

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
WESTERN DISTRICT OF NORTH CAROLINA  
ASHEVILLE DIVISION  
1:18-cv-44-FDW**

<b>ADAM WADE HALL,</b>	)	
	)	
<b>Plaintiff,</b>	)	
	)	
<b>vs.</b>	)	<b><u>ORDER</u></b>
	)	
<b>FNU PRUITT, et al.,</b>	)	
	)	
<b>Defendants.</b>	)	
<hr style="width:50%; margin-left:0;"/>	)	

**THIS MATTER** is before the Court on initial review of Plaintiff’s Amended Complaint, (Doc. No. 9). Plaintiff is proceeding *in forma pauperis*. See (Doc. No. 6).

**I. BACKGROUND**

*Pro se* Plaintiff has filed a civil rights suit pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983 with regards to an incident that allegedly occurred at the Marion Correctional Institution where he is still incarcerated. The Complaint was dismissed pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(ii) and Plaintiff was given the opportunity to file an Amended Complaint, which is presently before the Court on initial review. See (Doc. No. 8).

Plaintiff names as Defendants Sergeant Pruitt, Officer Kalinowski, and Officer Brigh. Construing the Amended Complaint liberally and accepting the allegations as true, Plaintiff was in a cell in the North Wing of Marion C.I. at 14:05 hours on January 4, 2018, when Officer Kalinowski cuffed him, then pushed and hit him with closed fists. Officer Brigh jumped in to help Kalinowski. Sergeant Pruitt tried to spray Plaintiff but another officer stopped her. Plaintiff also alleges that “[t]hey jump on me cause we was in my cell no crame for me by gay and then Sgt. spray me and said you a gay ass Muslim.” (Doc. No. 9 at 4). In addition, his prayer rug was taken

by Officers Brighth and Sergeant Pruitt.

Plaintiff's leg was cut, he was sprayed which still hurts, and he has "small redness" to his head and neck, for which he was given ibuprofen. (Doc. No. 9 at 5).

Plaintiff seeks the return of his prayer rug, transfer from the institution or "fixs it where no inmate be in cell with officer," and \$3,000. (Doc. No. 9 at 5).

## **II. STANDARD OF REVIEW**

Because Plaintiff is a prisoner proceeding *in forma pauperis*, the Court must review the Complaint to determine whether it is subject to dismissal on the grounds that it is "(i) frivolous or malicious; (ii) fails to state a claim on which relief may be granted; or (iii) seeks monetary relief against a defendant who is immune from such relief." 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B). In its frivolity review, a court must determine whether the Complaint raises an indisputably meritless legal theory or is founded upon clearly baseless factual contentions, such as fantastic or delusional scenarios. Neitzke v. Williams, 490 U.S. 319, 327-28 (1989). A complaint should not be dismissed for failure to state a claim "unless 'after accepting all well-pleaded allegations in the plaintiff's complaint as true and drawing all reasonable factual inferences from those facts in the plaintiff's favor, it appears certain that the plaintiff cannot prove any set of facts in support of his claim entitling him to relief.'" Veney v. Wyche, 293 F.3d 726, 730 (4<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2002) (quoting Edwards v. City of Goldsboro, 178 F.3d 231, 244 (4<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1999)).

A *pro se* complaint must be construed liberally. Haines v. Kerner, 404 U.S. 519, 520 (1972); see also Smith v. Smith, 589 F.3d 736, 738 (4<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2009) ("Liberal construction of the pleadings is particularly appropriate where ... there is a *pro se* complaint raising civil rights issues."). However, the liberal construction requirement will not permit a district court to ignore a clear failure to allege facts in his complaint which set forth a claim that is cognizable under

federal law. Weller v. Dep't of Soc. Servs., 901 F.2d 387 (4<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1990). A *pro se* complaint must still contain sufficient facts “to raise a right to relief above the speculative level” and “state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face.” Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 555, 570 (2007); see Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662 (2009) (the Twombly plausibility standard applies to all federal civil complaints including those filed under § 1983). This “plausibility standard requires a plaintiff to demonstrate more than a sheer possibility that a defendant has acted unlawfully.” Francis v. Giacomelli, 588 F.3d 186, 193 (4<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2009) (internal quotation marks omitted). He must articulate facts that, when accepted as true, demonstrate he has stated a claim entitling him to relief.

Id.

### III. DISCUSSION

#### (1) Excessive Force

“[T]he treatment a prisoner receives in prison and the conditions under which he is confined are subject to scrutiny under the Eighth Amendment,” Helling v. McKinney, 509 U.S. 25, 31 (1993). In its prohibition of “cruel and unusual punishments,” the Eighth Amendment places restraints on prison officials, who may not, for example, use excessive physical force against prisoners. See Hudson v. McMillian, 503 U.S. 1 (1992).

A prison official violates the Eighth Amendment only when two requirements are met. First, the deprivation alleged must be, objectively, “sufficiently serious,” Wilson v. Seiter, 501 U.S. 294, 298 (1991); see also Hudson, 503 U.S. at 5, and must result in the denial of “the minimal civilized measure of life’s necessities,” Rhodes v. Chapman, 452 U.S. 337, 347 (1981). The second requirement is that a prison official must have a “sufficiently culpable state of mind.” Wilson, 501 U.S. at 297, 302-03; Hudson, 503 U.S. at 5, 8. “[T]he use of excessive physical force against a prisoner may constitute cruel and unusual punishment [even] when the inmate does not suffer

serious injury.” Hudson, 503 U.S. 1, 4 (1992); see Wilkins v. Gaddy, 559 U.S. 34, 34 (2010). The “core judicial inquiry,” is not whether a certain quantum of injury was sustained, but rather “whether force was applied in a good-faith effort to maintain or restore discipline, or maliciously and sadistically to cause harm.” Hudson, 503 U.S. at 7. “When prison officials maliciously and sadistically use force to cause harm,” the Court recognized, “contemporary standards of decency always are violated ... whether or not significant injury is evident. Otherwise, the Eighth Amendment would permit any physical punishment, no matter how diabolic or inhuman, inflicting less than some arbitrary quantity of injury.” Hudson, 503 U.S. at 9, 13–14.

The Fourth Circuit addresses a failure to intervene claim as a theory of “bystander liability” wherein there is “an omission to act...coupled with a duty to act.” Randall v. Prince George’s Cnty., 302 F.3d 188, 202 (4<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2002). A “bystander officer” could be liable for his or her nonfeasance if he or she: “(1) knows that a fellow officer is violating an individual’s constitutional rights; (2) has a reasonable opportunity to prevent the harm; and (3) chooses not to act.” Id. at 204. However, if no excessive force is applied by the fellow officer, the officer witnessing the conduct “cannot be held liable under bystander liability for a failure to intervene.” Howie v. Prince George’s Cnty., 2009 WL 2426018 at \*6 (D. Md. Aug. 5, 2009); see also Jarvis v. Securitas Sec. Servs. USA, 2012 WL 527597 (D. Md. Feb. 16, 2012).

Plaintiff alleges that Officers Kalinowski and Brighth hit him for no reason while he was handcuffed and that Sergeant Pruitt attempted to, or actually, sprayed him. He has stated a facially sufficient claim against Defendants Kalinowski, Brighth, and Pruitt for the use of excessive force and/or failure to intervene. This claim will therefore be permitted to proceed.

(2) **Housing and Transfer**

Plaintiff does not have a federally protected liberty interest in any particular housing or classification unless it exceeds the scope of his original sentence and imposes an atypical and significant hardship in relation to the ordinary incidents of prison life. See Sandin v. Conner, 515 U.S. 472 (1995). “[C]hanges in a prisoner’s location, variations of daily routine, changes in conditions of confinement (including administrative segregation) and the denial of privileges ... are necessarily functions of prison management that must be left to the broad discretion of prison administrators to enable them to manage prisons safely and efficiently.” Gaston v. Taylor, 946 F.2d 340, 343 (4<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1991) (*en banc*).

Plaintiff requests transfer away from Marion C.I. and a private cell. Plaintiff has no interest in his transfer to another facility or in his placement in a cell without staff access, and therefore, has failed to state a claim for which relief is available.

(3) **Property**

Where a state employee’s random, unauthorized act deprives an individual of property, either negligently or intentionally, the individual is relegated to his state post-deprivation process, so long as the State provides an adequate post-deprivation remedy. Hudson v. Palmer, 468 U.S. 517 (1984); Parratt v. Taylor, 451 U.S. 527 (1981), *overruled on other grounds by Daniels v. Williams*, 474 U.S. 327 (1986)). However, post-deprivation remedies do not satisfy the due process requirement where the deprivation complained of is effected pursuant to an established state procedure rather than a random, unauthorized action. Logan v. Zimmerman Brush Co., 455 U.S. 422 (1982).

Under North Carolina law, an action for conversion will lie against a public official who wrongfully deprives an owner of his property by an unauthorized act. Gallimore v. Sink, 27

N.C.App. 65, 67, 218 S.E.2d 181, 182 (1975). North Carolina's post-deprivation remedies are adequate. N.C. Gen. Stat. § 143-291; see Wilkins v. Whitaker, 714 F.2d 4, 6 (4<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1983) (due process satisfied where North Carolina tort law provides an adequate avenue for relief for state prisoner).

Plaintiff appears to allege that the loss of his prayer rug resulted from a random, unauthorized action rather than an established state procedure. Adequate post-deprivation remedies exist for Plaintiff's alleged property loss, so there is no legal theory which would support this claim. See, e.g., Smith v. Ledford, 2006 WL 1431666 at \*2 (W.D.N.C. May 22, 2006), *aff'd*, 203 Fed. Appx. 484 (4<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2006) (dismissing plaintiff's claim that jail administrator confiscated his personal property upon his departure from the jail and refused to return it, because plaintiff had an adequate post-deprivation remedy for conversion). Therefore, Plaintiff has failed to state a cognizable claim for relief with regards to the alleged loss of his property.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

For the reasons stated herein, the Amended Complaint is sufficient to proceed against Defendants Pruitt, Brigh, and Kalinowski on Plaintiff's claims of excessive force and failure to intervene, but his remaining allegations fail to state a claim upon which relief can be granted.

#### **IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED** that:

1. The Amended Complaint, (Doc. No. 9), survives initial review on Plaintiff's claim of excessive force/ failure to intervene against Defendants Pruitt, Brigh, and Kalinowski.
2. The remaining claims are dismissed pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(ii).
3. **IT IS FURTHER ORDERED THAT** the Clerk is directed to commence the procedure for waiver of service as set forth in Local Rule 4.3 for **Defendants Pruitt, Brigh, and Kalinowski** who are current or former employees of NC DPS.

Signed: May 28, 2018

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Frank D. Whitney", written over a horizontal line.

Frank D. Whitney  
Chief United States District Judge

