
IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF UTAH

JAMES C. NORMAN,
Plaintiff,

v.

STATE OF UTAH et al.,
Defendants.

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

Case No. 2:17-CV-941-CW

District Judge Clark Waddoups

Plaintiff, James C. Norman, housed at the Utah State Hospital, filed this *pro se* civil rights suit, *see* 42 U.S.C.S. § 1983 (2018), *in forma pauperis*, *see* 28 id. § 1915. The Court now screens the Complaint and orders Plaintiff to file an amended complaint to cure deficiencies before further pursuing claims.

A. Deficiencies in Complaint

Complaint:

- (a) improperly names a judge as a defendant, without considering judicial immunity. (See below.)
- (b) possibly alleges claims that concern the constitutionality of his imprisonment, which should be brought in a habeas-corpus petition, not a civil-rights complaint.
- (c) alleges claims that are possibly invalidated by the rule in *Heck*. (See below.)
- (d) names State of Utah as a defendant which is in violation of governmental immunity principles. (See below.)
- (e) 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)).

B. 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 refileing Plaintiff's 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).

• **Judicial Immunity**

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)). The judges in the claims here very well may have been acting in a judicial capacity in presiding over Plaintiff's case(s); if so, those 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).

• ***Heck***

Further, the Court concludes that Plaintiff's claims appear to involve some allegations that if true may invalidate his continued imprisonment. "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 his continued imprisonment is invalid. *Id.* at 487. Here, it appears it may regarding some claims. If this Court were to conclude that Plaintiff's constitutional rights were violated in a prejudicial manner, it would be stating that Plaintiff's continued imprisonment is not valid. Thus, the involved claims "must be dismissed unless the plaintiff can demonstrate that his continued

imprisonment has already been invalidated." *Id.* This has apparently not happened and may result in dismissal of such claims.

• **State Immunity**

Finally, regarding claims that have been made against the State, generally, the Eleventh Amendment prevents "suits against a state unless it has waived its immunity or consented to suit, or if Congress has validly abrogated the state's immunity." *Ray v. McGill*, No. CIV-06-0334-HE, 2006 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 51632, at *8 (W.D. Okla. July 26, 2006) (unpublished) (citing *Lujan v. Regents of Univ. of Cal.*, 60 F.3d 1511, 1522 (10th Cir. 1995); *Eastwood v. Dep't of Corrs.*, 846 F.2d 627, 631 (10th Cir. 1988)). Plaintiff asserts no basis for determining that the State has waived its immunity or that it has been abrogated by Congress. Because any claims against the State appear to be precluded by Eleventh Amendment immunity, the Court believes it has no subject-matter jurisdiction to consider them. *See id.* at *9.

ORDER

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that:

- (1) Plaintiff must within thirty days cure the Complaint's deficiencies noted above.
- (2) The Clerk's Office shall mail Plaintiff the Pro Se Litigant Guide with a form complaint and habeas petition for Plaintiff to use should Plaintiff choose to file an amended complaint.
- (3) If Plaintiff fails to timely cure the above deficiencies according to this Order's instructions, this action will be dismissed without further notice.

(4) Plaintiff's motion for service of process is **DENIED**. (See Doc. No. 7.) There is currently no valid complaint on file to be served.

DATED this 27th day of August, 2018.

BY THE COURT:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Clark Waddoups", is written over a solid horizontal line.

Clark Waddoups
United States District Court Judge