U.S.C. § 1983.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Superintendent, Mass. Corr. Inst. v. Hill, 472 U.S. 445, 454-55 (1985)
- Wolff v. McDonnell, 418 U.S. 539 (1974)
- Preiser v. Rodriguez, 411 U.S. 475, 487, 500 (1973)
- Nettles v. Grounds, 830 F.3d 922, 934-36 (9th Cir. 2016) (en banc)
- Blair v. Martel, 645 F.3d 1151, 1157-58 (9th Cir. 2011)
- Martinez v. Yist, 951 F.2d 1153 (9th Cir. 1991)

OPINION

(HC) Edwards v. Trate

PER CURIAM.

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8 IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

9 FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

10

11 GEZO EDWARDS, No. 2:24-CV-0887-DMC-P

12 Petitioner,

ORDER

13 v. and

14 B. M. TRATE,

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

15 Respondent. 16

17 Petitioner, a federal prisoner proceeding pro se, brings this petition for a writ of 18 habeas corpus under 28 U.S.C. § 2241. Pending before the Court is Respondent’s motion to 19 dismiss petition for a writ of habeas corpus, ECF No. 13. Also pending before the Court is 20 Petitioner’s motion for summary judgment, ECF No. 19. 21

22 I. BACKGROUND

23 A. Petitioner’s Claims 24 Petitioner requests “expungement of [his] prison discipline record

germane to 25 Incident Report No. 3613940,” arguing that the Unit Discipline Committee (UDC) process 26 violated Petitioner’s due process rights. ECF No. 2, pgs. 7-8. Incident Report No. 3613940 arose 27 from an allegation that Petitioner was in possession of unauthorized food items on April 5, 2022. 28 See id. at 20. Petitioner contends that the UDC was conducted by just one committee member 1 and Petitioner was not provided a timely written decision. See id. at 7. Further, Petitioner argues 2 he was denied the opportunity to present witnesses and evidence in defense of himself, “the 3 incident report is deficient on its face,” and the “unreasonable delay in delivering the incident 4 report” hindered his ability to properly appeal. Id. at 8. Finally, Petitioner contends the “combined 5 affects” of his previously asserted claims “prejudiced” Petitioner. Id. at 9. Petitioner asserts these 6 errors violated his right to due process. See ECF No. 21, pg. 4. Petitioner appealed the UDC 7 decision on June 12, 2023, and again on August 22, 2023. See ECF No. 2 at 3. 8 Petitioner acknowledges he is serving a life sentence, which generally would make 9 him ineligible for habeas relief seeking expungement because it does not have the potential to 10 shorten his incarceration. See ECF No. 21, pg. 2. However, Petitioner asserts this Court has 11 jurisdiction and his claim is properly brought under § 2241 because Petitioner is seeking 12 compassionate release and therefore, his disciplinary record may impact his release date. See id. 13 at 2-3. Petitioner argues compassionate release is distinguishable from parole, which Petitioner 14 concedes that courts have established is “too attenuated to invoke” a habeas request for 15 expungement of a disciplinary record. See id. at 2. According to Petitioner, 16 compassionate release under 18 U.S. Code § 3582 requires consideration of “the history and 17 characteristics of the defendant,” which Petitioner contends is “inseparably tied to a prisoner’s 18 disciplinary record.” ECF No. 21, pg. 3 (quoting 18 U.S.C. § 3553 (a)(1)). 19 With regard to Petitioner’s motion for summary judgment, Petitioner argues that 20 because the government failed to provide Petitioner a copy nor serve Petitioner with their motion 21 to dismiss, Petitioner is entitled to summary judgment. See ECF No. 19. Petitioner contends this 22 is in violation of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure and due to such failure, Petitioner’s motion 23 for summary judgment should be granted, and the incident should be expunged from his record. 24 See id. Prior to the motion for summary judgment, on February 7, 2025, Petitioner filed a notice 25 informing the Court and government that he had not received a copy of the motion to dismiss. See 26 ECF No. 18, pg. 1 Petitioner asserts that he was informed of the filing on January 14, 2025, when 27 he received a docket sheet from the clerk. See id. 28 / / / 1 B. Respondent’s Position 2 In the answer, Respondent first argues that Petitioner’s disciplinary decision was 3 supported by “physical evidence, direct law enforcement observation, contemporaneous 4 supporting documentation plus memoranda, and subsequent confession,” which is sufficient to 5 meet the standard required by the Supreme Court. See ECF No. 13, pg. 4 (citing Superintendent, 6 Mass. Corr. Inst. v. Hill, 472 U.S. 445, 454-455 (1985)). Second, Respondent contends that the 7 “Wolff due process safeguards are not implicated” because Petitioner does not have a 8 constitutionally protected liberty interest in his prison discipline record. See id. at 5 (citing Wolff 9 v. McDonnell, 418 U.S. 539 (1974)). And

finally, Respondent asserts that this Court lacks subject matter jurisdiction because the length of Petitioner's prison term is not impacted by the discipline record Petitioner challenges. See *id.* at 5-6. 12

13 II. DISCUSSION

14 A. Petitioner's Motion for Summary Judgment 15 Petitioner requests summary judgment asserting that Respondent failed to properly 16 serve Petitioner with the motion to dismiss. See ECF No. 19. Petitioner additionally provided a 17 statement from the Supervisory Correctional Systems Specialist stating that "Mr. Edwards did not 18 receive your letter from the court¹ until December 4, 2024, due to a delay in mail processing . . . I 19 am requesting you provide Mr. Edwards with additional time to work on his case." ECF No. 18 at 20 3. Petitioner states that he learned of the motion to dismiss when he received "a docket sheet from 21 the Clerk" on January 12, 2025. See *id.* at 1. 22 Respondent's motion to dismiss included a certificate of service asserting that the 23 motion to dismiss was placed in an envelope with proper postage and address for Petitioner on

24 September 4, 2024. See ECF No. 13, pg. 7.

25 / / / 26 27 1 It is unclear what the December 4, 2025, letter indicated in the attached statement was, and whether it was Respondent's motion to dismiss. However, this fact does not impact whether 28 service was effectuated here. 1 Local Rule 135 requires that individuals not registered for electronic filing, such as 2 a prisoner or pro se litigant, be "conventionally served" in accordance with the Federal Rules of 3 Civil Procedure. See L. R. 135. Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 5 (b)(2)(C) permits service by 4 "mailing it to the person's last known address—in which event service is complete upon mailing." 5 Fed. Rule Civ. Pro. 5 (b)(2)(C). 6 Here, Respondent's motion to dismiss included proof of service that stated a copy 7 of the motion to dismiss was mailed to Petitioner's last known address on September 4, 2024. See 8 ECF No. 13, pg. 7. Service of the motion to dismiss was complete upon such mailing on

9 September 4, 2024. See L. R. 135; Fed. Rule Civ. Pro. 5 (b)(2)(C). Thus, the undersigned 10 recommends Petitioner's motion for summary judgment, ECF No. 19, be denied. 11 B. Eligibility for Habeas Relief 12 Respondent argues that this court lacks subject matter jurisdiction because 13 expunging the incident from Petitioner's discipline record "would not shorten petitioner's 14 confinement." ECF No. 13, pg. 5. Petitioner contends that he is eligible for habeas relief because 15 of the impact his disciplinary record may have on his motion for compassionate release. See ECF

16 No. 21, pg. 2. This Court finds that Petitioner's claim is not cognizable because it does not fall 17 within the core of habeas corpus and therefore, Respondent's motion to dismiss should be 18 granted. 19 When a state prisoner challenges the legality of his custody – either the fact of 20 confinement or the duration of confinement – and the relief he seeks is a determination that he is 21 entitled to an earlier or immediate release, such a challenge is cognizable in a petition for a writ of 22 habeas corpus. See *Preiser v. Rodriguez*, 411 U.S. 475, 500 (1973). If a petitioner's claim

does not lie at “the core of habeas corpus,” as established in *Preiser*, “it may not be brought in habeas corpus.” *Nettles v. Grounds*, 830 F.3d 922, 934 (9th Cir. 2016) (quoting *Preiser v. Rodriguez*, 411 U.S. 475, 487 (1973)); C.f. *Blair v. Martel*, 645 F.3d 1151, 1157-58 (9th Cir. 2011). Respondent analogizes Petitioner’s claim to the Ninth Circuit case *Nettles*, where a prisoner sought §2254 habeas relief in the form of expungement of a disciplinary record. See ECF No. 13, pg. 6. This Court finds the analysis in *Nettles* instructive. *Nettles* argued that his disciplinary record “delayed his parole hearing and constituted grounds for future denial of 2 parole,” and his claim falls within habeas because expungement of that record would “accelerate 3 his eligibility for parole.” *Nettles*, 830 F.3d at 927. There, the Court determined that because 4 parole determination was “in the discretion of the parole board . . . [and] success on *Nettles*’s 5 claims would not even necessarily lead to an earlier parole hearing . . . *Nettles*’s claims would not 6 necessarily lead to his immediate or earlier release from confinement.” *Id.* at 935. Based on that 7 analysis, the Court held that *Nettles*’s claim “does not fall within ‘the core of habeas corpus,’” 8 and *Nettles* was therefore ineligible for habeas relief. See *id.* 9 Here, Petitioner asserts that he is seeking compassionate release under 18 U.S. 10 Code § 3582, which requires consideration of “the history and characteristics of the defendant.” 11 18 U.S.C. § 3553 (a)(1). Petitioner contends that consideration is “inseparably tied to a prisoner’s 12 disciplinary record” and, in support of that contention, Petitioner provides a string of citations to 13 cases where courts consider disciplinary records when determining eligibility for compassionate 14 release. ECF No. 21, pg. 3. 15 The Court disagrees with Petitioner and finds compassionate release to be 16 analogous to parole eligibility, as addressed by the Ninth Circuit in *Nettles*. As the Ninth Circuit 17 found with parole, compassionate release is discretionary, expungement of a disciplinary record 18 “would not even necessarily result” in compassionate release, and therefore, Petitioner’s “claims 19 would not necessarily lead to his immediate or earlier release from confinement.” *Nettles*, 830 20 F.3d at 935. While Petitioner is correct that a disciplinary record may be considered when 21 determining whether compassionate release is appropriate, the existence of Petitioner’s 22 disciplinary record would not dispositively impact Petitioner’s compassionate release motion and, 23 in turn, his release date. Petitioner may still be eligible for compassionate release with his 24 disciplinary record, as nothing in the statute requires that prisoners have a clear record to be 25 eligible. Further, even if Petitioner’s record were expunged, a clear disciplinary record is not 26 decisive for compassionate release. As such, Petitioner’s claim “does not fall within ‘the core of 27 habeas corpus,’” and is therefore not cognizable. *Nettles*, 830 F.3d at 935. Thus, the undersigned 28 will recommend that Respondent’s motion to dismiss be granted.

1 C. Recharacterizing Petitioner’s Claim 2 When a habeas corpus action is filed which may state claims cognizable under § 3 1983, the district court may recharacterize the action as a civil rights action where the action is 4 amenable to such recharacterization. See *Nettles v. Grounds*, 830 F.3d 922, 936 (9th Cir. 2016) 5 (en banc). A habeas action is amendable to recharacterization when it names the correct 6 defendants and seeks the correct relief. See *id.* If the district court is inclined to recharacterize a 7

habeas action as a civil rights action, it may only do so after “notifying and obtaining informed 8
consent from the prisoner.” Id. 9 The undersigned recommends that the District Judge decline to
recharacterize 10 Petitioner’s claim as a civil rights action because Petitioner named the warden as
Defendant, not 11 the individuals involved in Petitioner’s disciplinary hearing. See ECF No. 2, pg.
1. 12 /// 13 /// 14 /// 15 /// 16 /// 17 /// 18 /// 19 /// 20 /// 21 /// 22 /// 23 /// 24 /// 25 /
/ / 26 / / / 27 / / / 28 / / / 1 Ill. CONCLUSION 2 Accordingly, IT IS HEREBY ordered and
recommended as follows: 3 1. It is ORDERED that the Clerk of the Court is directed to randomly
assign 4 | a District Judge to this case. 5 2. It is RECOMMENDED Petitioner’s motion for
summary judgment, ECF 6 | No. 19, be denied. 7 3. It is RECOMMENDED Respondent’s motion
to dismiss, ECF No. 13, be 8 | granted. 9 These findings and recommendations are submitted to the
United States District 10 || Judge assigned to the case, pursuant to the provisions of 28 U.S.C. §
636(b)(1). Within 14 days 11 | after being served with these findings and recommendations, any
party may file written 12 || objections with the court. Responses to objections shall be filed within
14 days after service of 13 || objections. Failure to file objections within the specified time may
waive the right to appeal. See 14 | Martinez v. Yist, 951 F.2d 1153 (9th Cir. 1991). 15 16 | Dated:
August 5, 2025 Ss..c0_,

M7 DENNIS M. COTA

18 UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE

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