

UNPUBLISHED

**UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
FOR THE FOURTH CIRCUIT**

No. 19-7287

JEROME JOHNSON,

Petitioner - Appellant,

v.

KENNETH LASSITER,

Respondent - Appellee.

Appeal from the United States District Court for the Middle District of North Carolina, at Greensboro. Loretta C. Biggs, District Judge. (1:18-cv-00778-LCB-JEP)

Submitted: May 19, 2020

Decided: May 21, 2020

Before NIEMEYER, HARRIS, and RICHARDSON, Circuit Judges.

Dismissed by unpublished per curiam opinion.

Jerome Johnson, Appellant Pro Se.

Unpublished opinions are not binding precedent in this circuit.

PER CURIAM:

Jerome Johnson seeks to appeal the district court's order accepting the recommendation of the magistrate judge and denying relief on Johnson's 28 U.S.C. § 2254 (2018) petition. The order is not appealable unless a circuit justice or judge issues a certificate of appealability. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 2253(c)(1)(A) (2018). 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) (2018). When the district court denies relief on the merits, a prisoner satisfies this standard by demonstrating that reasonable jurists could find the district court's assessment of the constitutional claims debatable or wrong. *See Buck v. Davis*, 137 S. Ct. 759, 773-74 (2017). 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. *Gonzalez v. Thaler*, 565 U.S. 134, 140-41 (2012) (citing *Slack v. McDaniel*, 529 U.S. 473, 484 (2000)).

We have independently reviewed the record and conclude that Johnson 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