

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF
WASHINGTON

Mikal Cordova Harrison v. Judge Monica K. Cary, in Her Personal
and Official Capacities, and Tarrell Harrison, Jr., in His Individual
Capacity

Harrison · No. 2:26-cv-00353-JNW · Decided February 4, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Western District of Washington denies Mikal Cordova Harrison’s ex parte motion for a temporary restraining order seeking to prevent enforcement of King County Superior Court family-law orders. The court concludes that Harrison failed to satisfy the procedural requirements of Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 65(b) and did not show a likelihood of success on the merits. The court also directs Harrison to show cause within 21 days why the action should not be dismissed for lack of subject-matter jurisdiction, citing possible application of the Rooker-Feldman and Younger doctrines and judicial immunity.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Western District of Washington
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Jamal N. Whitehead
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Western District of Washington
DECIDED	February 4, 2026
DOCKET	2:26-cv-00353-JNW
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff proceeding pro se moved ex parte for a temporary restraining order preventing enforcement of family-law orders issued by the King County Superior Court. The court denied the motion and ordered plaintiff to show cause why the action should not be dismissed for lack of subject-matter jurisdiction.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	A party seeking preliminary injunctive relief must demonstrate a likelihood of success on the merits, a likelihood of irreparable harm, that the balance of equities tips in the party's favor, and that an injunction is in the public interest. An ex parte temporary restraining order additionally requires compliance with Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 65(b)(1).

PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unknown; district-court order denying a temporary restraining order.
PARTIES	Mikal Cordova Harrison v. Judge Monica K. Cary, in her personal and official capacities, Tarrell Harrison, Jr., in his individual capacity

TOPICS

injunctions

subject matter jurisdiction

family law

civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure

constitutional law

family law

remedies

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Harrison satisfied Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 65(b)(1)'s requirements for an ex parte temporary restraining order.
2. Whether Harrison demonstrated a likelihood of success on the merits sufficient to obtain preliminary injunctive relief.
3. Whether doctrines including Rooker-Feldman and judicial immunity appeared to foreclose some or all of Harrison's claims.
4. Whether Harrison should be ordered to show cause why the action should not be dismissed for lack of subject-matter jurisdiction.

HOLDINGS

1. The motion for an ex parte temporary restraining order was properly denied because Harrison failed to comply with Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 65(b)(1), including the requirements concerning specific facts showing immediate and irreparable injury and written certification regarding notice.
2. Harrison failed to meet her burden for temporary injunctive relief because she did not meaningfully address whether she was likely to succeed on the merits.
3. The court denied emergency relief because Harrison had not shown a likelihood of success, and identified Rooker-Feldman, possible Younger abstention, and judicial immunity as doctrines that appeared to preclude some or all claims; the court did not finally resolve the applicability of Younger.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Motions for temporary restraining orders without notice and an opportunity to be heard by the adverse party are disfavored and will rarely be granted.” (at 1)

“injunctive relief is an extraordinary remedy that may only be awarded upon a clear showing that the plaintiff is entitled to such relief.” (at 2)

“The proper legal standard for preliminary injunctive relief requires a party to demonstrate that he is likely to succeed on the merits, that he is likely to suffer irreparable harm in the absence of preliminary relief, that the

balance of equities tips in his favor, and that an injunction is in the public interest.” (at 2)

“district courts lack subject matter jurisdiction over cases brought by state-court losers complaining of injuries caused by state-court judgments.” (at 3)

“Judicial immunity discourages collateral attacks on final judgments through civil suits, and thus promotes the use of appellate procedures as the standard system for correcting judicial error.” (at 4)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Harrison sought federal relief from family-law orders issued by the King County Superior Court. She alleged that the state-court judge entered erroneous orders unsupported by the record and lacking a lawful foundation, and asked the federal court to enjoin those orders. Her motion contained only conclusory discussion of the likelihood-of-success factor and did not satisfy Rule 65(b)'s requirements for an ex parte temporary restraining order.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Harrison filed a federal action challenging or seeking to enjoin enforcement of King County Superior Court family-law orders. She moved ex parte for a temporary restraining order. The district court denied the motion because she failed to satisfy Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 65(b)'s procedural requirements and failed to demonstrate a likelihood of success on the merits. The court also ordered her to respond within twenty-one days to concerns regarding subject-matter jurisdiction and possible dismissal.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Winter v. Nat. Res. Def. Council, Inc., 555 U.S. 7, 20, 22 (2008)
- Stormans, Inc. v. Selecky, 586 F.3d 1109, 1127 (9th Cir. 2009)
- Fraihat v. U.S. Immigr. & Customs Enf't, 16 F.4th 613, 635 (9th Cir. 2021)
- Planned Parenthood Great Nw., Hawaii, Alaska, Indiana, Kentucky v. Labrador, 122 F.4th 825, 843-44 (9th Cir. 2024)
- All. for the Wild Rockies v. Cottrell, 632 F.3d 1127, 1135 (9th Cir. 2011)
- Miroth v. County of Trinity, 136 F.4th 1141, 1150-51 (9th Cir. 2025)
- Kougasian v. TMSL, Inc., 359 F.3d 1136 (9th Cir. 2004)
- Younger v. Harris, 401 U.S. 37 (1971)
- ReadyLink Healthcare, Inc. v. State Comp. Ins. Fund, 754 F.3d 754, 758 (9th Cir. 2014)
- Laflam v. Hillman, 2025 WL 1898922, at *3 (W.D. Wash. July 9, 2025)
- In re Castillo, 297 F.3d 940, 947 (9th Cir. 2002)
- Forrester v. White, 484 U.S. 219, 225 (1988)

OPINION

1 2 3 4 5 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT 6 WESTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON
AT SEATTLE 7 MIKAL CORDOVA HARRISON, CASE NO. 2:26-cv-00353-JNW 8 Plaintiff,
ORDER DENYING MOTION FOR 9 TEMPORARY RESTRAINING ORDER v. AND ORDER
TO SHOW CAUSE 10 JUDGE MONICA K. CARY, in her 11 personal and official capacities, and
TARRELL HARRISON, JR, in his 12 individual capacity, 13 Defendants.

14 Plaintiff Mikal Cordova Harrison, proceeding pro se, moves ex parte for a 15 temporary
restraining order to prevent the enforcement of family law orders issued 16 by King County
Superior Court. Dkt. No. 3. The Court DENIES the motion for the 17 reasons below.

The Court has liberally construed Harrison's filings, as it must for 18 pro se litigants, but even so
construed, the motion is DENIED for the reasons stated 19 below. 20 "Motions for temporary
restraining orders without notice and an opportunity 21 to be heard by the adverse party are
disfavored and will rarely be granted." 22 LCR 65(b). Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 65(b)
clarifies that courts may only 23 1 grant ex parte motions for temporary restraining orders if: "(A)
specific facts in an 2 affidavit or a verified complaint clearly show that immediate and irreparable
injury, 3 loss, or damage will result to the movant before the adverse party can be heard in 4
opposition; and (B) the movant's attorney [or movant] certifies in writing any efforts 5 made to
give notice and the reasons why it should not be required." Fed.

R. Civ. P. 6 65(b)(1). Harrison has failed to comply with this rule—this procedural failure alone 7
warrants denial of her motion. 8 Even if Harrison had complied with Rule 65(b)'s procedural
requirements, 9 the Court would deny the motion because Harrison has not shown a likelihood of
10 success on the merits. 11 "[I]njunctive relief [is] an extraordinary remedy that may only be
awarded 12 upon a clear showing that the plaintiff is entitled to such relief." *Winter v. Nat.*

Res. 13 Def. Council, Inc., 555 U.S. 7, 22 (2008). "The proper legal standard for preliminary 14
injunctive relief requires a party to demonstrate [1] 'that he is likely to succeed on 15 the merits,
[2] that he is likely to suffer irreparable harm in the absence of 16 preliminary relief, [3] that the
balance of equities tips in his favor, and [4] that an 17 injunction is in the public interest.'" *Stormans, Inc. v. Selecky*, 586 F.3d 1109, 1127 18 (9th Cir.

2009) (citing *Winter*, 555 U.S. at 20). 19 The Ninth Circuit takes a "sliding-scale" approach to
preliminary relief, 20 under which "serious questions going to the merits and a balance of
hardships that 21 tips sharply towards the plaintiffs can support issuance of [preliminary injunctive
22 relief], so long as the plaintiffs also show that there is a likelihood of irreparable 23 injury and
that the injunction is in the public interest." *Fraihat v. U.S. Immigr. & 1 Customs Enf't*, 16 F.4th
613, 635 (9th Cir.

2021) (cleaned up). This approach allows 2 a stronger showing of one Winter factor to offset a weaker showing of another. 3 *Planned Parenthood Great Nw., Hawaii, Alaska, Indiana, Kentucky v. Labrador*, 4 122 F.4th 825, 843–44 (9th Cir. 2024). 5 Harrison’s motion does not meaningfully address the first Winter factor— 6 whether she is likely to succeed on her claims.

The briefing includes only a few, 7 conclusory sentences on this point. Accordingly, Harrison has not met her burden 8 under Rule 65 for a temporary restraining order. See *All. for the Wild Rockies v. Cottrell*, 9 632 F.3d 1127, 1135 (9th Cir. 2011) (moving party must make “a showing 10 on all four prongs” under Winter to obtain relief.). 11 Several legal doctrines appear to preclude some or all of Harrison’s claims.

12 First, under the Rooker-Feldman doctrine, district courts lack subject matter 13 jurisdiction over cases brought by state-court losers complaining of injuries caused 14 by state-court judgments. *Miroth v. Cnty. of Trinity*, 136 F.4th 1141 (9th Cir. 2025). 15 Rooker-Feldman applies “when the federal plaintiff both asserts as her injury legal 16 error or errors by the state court and seeks as her remedy relief from the state court 17 judgment.” *Id.* at 1151 (quoting *Kougasian v. TMSL, Inc.*, 359 F.3d 1136 (9th Cir.

18 2004)). The Ninth Circuit has clarified that Rooker-Feldman applies when a federal 19 Plaintiff alleges a “legal error by the state court,” as opposed to a “wrongful act by 20 the adverse party” in the underlying, state-court litigation. *Id.* at 1150 (quotations 21 omitted). 22 Here, while Harrison alleges wrongful acts by the adverse party in the 23 underlying state-court litigation, she also alleges that the presiding judge 1 committed legal error, separate and apart from any wrongdoing by the adverse 2 party.

Indeed, she asserts that the presiding judge entered erroneous orders that 3 “were unsupported by the record and... lacking lawful foundation,” Dkt. No. 2 at 2, 4 and she asks this Court to enjoin those orders, *id.* at 24.

Accordingly, the Rooker- 5 Feldman doctrine likely applies to some—if not all—of Harrison’s claims, making 6 Harrison unlikely to succeed on the merits. 7 Next, to the extent the underlying state family law proceedings remain 8 ongoing, the Younger abstention doctrine may independently require this Court to 9 decline jurisdiction. See *Younger v. Harris*, 401 U.S. 37 (1971).

Federal courts must 10 abstain from interfering with ongoing state judicial proceedings that implicate 11 important state interests and provide an adequate opportunity to raise 12 constitutional challenges. See *ReadyLink Healthcare, Inc. v. State Comp. Ins. Fund*, 13 754 F.3d 754, 758 (9th Cir. 2014). Family law is a matter of paramount state 14 interest to which Younger may apply.

See *Laflam v. Hillman*, 2025 WL 1898922, at 15 *3 (W.D. Wash. July 9, 2025) (collecting cases) (explaining *Younger* applies to some, 16 but not all domestic relations proceedings). It is unclear whether the state 17 proceedings are still pending, so the Court does not resolve *Younger*'s applicability 18 at this time. But Harrison should address this issue in her response to the order to 19 show cause below.

20 Finally, Harrison fails to explain how her claims against Judge Monica K. 21 Cary can survive, given Judge Cary has judicial immunity. Judicial immunity is 22 “absolute immunity [that] insulates judges from charges of erroneous acts or 23 irregular action.” In *re Castillo*, 297 F.3d 940, 947 (9th Cir. 2002). “Judicial 1 immunity discourages collateral attacks on final judgments through civil suits, and 9 thus promotes the use of ‘appellate procedures as the standard system for correcting 3 ||judicial error.” Id. (quoting *Forrester v. White*, 484 U.S. 219, 225 (1988)).

It 4 recognizes that “[m]ost judicial mistakes or wrongs are open to correction through 5 ordinary mechanisms of review.” Id. (quoting *Forrester*, 484 U.S. at 225). While 6 there are exceptions to judicial immunity, Harrison’s motion fails to argue that any 7 exception applies to her case. 8 Because Harrison failed to meet her burden of showing that she is likely to 9 succeed on her claims, and because she failed to meet the requirements of Rule 10 65(b), an ex parte temporary restraining order is inappropriate.

Accordingly, 11 || Harrison’s motion is DENIED. Dkt. No. 3. 12 Given the Court’s concerns identified above about the whether Harrison can 13 even maintain suit, Harrison is ORDERED TO SHOW CAUSE, in writing within || TWENTY-ONE (21) days of this order why this case should not be dismissed for 15 lack of subject matter jurisdiction. Failure to timely respond may result in dismissal 16 || of this action.

17 The Clerk is directed to calendar the response deadline on the Court’s docket. 18 19 Dated this 4th day of February, 2026. 20 21 C Kal N. Whitehead United States District Judge 22 23