

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

Garrison v. U.S. Judicial Commission, et al.

Garrison · No. 25-cv-00866-EKL · Decided December 22, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Northern District of California grants Steve Garrison’s application to proceed in forma pauperis and screens his complaint. The court dismisses the action with prejudice and without leave to amend because the claims fail to state a claim, are untimely, and are barred by judicial immunity. The Clerk is directed to close and unseal the case.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Northern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Eumi K. Lee
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Northern District of California
DECIDED	December 22, 2025
DOCKET	25-cv-00866-EKL
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff proceeding in forma pauperis filed claims arising from the dismissal of three prior federal actions. The district court screened the complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2) and dismissed it with prejudice and without leave to amend.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court screened the in forma pauperis complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2), dismissing claims that were frivolous or malicious, failed to state a claim, or sought monetary relief from an immune defendant. The court also considered whether amendment would be futile.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unknown; district court order with no reporter citation.
PARTIES	Steve Garrison v. U.S. Judicial Commission, et al.

TOPICS

- civil procedure
- motions to dismiss
- statute of limitations
- civil rights
- remedies

PRACTICE AREAS

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the complaint stated plausible claims under the 1964 Civil Rights Act, RICO, or the Trafficking Victims Protection Act.
2. Whether the claims arising from the dismissal of Garrison's prior cases were barred by applicable statutes of limitations.
3. Whether judicial immunity barred Garrison's claims for damages and retrospective injunctive relief against the judges and the entity allegedly vicariously liable for their conduct.
4. Whether dismissal should be without leave to amend because amendment would be futile.

HOLDINGS

1. The complaint failed to state a plausible claim under any of the asserted federal statutes because it alleged no actionable discrimination, no RICO enterprise, and no facts showing that Garrison was a victim of human trafficking.
2. The claims arising from dismissal of the Brown and Davila cases were time-barred, and the RICO and TVPA claims arising from dismissal of the Trump case were also time-barred.
3. Judicial immunity barred Garrison's claims for monetary damages and retrospective injunctive relief based on the judges' dismissal of his prior cases.
4. Dismissal without leave to amend was warranted because amendment would be futile.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Judges and those performing judge-like functions are absolutely immune from damage liability for acts performed in their official capacities.” (at 4)

“If no amendment would allow the complaint to withstand dismissal as a matter of law, courts consider amendment futile.” (at 5)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Garrison alleged that three cases he previously filed in the Northern District of California were dismissed without issuance or service of summonses, allegedly in violation of Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 4. He asserted claims under the 1964 Civil Rights Act, RICO, and the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, seeking \$2.5 billion in damages and an injunction concerning service of summonses in the prior cases. The defendants included the U.S. Judicial Commission, Judge Yvonne Gonzalez Rogers, and Judge James Donato.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Garrison alleged that three prior cases had been improperly dismissed without issuance or service of summonses and sought damages and injunctive relief. The court granted his application to proceed in forma pauperis, screened the complaint, and dismissed the action for failure to state a claim, untimeliness, and judicial immunity. The court denied leave to amend, directed the clerk to close the case, and ordered the record unsealed.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Garrison v. Brown, No. 11-cv-1901 (N.D. Cal.)
- Garrison v. Davila, No. 13-cv-5862 (N.D. Cal.)
- Garrison v. Trump, No. 17-cv-5104 (N.D. Cal.)
- Lopez v. Smith, 203 F.3d 1122, 1126-1127 (9th Cir. 2000) (en banc)
- Boyle v. United States, 556 U.S. 938, 946 (2009)
- Doan v. Singh, 617 F. App'x 684, 686 (9th Cir. 2015)
- Rivera v. Peri & Sons Farms, Inc., 735 F.3d 892, 902 (9th Cir. 2013)
- Lund v. Cowan, 5 F.4th 964, 970-973 (9th Cir. 2021), cert. denied, 142 S. Ct. 900 (2022)
- Ashelman v. Pope, 793 F.2d 1072, 1075 (9th Cir. 1986) (en banc)
- Foman v. Davis, 371 U.S. 178, 182 (1962)
- Schwartz v. Miller, 153 F.4th 918, 932 (9th Cir. 2025)
- Kroessler v. CVS Health Corp., 977 F.3d 803, 815 (9th Cir. 2020)
- Lamoon, Inc. v. Lamour Nail Prods., Inc., 373 F. App'x 795, 797 (9th Cir. 2010)
- Hoang v. Bank of Am., N.A., 910 F.3d 1096, 1103 (9th Cir. 2018)
- Ezor v. Duffy-Lewis, 857 F. App'x 412, 413 (9th Cir. 2021)
- Keliihuluhulu v. Strance, 692 F. App'x 406, 407 (9th Cir. 2017)
- Middleton v. Martingale Investments, LLC, 621 F. App'x 396, 396-397 (9th Cir. 2015)
- United States v. Aguilar, 782 F.3d 1101, 1103 n.1 (9th Cir. 2015)

OPINION

Garrison

PER CURIAM.

1 2 3

4 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

5 NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

6 7 STEVE GARRISON, Case No. 25-cv-00866-EKL 8 Plaintiff,

ORDER DISMISSING CASE

9 v. WITHOUT LEAVE TO AMEND

10 U.S. JUDICIAL COMMISSION, et al., Re: Dkt. Nos. 1, 2 Defendants. 11 12 13 Self-
represented Plaintiff Steve Garrison filed this action and an application to proceed in 14 forma
pauperis. See ECF No. 1 (“Complaint”), No. 2 (“IFP Application”). Having considered 15
Plaintiff’s IFP application, the application is GRANTED. In this Order, the Court screens the 16
complaint and finds that it must be dismissed with prejudice for failure to state a claim.

17 I. BACKGROUND

18 Garrison claims that three cases he previously filed in the Northern District of California 19
“were dismissed [without] a summons” and “in violation of FRCP 4.” Compl. at 3-4. Garrison 20
contends that issuance and service of a summons was mandatory in his prior cases, id. at 4, and 21
that only a grand jury can dismiss a case, id. at 7. Garrison seeks \$2.5 billion in damages, ECF
22 No. 1-1, and an injunction ordering service of the summons in the prior cases, see Compl. at 7.
23 Garrison identifies three prior cases that, in his view, were improperly dismissed. The first 24
case, *Garrison v. Brown*, No. 11-cv-1901 (N.D. Cal.), was dismissed on January 8, 2013. On
25 January 27, 2014, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed dismissal, holding that the
district

26 court “properly dismissed Garrison’s action because Garrison failed to allege sufficient facts in
his 27 Second Amended Complaint showing that defendants violated his constitutional rights.”
Mem. at 1 *Garrison v. Davila*, No. 13-cv-5862 (N.D. Cal.), was initially dismissed because
Garrison asserted 2 claims against defendants who were immune from liability. Order of Dismissal
at 1, ECF No. 26. 3 The case was finally dismissed on November 5, 2014, for failure to prosecute
after Garrison failed 4 to amend his complaint. Id. at 4. The third case, *Garrison v. Trump*, No. 17-
cv-5104 (N.D. Cal.), 5 was dismissed on December 15, 2017, after Garrison became non-
responsive and failed to update 6 his address as required by Civil Local Rule 3-11. Order of
Dismissal, ECF No. 8. 7 In his complaint, Garrison asserts claims under the 1964 Civil Rights Act,
the Racketeer 8 Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (“RICO”), and 22 U.S.C. § 7102.1
These claims are 9 brought against the “U.S. Judicial Commission,” District Judge Yvonne
Gonzalez Rogers, and 10 District Judge James Donato. The “U.S. Judicial Commission” is not a
real entity, and the 11 complaint includes only one conclusory allegation that the Commission is
“responsible” for his 12 cases being dismissed. Compl. at 4. Judge Gonzalez Rogers presided over
Garrison’s Davila and 13 Trump cases. The complaint lacks allegations against Judge Donato, who
did not preside over any 14 case referenced in the complaint.2

15 II. DISCUSSION

16 Section 1915(e)(2) requires the Court to screen complaints filed by persons proceeding in
17 forma pauperis. The Court must identify any cognizable claims, and dismiss claims that are 18
frivolous or malicious, fail to state a claim on which relief may be granted, or seek monetary relief
19 against a defendant who is immune from such relief. 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B); see also *Lopez*
v. 20 *Smith*, 203 F.3d 1122, 1126-27 (9th Cir. 2000) (en banc). 21 Here, the Court finds that the
complaint must be dismissed for three reasons: for failure to 22 state a claim, because Garrison’s
claims are untimely, and because his claims are barred by 23 judicial immunity. 24 25 1 Garrison
does not specify which title of the 1964 Civil Rights Act he is invoking, and the Court cannot
identify any title that may be relevant to Garrison’s allegations. Separately, the statutory 26
provision that Garrison cites, 22 U.S.C. § 7102, does not provide a private right of action. Rather,
it defines certain terms that are used in other statutes. Because Garrison references “human 27

trafficking” in the complaint, see Compl. at 5, the Court infers that Garrison seeks to bring a claim under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, 18 U.S.C. § 1595 (“TVPA”). 1 First, the complaint does not allege any facts that plausibly state a claim under the 1964 2 Civil Rights Act, RICO, or the TVPA. Garrison does not allege any form of discrimination that 3 could give rise to a claim under any title of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Garrison does not allege an 4 enterprise as required for his RICO claim. See *Boyle v. United States*, 556 U.S. 938, 946 (2009) 5 (stating requirements for a RICO enterprise); *Doan v. Singh*, 617 F. App’x 684, 686 (9th Cir. 6 2015) (affirming dismissal where plaintiff failed to allege “how Defendants associated together for 7 a common purpose”). Finally, Garrison does not allege that he is a victim of human trafficking as 8 required for his TVPA claim. See 18 U.S.C. 1595(a) (providing a civil remedy for victims of 9 trafficking). 10 Second, with one possible exception, Garrison’s claims are untimely. See *Rivera v. Peri & 11 Sons Farms, Inc.*, 735 F.3d 892, 902 (9th Cir. 2013) (holding that dismissal is appropriate when 12 the expiration of the limitations period is “apparent on the face of the complaint”). TVPA claims 13 must be brought within “10 years after the cause of action arose,” 18 U.S.C. 1595(c)(1), which is 14 the longest limitations period of the claims Garrison asserts here.³ The complaint was filed on

15 January 27, 2025, which is more than ten years after the Davila and Brown cases were dismissed.⁴

16 Therefore, all Garrison’s claims arising from dismissal of the Davila and Brown cases are time-
17 barred. The Trump case was dismissed more than seven years before this action was filed, thus
18 Garrison’s RICO and TVPA claims arising from dismissal of that case are time-barred. 19
Third, because Garrison seeks monetary damages and retrospective injunctive relief, his 20 claims
are barred by judicial immunity. *Lund v. Cowan*, 5 F.4th 964, 970, 973 (9th Cir. 2021), 21 cert.
denied, 142 S. Ct. 900 (2022); see also *Ashelman v. Pope*, 793 F.2d 1072, 1075 (9th Cir. 22 1986)
(en banc) (“Judges and those performing judge-like functions are absolutely immune from 23 24 3
“The statute of limitations for civil RICO actions is four years.” *Pincay v. Andrews*, 238 F.3d 25
1106, 1108 (9th Cir. 2001). The statutes of limitations for claims under the 1964 Civil Rights Act
vary, but no relevant limitations period exceeds four years. 26 4 The Court may take judicial
notice of facts that are apparent from the dockets in the prior cases – including dismissal dates –
because those cases give rise to the claims here. See *United States v. 27 Aguilar*, 782 F.3d 1101,
1103 n.1 (9th Cir. 2015) (Courts “may take notice of proceedings in other 1 damage liability for
acts performed in their official capacities.”). Judicial immunity applies to 2 judicial acts, and the
dismissal of a case is a quintessential judicial act entitled to immunity. See 3 *Lund*, 5 F.4th at 971
(discussing factors used to determine whether an act is judicial). 4 Additionally, judicial immunity
bars Garrison’s claims against the “U.S. Judicial Commission” 5 because Garrison seeks to hold
this entity vicariously liable for judicial acts of immune 6 Defendants. *Id.* at 973 (rejecting
proposed claims against another entity because those claims 7 “stem from the conduct” of a judge
“who enjoys judicial immunity”). 8 For the foregoing reasons, Garrison’s complaint must be

dismissed for failure to state a 9 claim.

10 III. DISMISSAL IS WITHOUT LEAVE TO AMEND

11 The Court concludes that the complaint should be dismissed with prejudice and without 12
leave to amend. In making this determination, the Court considers factors such as “undue delay, 13
bad faith or dilatory motive on the part of the [Plaintiff], repeated failure to cure deficiencies by 14
amendments previously allowed, undue prejudice to the opposing party by virtue of allowance of
15 the amendment, and futility of amendment.” *Foman v. Davis*, 371 U.S. 178, 182 (1962). The 16
Court also considers “the number of times the plaintiff has already been allowed to amend.” 17
Schwartz v. Miller, 153 F.4th 918, 932 (9th Cir. 2025). 18 Here, the Court finds that dismissal
without leave to amend is appropriate because 19 amendment would be futile, as Garrison’s claims
are legally deficient. *Kroessler v. CVS Health 20 Corp.*, 977 F.3d 803, 815 (9th Cir. 2020) (“If no
amendment would allow the complaint to 21 withstand dismissal as a matter of law, courts
consider amendment futile.”); *Lamoon, Inc. v. 22 Lamour Nail Prods., Inc.*, 373 F. App’x 795, 797
(9th Cir. 2010) (When a plaintiff’s “claims have 23 underlying legal deficiencies that cannot be
cured, amendment would be futile.”). First, 24 amendment would be futile to the extent that
Garrison’s claims are time-barred, and no additional 25 facts could render the claims timely.
Hoang v. Bank of Am., N.A., 910 F.3d 1096, 1103 (9th Cir. 26 2018) (Leave to amend need not be
granted “when the claims are barred by the applicable statute 27 of limitations.”). Second,
amendment would be futile because Defendants are absolutely immune 1 30, 2025) (affirming
dismissal of claims “on the basis of judicial immunity” without leave to 2 amend); *Ezor v. Duffy-*
Lewis, 857 F. App’x 412, 413 (9th Cir. 2021) (same); *Keliuhuluhulu v. 3 Strance*, 692 F. App’x
406, 407 (9th Cir. 2017) (affirming dismissal without leave to amend of 4 || claims “barred by
judicial immunity because amendment would have been futile”); *Middleton v. 5 || Martingale*
Investments, LLC, 621 F. App’x 396, 396-97 (9th Cir. 2015) (same). Under these 6 ||
circumstances, dismissal without granting leave to amend is warranted.

7 || IV. CONCLUSION

8 For the foregoing reasons, the Court DISMISSES Garrison’s complaint with prejudice. 9 The
Clerk is directed to close this case. The Clerk is also directed to unseal the record in this 10 || case.
° 11 IT IS SO ORDERED. a 12 Dated: December 22, 2025 Eumi K. Lee IS United States District
Judge 16 = 17 Z 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 \Is The docket in this case was sealed when the
complaint was filed because Garrison indicated that 2g || his complaint raised a claim under the
False Claims Act, ECF No. 1-1, which is incorrect. Therefore, sealing is not necessary.