

IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF THE UNITED STATES
FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF ALABAMA
EASTERN DIVISION

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|---------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| TANNA NACOLE JARRELL, |) | |
| |) | |
| Plaintiff, |) | |
| |) | |
| v. |) | CIVIL ACTION NO. 3:10-CV-836-ID |
| |) | [WO] |
| |) | |
| CHAMBERS COUNTY, ALABAMA, |) | |
| |) | |
| Defendant. |) | |

RECOMMENDATION OF THE MAGISTRATE JUDGE

I. INTRODUCTION

This case is before the court on a 42 U.S.C. § 1983 complaint filed by Tanna Nacole Jarrell [“Jarrell”], an indigent inmate presently confined at the Chambers County Jail. In this complaint, Jarrell challenges the seizure of property during his/her arrest. Jarrell further complains the state court failed to provide either an initial appearance or preliminary hearing on various pending criminal charges. In addition, Jarrell alleges the bond set by the state court is excessive and the Circuit Clerk of Chambers County, Alabama failed to furnish him/her with requested information regarding the pending criminal cases. Jarrell seeks release from incarceration, dismissal of the pending criminal charges and return of all seized property. *Plaintiff's Complaint - Court Doc. No. 1* at 5. The court further notes that issuance of a decision in favor of Jarrell would result in the granting of declaratory relief from actions of the state courts.

Upon review of the allegations contained in the complaint, the court concludes that this case is due to be dismissed prior to service of process pursuant to the provisions of 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(i) and (ii).¹

II. DISCUSSION

A. Request for Declaratory Relief

1. Non-Final Orders. To the extent Jarrell seeks relief from adverse decisions issued by a state court which are not yet final, he is not entitled to relief from this court on such claims as there is an adequate remedy at law. *Bolin v. Story*, 225 F.3d 1234, 1242 (11th Cir. 2000) (“In order to receive declaratory or injunctive relief, plaintiff[] must establish that there was a [constitutional] violation, that there is a serious risk of continuing irreparable injury if the relief is not granted, and the absence of an adequate remedy at law.”). Specifically, Jarrell could appeal orders issued by the state court to the appropriate higher state court. Since state law provides an adequate remedy for Jarrell to challenge non-final orders, the plaintiff is “not entitled to declaratory or injunctive relief in this case.” *Id.* at 1243.

2. Final Orders. With respect to the claims presented by Jarrell attacking the constitutionality of orders issued by any state court which have become final in accordance

¹The court granted Jarrell leave to proceed *in forma pauperis* in this cause of action. *Order of October 5, 2010 - Court Doc. No. 3*. A prisoner who is allowed to proceed *in forma pauperis* will have his/her complaint screened under the provisions of 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B) which requires this court to dismiss a prisoner’s civil action prior to service of process if it determines that the complaint is frivolous, malicious, fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, or seeks monetary damages from a defendant who is immune from such relief. 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(i)-(iii).

with state law, this court lacks jurisdiction to render such judgment in an action filed pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983. “The *Rooker-Feldman* doctrine prevents ... lower federal courts from exercising jurisdiction over cases brought by ‘state-court losers’ challenging ‘state-court judgments rendered before the district court proceedings commenced.’ *Exxon Mobil Corp. v. Saudi Basic Industries Corp.*, 544 U.S. 280, 284, 125 S.Ct. 1517, 161 L.Ed.2d 454 (2005).” *Lance v. Dennis*, 546 U.S. 459, 460, 126 S.Ct. 1198, 1199 (2006). Although “*Rooker-Feldman* is a narrow doctrine,” it remains applicable to bar Jarrell from proceeding before this court as this case, with respect to any claims challenging final orders issued by a state court in pending criminal actions, is “‘brought by [a] state-court loser[] complaining of injuries caused by state-court judgments rendered before the district court proceedings commenced and inviting district court review and rejection of those judgments.’ 544 U.S. at 284, 125 S.Ct. [at] 1517.” *Lance*, 546 U.S. at 464, 125 S.Ct. at 1201; *District of Columbia Court of Appeals v. Feldman*, 460 U.S. 462, 486 (1983) (federal district courts “do not have jurisdiction ... over challenges to state court decisions in particular cases arising out of judicial proceedings even if those challenges allege that the state court’s action was unconstitutional.”). Moreover, a § 1983 action is inappropriate either to compel or to appeal a particular course of action by a state court. *Datz v. Kilgore*, 51 F.3d 252, 254 (11th Cir. 1995) (§ 1983 suit arising from alleged erroneous decisions of a state court is merely a prohibited appeal of the state court judgment); *see also Rolleston v. Eldridge*, 848 F.2d 163 (11th Cir. 1988).

In light of the foregoing, the court concludes that dismissal of the requests for relief from final actions undertaken by the state courts during proceedings related to the plaintiff's pending criminal cases is appropriate under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(i). *See Clark v. State of Georgia Pardons and Paroles Board*, 915 F.2d 636 (11th Cir. 1990); *see also Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319, 327 (1989).²

B. Request for Dismissal of Criminal Charges

Jarrell seeks dismissal of the criminal charges presently pending against him/her before the Circuit Court of Chambers County, Alabama. *Plaintiff's Complaint - Court Doc. No. 1* at 5. Such relief, however, is not warranted in this cause of action.

Under the decision issued by the United States Supreme Court in *Younger v. Harris*, 401 U.S. 37, 43-44 (1971), a federal court must refrain from interfering with pending state criminal proceedings “when the moving party has an adequate remedy at law and will not suffer irreparable injury if denied equitable relief.” The *Younger* abstention doctrine is premised upon a fundamental “public policy against federal interference with state criminal prosecutions.” *Id.* at 43. In this case, Jarrell has an adequate remedy at law regarding any claims relative to the propriety of the pending criminal charges because he/she may pursue these claims through the state court system in the on-going state criminal proceedings. *See generally Doby v. Strength*, 758 F.2d 1405 (11th Cir. 1985). Moreover, the plaintiff has not

²Although *Neitzke* interpreted the provisions of 28 U.S.C. § 1915(d), the predecessor to § 1915(e)(2), the analysis contained therein remains applicable to the directives contained in the present statute.

alleged the existence of any special circumstance which creates a threat of irreparable harm. The mere fact that Jarrell must endure state criminal proceedings fails to demonstrate irreparable harm. *Younger*, 401 U.S. at 45. This court is therefore compelled to abstain from considering the merits of Jarrell's claims which place into question the constitutionality of the criminal charges pending against him/her before the Circuit Court of Chambers County, Alabama as such claims are not cognizable in a 42 U.S.C. § 1983 action at this time. *Id.* at 43-44. Consequently, dismissal of the request for relief from the pending criminal charges is appropriate under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(ii).

III. CONCLUSION

Accordingly, it is the RECOMMENDATION of the Magistrate Judge that this case be DISMISSED with prejudice prior to service of process in accordance with the directives of 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(i) and (ii).

It is further

ORDERED that **on or before November 19, 2010** the parties may file objections to this Recommendation. Any objections filed must specifically identify the findings in the Magistrate Judge's Recommendation to which the party is objecting. Frivolous, conclusive or general objections will not be considered by the District Court. The parties are advised that this Recommendation is not a final order of the court and, therefore, it is not appealable.

Failure to file written objections to the proposed findings and advisements in the

Magistrate Judge's Recommendation shall bar the party from a de novo determination by the District Court of issues covered in the Recommendation and shall bar the party from attacking on appeal factual findings in the Recommendation accepted or adopted by the District Court except upon grounds of plain error or manifest injustice. *Nettles v. Wainwright*, 677 F.2d 404 (5th Cir. 1982); *see Stein v. Reynolds Securities, Inc.*, 667 F.2d 33 (11th Cir. 1982); *see also Bonner v. City of Prichard*, 661 F.2d 1206 (11th Cir. 1981, *en banc*), adopting as binding precedent all of the decisions of the former Fifth Circuit handed down prior to the close of business on September 30, 1981.

Done this 5th day of November, 2010.

/s/Charles S. Coody
CHARLES S. COODY
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE