

**UNPUBLISHED**

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS  
FOR THE FOURTH CIRCUIT

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**No. 16-7296**

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DARNELL M. CLEATON,

Petitioner - Appellant,

v.

HAROLD CLARKE, Director; B. W. BOOKER, Warden of Green Rock,

Respondents - Appellees,

and

UNKNOWN,

Respondent.

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Appeal from the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, at Alexandria. Liam O'Grady, District Judge. (1:15-cv-00443-LO-IDD)

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Submitted: February 23, 2017

Decided: February 27, 2017

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Before SHEDD and DIAZ, Circuit Judges, and DAVIS, Senior Circuit Judge.

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Dismissed by unpublished per curiam opinion.

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Darnell M. Cleaton, Appellant Pro Se. Virginia Bidwell Theisen, Senior Assistant Attorney General, Richmond, Virginia, for Appellees.

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Unpublished opinions are not binding precedent in this circuit.

PER CURIAM:

Darnell M. Cleaton seeks to appeal the district court's order dismissing as untimely his 28 U.S.C. § 2254 (2012) petition. The order is not appealable unless a circuit justice or judge issues a certificate of appealability. 28 U.S.C. § 2253(c)(1)(A) (2012). A certificate of appealability will not issue absent "a substantial showing of the denial of a constitutional right." 28 U.S.C. § 2253(c)(2) (2012). When the district court denies relief on the merits, a prisoner satisfies this standard by demonstrating that reasonable jurists would find that the district court's assessment of the constitutional claims is debatable or wrong. Slack v. McDaniel, 529 U.S. 473, 484 (2000); see Miller-El v. Cockrell, 537 U.S. 322, 336-38 (2003). When the district court denies relief on procedural grounds, the prisoner must demonstrate both that the dispositive procedural ruling is debatable, and that the petition states a debatable claim of the denial of a constitutional right. Slack, 529 U.S. at 484-85.

We have independently reviewed the record and conclude that Cleaton has not made the requisite showing. Accordingly, we deny a certificate of appealability, deny leave to proceed in forma pauperis, and dismiss the appeal. We dispense with oral argument because the facts and legal contentions are adequately

presented in the materials before this court and argument would not aid the decisional process.

DISMISSED