

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF KANSAS

James C. Strader v. City Confidential, et al.

No. 25-3260-JWL, United States District Court for the District of Kansas (February 4, 2026)

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the District of Kansas orders pro se prisoner James C. Strader to show cause why his § 1983 action should not be dismissed. The court concludes that the complaint does not plausibly allege that any defendant acted under color of state law or violated a federal constitutional right, and that the asserted defamation claims do not support federal jurisdiction. Plaintiff is given until March 6, 2026, to respond.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the District of Kansas
WRITING FOR THE COURT	John W. Lungstrum
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the District of Kansas
DECIDED	February 4, 2026
DOCKET	25-3260-JWL
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	A state prisoner proceeding pro se filed a complaint under 42 U.S.C. § 1983. After statutorily required screening, the court found that the complaint was subject to dismissal but gave plaintiff time to show cause why the action should not be dismissed.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A, the court liberally construed the pro se complaint, accepted well-pleaded allegations as true, and assessed whether the complaint was frivolous, malicious, failed to state a plausible claim, or sought relief from an immune defendant. Conclusory allegations and legal conclusions were insufficient, and the complaint had to contain enough factual matter to state a plausible claim for relief.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unknown; memorandum and order to show cause from a federal district court.
PARTIES	James C. Strader v. City Confidential, A&E Network, Unknown networks that showed the documentary, Unknown individuals who profited from the documentary, Unknown Kansas officials

TOPICS

section 1983 civil rights pleadings civil procedure defamation

PRACTICE AREAS

Civil rights Federal civil procedure Constitutional law Defamation

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the complaint plausibly alleged that any defendant acted under color of state law for purposes of 42 U.S.C. § 1983.
2. Whether the complaint identified a federal constitutional or statutory right allegedly violated by a named defendant.
3. Whether plaintiff's defamation claims provided a basis for federal-question or supplemental jurisdiction.
4. Whether plaintiff stated a plausible claim under Bivens.
5. Whether plaintiff's references to 28 U.S.C. §§ 42 and 43 supplied a federal jurisdictional or substantive basis for his claims.

HOLDINGS

1. The complaint failed to state a plausible § 1983 claim because it did not allege facts showing that any defendant acted under color of state law.
2. The complaint failed to state a plausible § 1983 claim because it did not identify a federal constitutional or statutory right allegedly violated by a named defendant.
3. Plaintiff's defamation claims were state-law claims and could not support federal-question jurisdiction; because the complaint stated no claim within the court's original jurisdiction, the court could not exercise supplemental jurisdiction over them.
4. Plaintiff failed to state a plausible Bivens claim because he named no federal agents and did not plead facts showing a violation of the Bill of Rights.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"A defendant acts "under color of state law" when he or she "exercise[s] power 'possessed by virtue of state law and made possible only because the wrongdoer is clothed with the authority of state law.'"" (Section III.a)

"Harm to one's reputation does not implicate deprivation of a liberty or property interest under the Constitution." (Section III.b)

"This action is subject to dismissal in its entirety." (Section IV)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff alleged that a City Confidential documentary episode about Benjamin Appleby falsely identified him as a child molester, used his name, and displayed a photograph allegedly depicting him. He alleged that he had

never been convicted of a crime against a child and had not authorized the documentary. He asserted claims for false information, slander, and dissemination of false information, but expressly stated that he did not seek money damages.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff filed a civil-rights complaint alleging that a television documentary falsely portrayed him as a child molester and asserting claims characterized as life endangerment by false information, slander, and false information disseminated through prison channels and LexisNexis. The court screened the complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A and concluded that plaintiff had not plausibly alleged state action, a violation of a federal right, or another basis for federal jurisdiction. The court did not dismiss immediately; it ordered plaintiff to show cause by March 6, 2026, why the action should not be dismissed.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Erickson v. Pardus, 551 U.S. 89, 94 (2007)
- Anderson v. Blake, 469 F.3d 910, 913 (10th Cir. 2006)
- Whitney v. New Mexico, 113 F.3d 1170, 1173-74 (10th Cir. 1997)
- West v. Atkins, 487 U.S. 42, 48-49 (1988)
- Northington v. Jackson, 973 F.2d 1518, 1523 (10th Cir. 1992)
- Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 555, 558, 570 (2007)
- Hall v. Bellmon, 935 F.2d 1106, 1110 (10th Cir. 1991)
- Smith v. United States, 561 F.3d 1090, 1098 (10th Cir. 2009)
- Robbins v. Okla., 519 F.3d 1242, 1247 (10th Cir. 2008)
- Brentwood Academy v. Tenn. Secondary Athletic Ass'n, 531 U.S. 288, 294-96 (2001)
- Blessing v. Freestone, 520 U.S. 329, 340 (1997)
- Golden State Transit Corp. v. Los Angeles, 493 U.S. 103, 106 (1989)
- Nasious v. Two Unknown B.I.C.E. Agents, at Arapahoe County Justice Center, 492 F.3d 1158, 1163 (10th Cir. 2007)
- Ellingburg v. Lucas, 518 F.2d 1196, 1197 (8th Cir. 1975)
- Morey v. Indep. School Dist., 429 F.2d 428 (8th Cir. 1970)
- Cotton v. Simmons, 23 F. App'x 994, 2002 WL 93142 (10th Cir. 2002)
- Marcus v. Swanson, 317 Kan. 752, 755-56 (2023)
- Bivens v. Six Unknown Named Agents of Fed. Bureau of Narcotics, 403 U.S. 388, 397 (1971)
- Logsdon v. U.S. Marshal Serv., 91 F.4th 1352, 1355 (10th Cir. 2024)
- Rowland v. Matevousian, 121 F.4th 1237, 1241-42 (10th Cir. 2024)

