

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF
FLORIDA, TAMPA DIVISION

Deanthony A. Jackson, Robert Davis, Norman Sawyers, and Calvin
Martin v. Judge Stephen Whyte, et al.

Jackson v. Whyte · No. 8:26-cv-152-JLB-AAS · Decided February 11, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Middle District of Florida dismissed without prejudice a single § 1983 complaint filed jointly by four pretrial detainees. The court held that the Prison Litigation Reform Act requires each prisoner to file a separate action and pay the full filing fee or individually seek in forma pauperis status. The court also denied the motion to initiate a class action because pro se prisoners may not represent other inmates.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Middle District of Florida, Tampa Division
WRITING FOR THE COURT	John L. Badalamenti
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Middle District of Florida, Tampa Division
DECIDED	February 11, 2026
DOCKET	8:26-cv-152-JLB-AAS
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Multiple pretrial detainees filed a single pro se 42 U.S.C. § 1983 complaint and moved to initiate a class action. The district court dismissed the complaint without prejudice and denied the class-action motion.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unknown; district court order with no reporter or neutral citation.
PARTIES	Deanthony A. Jackson, Robert Davis, Norman Sawyers, Calvin Martin v. Judge Stephen Whyte, et al.

TOPICS

- class actions
- civil procedure
- section 1983
- prisoners rights

PRACTICE AREAS

Civil procedure

Prisoner civil rights

Federal courts

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether multiple prisoners may join their claims in one action to avoid separate filing-fee obligations under the Prison Litigation Reform Act.
2. Whether pro se prisoners may represent other prisoners in a class action.
3. Whether the jointly filed complaint should be dismissed without prejudice and the class-action motion denied.

HOLDINGS

1. Multiple prisoners may not avoid payment of the filing fee by joining their claims in a single action; each prisoner must file a separate action and remain responsible for the full filing fee or individually seek in forma pauperis status.
2. A pro se prisoner may not represent the interests of other prisoners in a class action.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Thus, to comply with the PLRA, each prisoner must file a separate action in which he is responsible for the full filing fee.” (at 1)

“a pro se plaintiff may not represent the interests of other prisoners.” (at 1-2)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Deanthony Jackson, Robert Davis, Norman Sawyers, and Calvin Martin were pretrial detainees at Manatee County Jail who filed one pro se complaint under 42 U.S.C. § 1983. Their allegations challenged their ongoing criminal proceedings and included claims involving speedy-trial violations, unlawful detention, access to discovery, conspiracy, and ineffective assistance of counsel. Plaintiffs neither paid the filing fee nor sought in forma pauperis status, and they also moved to initiate a class action on behalf of themselves and other detainees.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiffs, who were pretrial detainees at Manatee County Jail, jointly filed a civil-rights complaint challenging aspects of their separate criminal proceedings. They did not pay the filing fee or move to proceed in forma pauperis. The district court dismissed the complaint without prejudice because the Prison Litigation Reform Act does not permit multiple prisoners to join claims in one action to avoid separate filing-fee obligations, and denied the request to initiate a class action because a pro se prisoner cannot represent other prisoners.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Hubbard v. Haley, 262 F.3d 1194, 1198 (11th Cir. 2001)
- Wallace v. Smith, 145 F. App'x 300, 302 (11th Cir. 2005) (per curiam)
- Oxendine v. Williams, 509 F.2d 1405, 1407 (4th Cir. 1975)

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