
IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF UTAH

JOSEPH MIGUEL VALDEZ,
Plaintiff,

v.

STATE OF UTAH et al.,
Defendants.

**MEMORANDUM DECISION & ORDER
TO CURE DEFICIENT AMENDED
COMPLAINT**

Case No. 2:14-CV-7 RJS

District Judge Robert J. Shelby

Plaintiff, Joseph Miguel Valdez, filed this *pro se* civil rights suit, *see* 42 U.S.C.S. § 1983 (2015), *in forma pauperis*, *see* 28 id. § 1915. The Court now screens the Amended Complaint and orders Plaintiff to file a second amended complaint to cure deficiencies before further pursuing his claims.

Deficiencies in Amended Complaint

Amended Complaint:

- (a) alleges claims that are possibly invalidated by the rule in *Heck* (see below).
- (b) possibly alleges claims that concern the constitutionality of his conviction and/or validity of his imprisonment, which should be brought in a habeas-corpus petition, not a civil-rights complaint.
- (c) does not address Judge Hruby-Mills's potential immunity from suit, as further explained below.
- (d) does not address Prosecutor Evershed's potential immunity from suit, as further explained below.
- (e) does not state enough supporting factual information regarding any of his claims.
- (f) is not signed by Plaintiff.
- (g) names as a defendant the State of Utah without addressing the State's immunity from suit.

- (h) has claims appearing to be based on conditions of current confinement; however, the complaint was apparently not submitted using the legal help Plaintiff is entitled to by his institution under the Constitution. *See Lewis v. Casey*, 518 U.S. 343, 356 (1996) (requiring prisoners be given "'adequate law libraries or adequate assistance from persons trained in the law' . . . to ensure that inmates . . . have a reasonably adequate opportunity to file nonfrivolous legal claims challenging their convictions or conditions of confinement") (quoting *Bounds v. Smith*, 430 U.S. 817, 828 (1977) (emphasis added)).

Instructions to Plaintiff

Rule 8 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure requires a complaint to contain "(1) a short and plain statement of the grounds for the court's jurisdiction . . . ; (2) a short and plain statement of the claim showing that the pleader is entitled to relief; and (3) a demand for the relief sought." Rule 8's requirements mean to guarantee "that defendants enjoy fair notice of what the claims against them are and the grounds upon which they rest." *TV Commc'ns Network, Inc. v ESPN, Inc.*, 767 F. Supp. 1062, 1069 (D. Colo. 1991).

Pro se litigants are not excused from complying with these minimal pleading demands. "This is so because a pro se plaintiff requires no special legal training to recount the facts surrounding his alleged injury, and he must provide such facts if the court is to determine whether he makes out a claim on which relief can be granted." *Hall v. Bellmon*, 935 F.2d 1106, 1110 (10th Cir. 1991). Moreover, it is improper for the Court "to assume the role of advocate for a pro se litigant." *Id.* Thus, the Court cannot "supply additional facts, [or] construct a legal theory for plaintiff that assumes facts that have not been pleaded." *Dunn v. White*, 880 F.2d 1188, 1197 (10th Cir. 1989). Plaintiff should consider the following points before refile his complaint. First, the revised complaint must stand entirely on its own and shall not refer to, or incorporate by reference, any portion of the original complaint. *See Murray v. Archambo*, 132 F.3d 609, 612 (10th Cir. 1998) (stating amended complaint supersedes original).

Second, the complaint must clearly state what each defendant--typically, a named government employee--did to violate Plaintiff's civil rights. *See Bennett v. Passic*, 545 F.2d 1260, 1262-63 (10th Cir. 1976) (stating personal participation of each named defendant is essential allegation in civil-rights action). "To state a claim, a complaint must 'make clear exactly *who* is alleged to have done *what* to *whom*.'" *Stone v. Albert*, No. 08-2222, slip op. at 4 (10th Cir. July 20, 2009) (unpublished) (emphasis in original) (quoting *Robbins v. Oklahoma*, 519 F.3d 1242, 1250 (10th Cir. 2008)).

Third, Plaintiff cannot name an individual as a defendant based solely on his or her supervisory position. *See Mitchell v. Maynard*, 80 F.2d 1433, 1441 (10th Cir. 1996) (stating supervisory status alone does not support § 1983 liability).

Fourth, "denial of a grievance, by itself without any connection to the violation of constitutional rights alleged by plaintiff, does not establish personal participation under § 1983." *Gallagher v. Shelton*, No. 09-3113, 2009 U.S. App. LEXIS 25787, at *11 (10th Cir. Nov. 24, 2009).

Fifth, the Court concludes that Plaintiff's claims appear to involve some allegations that if true may invalidate his conviction and/or sentencing. "In *Heck*, the Supreme Court explained that a § 1983 action that would impugn the validity of a plaintiff's underlying conviction cannot be maintained unless the conviction has been reversed on direct appeal or impaired by collateral proceedings." *Nichols v. Baer*, No. 08-4158, 2009 U.S. App. LEXIS 4302, at *4 (10th Cir. Mar. 5, 2009) (unpublished) (citing *Heck v. Humphrey*, 512 U.S. 477, 486-87 (1994)). *Heck* prevents litigants "from using a § 1983 action, with its more lenient pleading rules, to challenge their conviction or sentence without complying with the more stringent exhaustion requirements for habeas actions." *Butler v. Compton*, 482 F.3d 1277, 1279 (10th Cir. 2007) (citation omitted).

Heck clarifies that "civil tort actions are not appropriate vehicles for challenging the validity of outstanding criminal judgments." 512 U.S. at 486.

Plaintiff argues that Defendants violated his constitutional rights in a way that may attack Petitioner's very imprisonment. *Heck* requires that, when a plaintiff requests damages in a § 1983 suit, this Court must decide whether judgment in the plaintiff's favor would unavoidably imply that the conviction or sentence is invalid. *Id.* at 487. Here, it appears it would regarding some claims. If this Court were to conclude that Plaintiff's constitutional rights regarding illegal incarceration were violated in a prejudicial manner, it would be stating that Plaintiff's conviction and/or sentence were not valid. Thus, the involved claims "must be dismissed unless the plaintiff can demonstrate that the conviction or sentence has already been invalidated." *Id.* This has not happened and may result in dismissal of such claim.

Sixth, it is well settled that judges "are absolutely immune from suit unless they act in 'clear absence of all jurisdiction,' meaning that even erroneous or malicious acts are not proper bases for § 1983 claims." *Segler v. Felfam Ltd. P'ship*, No. 08-1466, 2009 U.S. App. LEXIS 10152, at *4 (10th Cir. May 11, 2009) (unpublished) (quoting *Stump v. Sparkman*, 435 U.S. 349, 356-57 (1978)). Regarding the claims at issue here, Judge Hruby-Mills very well may have been acting in a judicial capacity in presiding over this case, so the judge's actions would be entitled to absolute immunity. *See Doran v. Sanchez*, No. 08-2042, 2008 U.S. App. LEXIS 17987, at *2 (10th Cir. Aug. 19, 2008) (unpublished).

Finally, a prosecutor acting within the scope of his duties enjoys absolute immunity from suit under § 1983. *Imbler v. Pachtman*, 424 U.S. 409, 424 (1976). The prosecutor's acts, as alleged by Plaintiff, appear to relate to advocacy before the court. This defendant therefore may be entitled to absolute prosecutorial immunity from this lawsuit.


ORDER

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED:

- (1) Plaintiff's motion for service of process is DENIED, (*see* Docket Entry # 14), and he must within thirty days cure the Amended Complaint's deficiencies noted above.
- (2) The Clerk's Office shall mail Plaintiff a copy of the Pro Se Litigant Guide.
- (3) If Plaintiff fails to timely cure the above deficiencies according to this Order's instructions, this action will be dismissed without further notice.

DATED this 29th day of July, 2015.

BY THE COURT:



ROBERT J. SHELBY
United States District Judge