

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF NEW JERSEY

THOMAS L. WHITEHEAD,

Plaintiff,

v.

CAMDEN COUNTY
CORRECTIONAL FACILITY,

Defendant.

HONORABLE JEROME B. SIMANDLE

Civil Action
No. 16-6422(JBS-AMD)

OPINION

APPEARANCES:

Thomas L. Whitehead, Plaintiff Pro Se
215 Myrtle Avenue
Lindenwold, NJ 08021

SIMANDLE, District Judge:

I. INTRODUCTION

Plaintiff Thomas L. Whitehead seeks to bring a civil rights Complaint pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983 against Camden County Correctional Facility ("CCCF") for allegedly unconstitutional conditions of confinement. Complaint, Docket Entry 1.

At this time, the Court must review the Complaint, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2) to determine whether it should be dismissed as frivolous or malicious, for failure to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, or because it seeks monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief. For the reasons set forth below, it is clear from the Complaint

that the claim arose more than two years before the Complaint was filed. It is therefore barred by the two-year statute of limitations that governs claims of unconstitutional conduct under 42 U.S.C. § 1983. The Court will therefore dismiss the Complaint with prejudice for failure to state a claim. 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(b)(ii).

II. BACKGROUND

The Complaint alleges that Plaintiff "slept on the floor multiple times between 2007 - 2011 due to overcrowd[ing]." Complaint §§ III(B)-(C). Plaintiff claims to have sustained back and hip injuries from these events. *Id.* § IV. Plaintiff seeks "the maximum amount of damages they are giving out." *Id.* § V.

III. STANDARD OF REVIEW

Section 1915(e)(2) requires a court to review complaints prior to service of the summons and complaint in cases in which a plaintiff is proceeding *in forma pauperis*. The Court must *sua sponte* dismiss any claim that is frivolous, is malicious, fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, or seeks monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief. This action is subject to *sua sponte* screening for dismissal under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B) because Plaintiff is proceeding *in forma pauperis*.

To survive *sua sponte* screening for failure to state a claim, the complaint must allege "sufficient factual matter" to

show that the claim is facially plausible. *Fowler v. UPMS Shadyside*, 578 F.3d 203, 210 (3d Cir. 2009) (citation omitted). "A claim has facial plausibility when the plaintiff pleads factual content that allows the court to draw the reasonable inference that the defendant is liable for the misconduct alleged." *Fair Wind Sailing, Inc. v. Dempster*, 764 F.3d 303, 308 n.3 (3d Cir. 2014) (quoting *Iqbal*, 556 U.S. at 678). "[A] pleading that offers 'labels or conclusions' or 'a formulaic recitation of the elements of a cause of action will not do.'" *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009) (quoting *Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 555 (2007)).

IV. DISCUSSION

The Complaint alleges that Plaintiff experienced unconstitutional conditions of confinement while incarcerated from "2007 - 2011." Complaint § III(B). Civil rights claims under § 1983 are governed by New Jersey's limitations period for personal injury and must be brought within two years of the claim's accrual. See *Wilson v. Garcia*, 471 U.S. 261, 276 (1985); *Dique v. New Jersey State Police*, 603 F.3d 181, 185 (3d Cir. 2010). "Under federal law, a cause of action accrues 'when the plaintiff knew or should have known of the injury upon which the action is based.'" *Montanez v. Sec'y Pa. Dep't of Corr.*, 773 F.3d 472, 480 (3d Cir. 2014) (quoting *Kach v. Hose*, 589 F.3d 626, 634 (3d Cir. 2009)).

The allegedly unconstitutional conditions of confinement, namely the purported overcrowding and sleeping conditions in cells, would have been immediately apparent to Plaintiff at the time of detention; therefore, the statute of limitations for Plaintiff's claims expired in 2013 at the latest, well before this Complaint was filed in 2016. Plaintiff has filed this lawsuit too late. Although the Court may toll, or extend, the statute of limitations in the interests of justice, certain circumstances must be present before it can do so. Tolling is not warranted in this case because the state has not "actively misled" Plaintiff as to the existence of Plaintiff's cause of action, there are no extraordinary circumstances that prevented Plaintiff from filing the claim, and there is nothing to indicate Plaintiff filed the claim on time but in the wrong forum. See *Omar v. Blackman*, 590 F. App'x 162, 166 (3d Cir. 2014).

As it is clear from the face of the Complaint that more than two years have passed since Plaintiff's claims accrued, the Complaint is dismissed with prejudice, meaning Plaintiff may not file an amended complaint concerning the events of "2007 - 2011." Complaint § III(B). See *Ostuni v. Wa Wa's Mart*, 532 F. App'x 110, 112 (3d Cir. 2013) (per curiam) (affirming dismissal with prejudice due to expiration of statute of limitations).

V. CONCLUSION

For the reasons stated above, the Complaint is dismissed with prejudice for failure to state a claim. An appropriate order follows.

June 30, 2017
Date

s/ Jerome B. Simandle
JEROME B. SIMANDLE
U.S. District Judge