

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Pennington v. Nationstar Mortgage LLC

Pennington v. Nationstar Mortgage LLC · No. Civil Action No. 25-00568 (AHA) · Decided January 20, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the District of Columbia dismissed Danielle Pennington’s claims concerning the foreclosure of her property and her subsequent eviction. The court held that the complaint failed to satisfy Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 8 and that claims seeking review of the D.C. Superior Court foreclosure and eviction proceedings were barred by the Rooker-Feldman doctrine.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the District of Columbia
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Amir H. Ali
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the District of Columbia
DECIDED	January 20, 2026
DOCKET	Civil Action No. 25-00568 (AHA)
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff brought a federal action asserting claims arising from a prior District of Columbia foreclosure and eviction and seeking damages, injunctive relief, declaratory relief, and quiet title. Several defendants moved to dismiss for lack of subject matter jurisdiction and failure to state a claim.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	On a motion to dismiss, the court accepts well-pleaded factual allegations as true and draws reasonable inferences in the plaintiff's favor, while requiring factual matter sufficient to provide fair notice and permit an inference of more than the mere possibility of misconduct. Subject matter jurisdiction may be dismissed under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(h)(3).
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	published district court memorandum opinion
PARTIES	Danielle Pennington v. Nationstar Mortgage LLC, Westcor Land Title Insurance Company, Sogol Irene Plagany, Adetunji Darcy Adefehiniti, Justin Fasano, First Hand Land, Forge Trust Co., ServiceLink, LLC, other defendants

TOPICS

motions to dismiss

pleadings

subject matter jurisdiction

foreclosure

eviction

PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure

real estate

foreclosure

eviction

consumer protection

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the complaint complied with Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 8(a)'s requirement of a short and plain statement providing defendants fair notice of the claims and grounds for relief.
2. Whether the district court had subject matter jurisdiction under the Rooker-Feldman doctrine over claims seeking to challenge or obtain relief from the D.C. Superior Court foreclosure and eviction proceedings or judgments.

HOLDINGS

1. The complaint failed to comply with Rule 8 because most counts consisted of conclusory one-sentence assertions that did not identify the liable defendants or explain the factual grounds for the claims, and the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act count did not specify the alleged practices, misrepresentations, disclosures, or timing and location of the events.
2. To the extent Pennington's claims sought review of, relief from, or invalidation of the D.C. Superior Court foreclosure and eviction proceedings or judgments, the claims were barred by the Rooker-Feldman doctrine.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“The federal rules require a complaint to contain “a short and plain statement of the claim showing that the pleader is entitled to relief.”” (at 2)

“Under the Rooker-Feldman doctrine, federal district courts may not hear “cases that amount to the functional equivalent of an appeal from a state court.”” (at 4)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Pennington purchased a Washington, D.C., property in 2010 with a secured mortgage and later defaulted. Nationstar obtained a foreclosure judgment, the D.C. Superior Court ratified the sale, and the foreclosure case was closed. Nationstar then pursued eviction proceedings, First Hand Land became the plaintiff after acquiring the property, and the eviction ultimately succeeded. Pennington's federal complaint alleged misconduct in the foreclosure and eviction and asserted constitutional, debt-collection, and other claims.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Nationstar obtained a foreclosure judgment in the D.C. Superior Court in 2017; the sale was ratified and the foreclosure proceeding was closed in 2019. Nationstar later initiated eviction proceedings, which First Hand

Land took over and ultimately won, resulting in execution of a writ in 2025. Pennington then filed this federal action, and the district court granted the motions to dismiss and dismissed the case in its entirety.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- *Banneker Ventures, LLC v. Graham*, 798 F.3d 1119, 1129 (D.C. Cir. 2015)
- *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009)
- *Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 555 (2007)
- *Ciralsky v. CIA*, 355 F.3d 661, 669 (D.C. Cir. 2004)
- *Dali v. Walter Reed Nat'l Mil. Med. Ctr.*, No. 24-cv-3313, 2025 WL 326575, at *1 (D.D.C. Jan. 29, 2025)
- *Ho v. Garland*, 106 F.4th 47, 50 (D.C. Cir. 2024)
- *Brown v. Whole Foods Mkt. Grp., Inc.*, 789 F.3d 146, 152 (D.C. Cir. 2015)
- *Jones v. Horne*, 634 F.3d 588, 596 (D.C. Cir. 2011)
- *Atherton v. D.C. Off. of Mayor*, 567 F.3d 672, 681–82 (D.C. Cir. 2009)
- *Kokkonen v. Guardian Life Ins. Co. of Am.*, 511 U.S. 375, 377 (1994)
- *Auster v. Ghana Airways Ltd.*, 514 F.3d 44, 48 (D.C. Cir. 2008)
- *Gray v. Poole*, 275 F.3d 1113, 1119 (D.C. Cir. 2002)
- *Stanton v. D.C. Court of Appeals*, 127 F.3d 72, 75 (D.C. Cir. 1997)
- *Johnson v. De Grandy*, 512 U.S. 997, 1005–1006 (1994)
- *Laverpool v. Taylor Bean & Whitaker Reo LLC*, 229 F. Supp. 3d 5, 16 (D.D.C. 2017)
- *Nationstar Mortgage, LLC v. Danielle Pennington*, No. 2015-CA-000244-R(RP) (D.C. Super. Ct. Nov. 6, 2017)
- *Nationstar Mortgage, LLC v. Danielle Pennington*, No. 2015-CA-000244-R(RP) (D.C. Super. Ct. Apr. 11, 2019)

OPINION

PER CURIAM.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA DANIELLE PENNINGTON, Plaintiff, Civil Action No. 25-00568 (AHA) v. NATIONSTAR MORTGAGE LLC, et al., Defendants. Memorandum Opinion Danielle Pennington sues several people and companies involved in the foreclosure on and her eviction from a property. She asserts various claims that appear to be related to the foreclosure and eviction proceedings in D.C.

Superior Court, and requests damages, as well as various forms of injunctive and declaratory relief, including quiet title to the property. Several defendants move to dismiss the complaint,

arguing that this court lacks jurisdiction to hear these claims and that Pennington fails to state a claim.

For the reasons below, the court dismisses the case. I. Background¹ In 2010, Pennington bought the property at 4908 Quarles St. NE in Washington, D.C. with a secured mortgage. See ECF No. 1 ¶ 18; ECF No. 1-2 at 2–7.

After she defaulted on her mortgage loan, defendant Nationstar Mortgage LLC started foreclosure proceedings and the D.C. Superior Court granted judgment to Nationstar in November 2017. Id. ¶¶ 5, 19; Order Granting Plaintiff’s Motion For Judgment On The Pleadings And Decree For Sale Of Real Property, Nationstar 1 As required at the pleading stage, the court accepts the complaint’s well-pled factual allegations and draws all reasonable inferences in Pennington’s favor.

Banneker Ventures, LLC v. Graham, 798 F.3d 1119, 1129 (D.C. Cir. 2015). Mortgage, LLC v. Danielle Pennington, No. 2015-CA-000244-R(RP) (D.C. Super. Ct. Nov. 6, 2017). Nationstar appears to have bought the property, and the Superior Court ratified the sale and closed the foreclosure proceeding in 2019. See ECF No. 1-2 at 18; Order Granting Motion To Ratify Sale Of Real Property, Nationstar Mortgage, LLC v. Danielle Pennington, No. 2015-CA- 000244-R(RP) (D.C.

Super. Ct. Apr. 11, 2019); Order Granting Motion To Ratify Accounting, Release The Bond, And Close The Case, Nationstar Mortgage, LLC v. Danielle Pennington, No. 2015-CA-000244-R(RP) (D.C. Super. Ct. Jun. 21, 2019). Nationstar then filed an action in Superior Court to evict Pennington and sold the property to First Hand Land, who subsequently took over the litigation and prevailed.

See ECF No. 1-2 at 23–25; Oral Order Granting Motion to Substitute, First Hand Land, LLC v. Danielle Pennington, No. 2019-LTB-011768 (D.C. Super. Ct. Apr. 19, 2024); Writ Executed, First Hand Land, LLC v. Danielle Pennington, No. 2019-LTB- 011768 (D.C. Super. Ct. May 23, 2025). Pennington now files this federal lawsuit asserting various claims that appear to be related to the foreclosure and eviction proceedings or judgments.

Defendants Nationstar, Westcor Land Title Insurance Company, Sogol Irene Plagany, Adetunji Darcy Adefehiniti, Justin Fasano, First Hand Land, Forge Trust Co., and ServiceLink, LLC move to dismiss the complaint for lack of subject matter jurisdiction and failure to state a claim. ECF Nos. 13, 18, 21, 22, 36, 38. II. Discussion The court concludes that Pennington’s case must be dismissed for failure to satisfy Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 8 and because, to the extent Pennington seeks relief from the Superior Court foreclosure and eviction proceedings or judgments, this court lacks jurisdiction to provide it.

The federal rules require a complaint to contain “a short and plain statement of the claim showing that the pleader is entitled to relief.” Fed. R. Civ. P. 8(a)(2). This “does not require 2 ‘detailed

factual allegations,’ but it demands more than an unadorned, the-defendant-unlawfully- harmed-me accusation.” *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009) (quoting *Bell Atl.*

Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 555 (2007)). This ensures the defendant has “notice of what the claim is and the grounds upon which it rests.” *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 555 (cleaned up). A court may dismiss a complaint that fails to meet these requirements upon motion or on its own accord. See Fed. R. Civ. P. 41(b); see also *Ciralsky v. CIA*, 355 F.3d 661, 669 (D.C.

Cir. 2004) (“Rule 41(b) authorizes the court to dismiss either a claim or an action because of the plaintiff’s failure to comply with the Federal Rules.”); *Dali v. Walter Reed Nat’l Mil. Med. Ctr.*, No. 24-cv-3313, 2025 WL 326575, at *1 (D.D.C. Jan. 29, 2025) (observing that dismissals under Rule 8(a) “may be ordered on motion or sua sponte by the court”).

In cases like this involving an unrepresented or “pro se” litigant, the court is careful to give extra leeway. The court evaluates the complaint “in light of all filings, including filings responsive to a motion to dismiss.” *Ho v. Garland*, 106 F.4th 47, 50 (D.C. Cir. 2024) (quotation marks omitted) (quoting *Brown v. Whole Foods Mkt. Grp., Inc.*, 789 F.3d 146, 152 (D.C.

Cir. 2015)). Of course, an unrepresented plaintiff still “must plead factual matter that permits the court to infer more than the mere possibility of misconduct.” *Jones v. Horne*, 634 F.3d 588, 596 (D.C. Cir. 2011) (quotation marks omitted) (quoting *Atherton v. D.C. Off. of Mayor*, 567 F.3d 672, 681–82 (D.C. Cir. 2009)). While “detailed factual allegations” are not necessary, the plaintiff must furnish “more than labels and conclusions” or “a formulaic recitation of the elements of a cause of action.” *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 555.

Pennington’s allegations fail to provide the defendants with notice of the claims against them. Pennington lists fourteen counts against fourteen named defendants and several unnamed defendants. ECF No. 1 at 1–9. Counts one through thirteen each consist of one sentence, asserting 3 a legal violation, without any further explanation. *Id.* at 7–9; see, e.g., *id.* ¶ 31 (“By proceeding with eviction based on fraudulent documents, Defendants violated Plaintiff’s constitutional right to due process and fair proceedings.”).

None of these counts identify which defendants are liable, failing to give any defendant “notice of what the claim is and the grounds upon which it rests.” Only count fourteen identifies specific defendants. *Id.* ¶ 39 (“Defendants, Mr. Cooper d/b/a Nationstar Mortgage and Orleans PC (via Defendant Sogol Irene Plagany), acting as ‘debt collectors’ under 15 U.S.C. § 1692a(6), attempted to collect a mortgage or purported debt from plaintiff.”).

This count asserts that those defendants “failed to comply with the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act (FDPA) and Regulation F (12 CFR Part 1006) by failing to provide required disclosures, engaging in harassing or deceptive practices, and misrepresenting the nature of the debt and

foreclosure status.” Id. ¶ 40. But Pennington does not describe what practices the defendants engaged in, what misrepresentations they made, or what disclosures they failed to provide.

Nor does the complaint identify when or where these events occurred. Pennington’s claims accordingly fail to provide the “short and plain statement” required by Rule 8.2 Pennington’s claims are also problematic because “[f]ederal courts are courts of limited jurisdiction.” *Kokkonen v. Guardian Life Ins. Co. of Am.*, 511 U.S. 375, 377 (1994). A party seeking relief in the district court must at least plead facts that bring the suit within the court’s jurisdiction.

See Fed. R. Civ. P. 8(a)(1). And “[w]hen a court lacks subject matter jurisdiction, it 2 Pennington attaches numerous documents to her complaint including emails, deeds, court filings, screenshots, and loan documents. See ECF Nos. 1-2-1-3.

However, unexplained attachments cannot cure a complaint’s deficiencies. See *Nichols v. Vilsack*, No. 13-cv-01502, 2015 WL 9581799, at *1 (D.D.C. Dec. 30, 2015) (observing that even in pro se cases, “courts are not responsible for hunting through the record in search of material potentially helpful to a party’s case,” and “where undifferentiated documents are submitted along with a complaint that is itself lacking in detail, asking the Court to comb through the attachments to discern the substance of the plaintiff’s claims risks... denying the defendant fair notice and an opportunity to respond to identifiable allegations of wrongdoing”).

4 must dismiss the case.” *Auster v. Ghana Airways Ltd.*, 514 F.3d 44, 48 (D.C. Cir. 2008) (citing Fed. R. Civ. P. 12(h)(3)). To the extent Pennington’s claims attempt to re-litigate the foreclosure on the property, this court does not have subject matter jurisdiction to consider them.

Under the Rooker-Feldman doctrine, federal district courts may not hear “cases that amount to the functional equivalent of an appeal from a state court.” *Gray v. Poole*, 275 F.3d 1113, 1119 (D.C. Cir. 2002). This prevents federal courts from considering issues that are “so inextricably intertwined with a state court decision that the district court is in essence being called upon to review the state-court decision.” *Stanton v. D.C.*

Court of Appeals, 127 F.3d 72, 75 (D.C. Cir. 1997) (quotation marks and citation omitted). Federal jurisdiction is barred even when the plaintiff claims “that the state judgment itself violates the [plaintiff’s] federal rights.” *Johnson v. De Grandy*, 512 U.S. 997, 1005–1006 (1994).

Here, the D.C. Superior Court decreed the foreclosure sale of the property and ratified its subsequent sale. Order Granting Plaintiff’s Motion For Judgment On The Pleadings And Decree For Sale Of Real Property, *Nationstar Mortgage, LLC v. Danielle Pennington*, No. 2015-CA-000244-R(RP) (D.C. Super. Ct. Nov. 6, 2017); Order Granting Motion To Ratify Sale Of Real Property, *Nationstar Mortgage, LLC v. Danielle Pennington*, No. 2015-CA-000244- R(RP) (D.C.

Super. Ct. Apr. 11, 2019). Pennington's claims appear to challenge the merits of these decisions insofar as they allege that the foreclosure involved misconduct that renders it invalid. See, e.g., ECF No. 1 ¶ 35 ("Defendants entered into an agreement to misrepresent ownership and foreclose on Plaintiff's Property through deceptive and illegal means."). And her claims related to her eviction appear to be premised on the invalidity of the foreclosure.

See id. ¶ 27 ("The Plaintiff's due process rights under the Fourteenth Amendment were violated when wrongful foreclosure and eviction proceedings were pursued without proper notice or valid standing."). To the extent Pennington's claims ask this court to review the propriety of the foreclosure, they are barred by 5 Rooker-Feldman. See *Laverpool v. Taylor Bean & Whitaker Reo LLC*, 229 F. Supp. 3d 5, 16 (D.D.C.

2017) (concluding that "because Plaintiff is invoking the United States Constitution and other federal statutes to challenge the propriety of the judicial foreclosure on his property, Plaintiff's claims are barred by the Rooker-Feldman doctrine").³ Because Pennington's complaint fails to comply with Rule 8, and any possible claims appear to be barred by Rooker-Feldman, the court dismisses the complaint in its entirety.

III. Conclusion For these reasons, the court grants the motions to dismiss and dismisses the matter as to all defendants. A separate order accompanies this memorandum opinion. AMIR H. ALI United States District Judge Date: January 20, 2026 ³ In her opposition to the motions to dismiss, Pennington states that she is not challenging state court proceedings and is instead challenging certain "2024-2025 acts" causing her "fresh injury." ECF No. 48 at 7.

To the extent the opposition asserts new claims or allegations, they are conclusory and fail to satisfy Rule 8. The opposition also appears to challenge the Superior Court's substitution of First Hand Land for Nationstar in Pennington's eviction proceeding, but this claim is barred by Rooker-Feldman for the reasons stated. ⁶