

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

JUSTIN VALK,

Plaintiff,

v.

3:24-CV-0003
(BKS/ML)

JOHN L. HUBBARD, District Attorney; and
SHAWN SMITH, District Attorney,

Defendants.

APPEARANCES:

OF COUNSEL:

JUSTIN VALK
Plaintiff, *Pro Se*
Delaware County Correctional Facility
280 Phoebe Lane, Suite 6
Delhi, New York 13753

MIROSLAV LOVRIC, United States Magistrate Judge

ORDER and REPORT-RECOMMENDATION

The Clerk has sent a *pro se* complaint in the above captioned action together with an application to proceed *in forma pauperis* and inmate authorization filed by Justin Valk (“Plaintiff”) to the Court for review. (Dkt. Nos. 1, 2, 3.) For the reasons discussed below, I grant Plaintiff’s *in forma pauperis* application and recommend that Plaintiff’s Complaint be dismissed in its entirety with leave to amend. (Dkt. Nos. 1, 2.)

I. BACKGROUND

Construed as liberally¹ as possible, Plaintiff's Complaint alleges that defendants John L. Hubbard and Shawn Smith (collectively "Defendants") violated his civil rights. (*See generally* Dkt. No. 1.) More specifically, the Complaint alleges that Defendants initiated criminal charges against Plaintiff by obtaining an arrest warrant without probable cause and made materially false statements in furtherance of those criminal charges "with reckless disregard for [the] truth." (Dkt. No. 1 at 6.)

Based on these factual allegations, the Complaint appears to assert one claim of malicious prosecution in violation of the Fourth Amendment and 42 U.S.C. § 1983. (*See generally* Dkt. No. 1.) As relief, Plaintiff seeks (1) a full investigation into Defendants' misconduct, and (2) dismissal of "any and all current charges." (Dkt. No. 1 at 4, 7.)

Plaintiff also filed a motion for leave to proceed *in forma pauperis*. (Dkt. No. 2.)

II. PLAINTIFF'S APPLICATION TO PROCEED *IN FORMA PAUPERIS*

"28 U.S.C. § 1915 permits an indigent litigant to commence an action in a federal court without prepayment of the filing fee that would ordinarily be charged." *Cash v. Bernstein*, 09-CV-1922, 2010 WL 5185047, at *1 (S.D.N.Y. Oct. 26, 2010).² "Although an indigent,

¹ The court must interpret *pro se* complaints to raise the strongest arguments they suggest. *Soto v. Walker*, 44 F.3d 169, 173 (2d Cir. 1995) (quoting *Burgos v. Hopkins*, 14 F.3d 787, 790 (2d Cir. 1994)).

² Section § 1915(g) prohibits a prisoner from proceeding *in forma pauperis* where, absent a showing of "imminent danger of serious physical injury," a prisoner has filed three or more actions that were subsequently dismissed as frivolous, malicious, or failing to state a claim upon which relief may be granted. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1915(g). The Court has reviewed Plaintiff's litigation history on the Federal Judiciary's Public Access to Court Electronic Records ("PACER") Service. *See* <http://pacer.uspci.uscourts.gov>. It does not appear from that review that Plaintiff had accumulated three strikes for purposes of 28 U.S.C. § 1915(g) as of the date this action was commenced.

incarcerated individual need not prepay the filing fee at the time of filing, he must subsequently pay the fee, to the extent he is able to do so, through periodic withdrawals from his inmate accounts.” *Cash*, 2010 WL 5185047, at *1 (citing 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b); *Harris v. City of New York*, 607 F.3d 18, 21 (2d Cir. 2010)).

Upon review, the Court finds that Plaintiff has submitted a completed IFP application which has been certified by an appropriate official at his facility (Dkt. No. 2 at 2), and which demonstrates economic need. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(2). Plaintiff has also filed the inmate authorization required in the Northern District. (Dkt. No. 3.)

Accordingly, Plaintiff’s application to proceed with this action IFP is granted. (Dkt. No. 2.)

III. LEGAL STANDARD FOR REVIEW OF THE COMPLAINT

Having found that Plaintiff met the financial criteria for commencing this action *in forma pauperis*, the Court must consider the sufficiency of the allegations set forth in the Complaint in light of 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e). Section 1915(e) of Title 28 of the United States Code directs that, when a plaintiff seeks to proceed *in forma pauperis*, “the court shall dismiss the case at any time if the court determines that— . . . (B) the action . . . (i) is 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); *see also* 28 U.S.C. 1915A(a) (“The court shall review . . . as soon as practicable . . . a complaint in a civil action in which a prisoner seeks redress from a governmental entity or officer or employee of a governmental entity.”).³

³ To determine whether an action is frivolous, a court must look to see whether the complaint “lacks an arguable basis in either law or in fact.” *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319, 325 (1989).

Additionally, when reviewing a complaint, a court may also look to the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure. Rule 8 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure provides that a pleading which sets forth a claim for relief shall contain, *inter alia*, “a short and plain statement of the claim showing that the pleader is entitled to relief.” *See* Fed. R. Civ. P. 8(a)(2). The purpose of Rule 8 “is to give fair notice of the claim being asserted so as to permit the adverse party the opportunity to file a responsive answer, prepare an adequate defense and determine whether the doctrine of res judicata is applicable.” *Powell v. Marine Midland Bank*, 162 F.R.D. 15, 16 (N.D.N.Y. 1995) (McAvoy, C.J.) (quoting *Brown v. Califano*, 75 F.R.D. 497, 498 (D.D.C. 1977)).

A court should not dismiss a complaint if the plaintiff has stated “enough facts to state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face.” *Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 570 (2007), *rev’d on other grounds*, 682 F. App’x 30. “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.” *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009). While the court should construe the factual allegations in the light most favorable to the plaintiff, “the tenet that a court must accept as true all of the allegations contained in a complaint is inapplicable to legal conclusions.” *Ashcroft*, 556 U.S. at 678. “Threadbare recitals of the elements of a cause of action, supported by mere conclusory statements, do not suffice.” *Id.* (citing *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 555). Rule 8 “demands more than an unadorned the-defendant-unlawfully-harmed-me accusation.” *Id.* Thus, a pleading that contains only allegations which “are so vague as to fail to give the defendants adequate notice of the claims against them” is subject to dismissal. *Sheehy v. Brown*, 335 F. App’x 102, 104 (2d Cir. 2009).

IV. ANALYSIS

In addressing the sufficiency of a plaintiff's complaint, the court must construe his pleadings liberally. *Sealed Plaintiff v. Sealed Defendant*, 537 F.3d 185, 191 (2d Cir. 2008). Having reviewed Plaintiff's Complaint with this principle in mind, I recommend that it be dismissed for four reasons.

To prove a malicious prosecution claim, a plaintiff must demonstrate "(1) that the defendant initiated a prosecution against the plaintiff, (2) that the defendant lacked probable cause to believe the proceeding could succeed, (3) that the defendant acted with malice, and (4) that the prosecution was terminated in the plaintiff's favor." *Posr v. Court Officer Shield # 207*, 180 F.3d 409, 417 (2d Cir. 1999) (citing *Ricciuti v. N.Y.C. Transit Auth.*, 124 F.3d 123, 130 (2d Cir. 1997)).

First, the Complaint is entirely lacking in factual allegations to give Defendants fair notice of the claims against them. Aside from listing the threadbare elements of a malicious prosecution claim, the Complaint fails to allege what allegedly false statements Defendants made with respect to the criminal charges against Plaintiff and what information Defendants had or reasonably should have had about the veracity of those statements. Moreover, the Complaint fails to allege how probable cause was lacking.

Second, although the Complaint alleges that there was a "termination of the proceeding in [Plaintiff's] favor" it also requests that this Court dismiss "any and all current charges" against Plaintiff. (Dkt. No. 1 at 2, 4.) To the extent that the underlying criminal proceeding was not terminated in Plaintiff's favor, an essential element of his malicious prosecution claim would be lacking.

Third, this Court is unable to grant the relief that Plaintiff seeks in the form of an investigation into the actions taken by Defendants and dismissal of the pending criminal charges against him. *See DeFreutas v. Toulon*, 23-CV-5933, 2024 WL 308250, at *4-5 (E.D.N.Y. Jan. 26, 2024) (dismissing the plaintiff’s “requests for injunctive relief in the form of dismissal of the criminal charges pending against him” because “the requested relief would require this Court to interfere with a pending state criminal prosecution, [which] . . . squarely trigger[s] the abstention doctrine set forth in *Younger v. Harris*, 401 U.S. 37 (1971), and *Sprint Commc’ns, Inc. v. Jacobs*, 571 U.S. 69 (2013).”); *Walker v. CIBC Ltd.*, 20-CV-1337, 2021 WL 3518439, at *5 (N.D.N.Y. Apr. 13, 2021) (Hummel, M.J.) (“It appears plaintiff is either seeking the criminal prosecution of an individual or individuals or a law enforcement investigation, which is beyond this Court’s jurisdiction.”), *report-recommendation adopted by* 2021 WL 3204860 (N.D.N.Y. July 29, 2021) (McAvoy, J.).

Fourth, to the extent Plaintiff seeks money damages against Defendants, they are likely immune from suit. Claims against Defendants in their official capacities are construed as claims against New York State, which are barred by Eleventh Amendment immunity. *Drawhorne v. Aloise*, 23-CV-1278, 2023 WL 8188396, at *3 (N.D.N.Y. Nov. 27, 2023) (Dancks, M.J.) (citing *Best v. Brown*, 19-CV-3724, 2019 WL 3067118, at *2 (E.D.N.Y. July 12, 2019) (dismissing the plaintiff’s claim against the Office of the Queens County District Attorney as barred by the Eleventh Amendment); *D’Alessandro v. City of New York*, 713 F. App’x 1, 8 (2d Cir. 2017) (“[I]f a district attorney or an assistant district attorney acts as a prosecutor, she is an agent of the state, and therefore immune from suit in her official capacity.”); *Rich v. New York*, 21-CV-3835, 2022 WL 992885, at *5 n.4 (S.D.N.Y. Mar. 31, 2022) (“[A]ny claims Plaintiff may raise against the DA Defendants in their ‘official capacity’ would be precluded by immunity under the Eleventh

Amendment.”); *Gentry v. New York*, 21-CV-0319, 2021 WL 3037709, at *6 (N.D.N.Y. June 14, 2021) (Lovric, M.J.) (recommending dismissal of the plaintiff’s claims against the defendant assistant district attorneys in their official capacities—which were effectively claims against the State of New York—as barred by the Eleventh Amendment) *adopted by*, 2021 WL 3032691 (N.D.N.Y. July 19, 2021) (Suddaby, C.J.). Moreover, claims against Defendants in their individual capacities for monetary damages are likely barred by the doctrine of prosecutorial immunity which, “is a form of absolute immunity that shields [a] prosecutor acting in the role of an advocate in connection with a judicial proceeding . . . for all acts intimately associated with the judicial phase of the criminal process.” *Carroll v. Trump*, 23-CV-1045, 23-CV-1146, 2023 WL 8608724, at *1 n.4 (2d Cir. Dec. 13, 2023) (quoting *Simon v. City of New York*, 727 F.3d 167, 171 (2d Cir. 2013)) (quoting *Imbler v. Pachtman*, 424 U.S. 409, 430 (1976)) (internal quotation marks omitted).

For each of these reasons, I recommend that the Complaint be dismissed.

V. OPPORTUNITY TO AMEND

Generally, a court should not dismiss claims contained in a complaint filed by a *pro se* litigant without granting leave to amend at least once “when a liberal reading of the complaint gives any indication that a valid claim might be stated.” *Branum v. Clark*, 927 F.2d 698, 704-05 (2d Cir. 1991); *see also* Fed. R. Civ. P. 15(a)(2) (“The court should freely give leave when justice so requires.”). An opportunity to amend is not required, however, where “the problem with [the plaintiff’s] causes of action is substantive” such that “better pleading will not cure it.” *Cuoco v. Moritsugu*, 222 F.3d 99, 112 (2d Cir. 2000); *see also Cortec Indus. Inc. v. Sum Holding L.P.*, 949 F.2d 42, 48 (2d Cir. 1991) (“Of course, where a plaintiff is unable to allege any fact sufficient to support its claim, a complaint should be dismissed with prejudice.”). Stated

differently, “[w]here it appears that granting leave to amend is unlikely to be productive, . . . it is not an abuse of discretion to deny leave to amend.” *Ruffolo v. Oppenheimer & Co.*, 987 F.2d 129, 131 (2d Cir. 1993); *accord*, *Brown v. Peters*, 95-CV-1641, 1997 WL 599355, at *1 (N.D.N.Y. Sept. 22, 1997) (Pooler, J.).⁴

Although I have serious doubts about whether *pro se* Plaintiff can replead to assert an actionable claim against Defendants, given that this is the Court’s first review of Plaintiff’s pleading and that Plaintiff is a *pro se* litigant, out of an abundance of caution, I recommend that he be permitted to replead the Complaint.

If Plaintiff chooses to file an amended complaint, he should note that the law in this circuit clearly provides that ““complaints relying on the civil rights statutes are insufficient unless they contain some specific allegations of fact indicating a deprivation of rights, instead of a litany of general conclusions that shock but have no meaning.”” *Hunt v. Budd*, 895 F. Supp. 35, 38 (N.D.N.Y. 1995) (McAvoy, J.) (quoting *Barr v. Abrams*, 810 F.2d 358, 363 (2d Cir. 1987)); *accord* *Pourzancvakil v. Humphry*, 94-CV-1594, 1995 WL 316935, at *7 (N.D.N.Y. May 22, 1995) (Pooler, J.). Therefore, in any amended complaint, Plaintiff must clearly set forth facts that give rise to the claims, including the dates, times, and places of the alleged underlying acts, and each individual who committed each alleged wrongful act. In addition, the revised pleading should allege facts demonstrating the specific involvement of any of the named defendants in the constitutional deprivations alleged in sufficient detail to establish that they

⁴ See also *Carris v. First Student, Inc.*, 132 F. Supp. 3d 321, 340-41 n.1 (N.D.N.Y. 2015) (Suddaby, C.J.) (explaining that the standard set forth in *Gomez v. USAA Fed. Sav. Bank*, 171 F.3d 794, 796 (2d Cir. 1999)—that the Court should grant leave to amend “unless the court can rule out any possibility, however unlikely it might be, that an amended complaint would be successful in stating a claim”—is likely not an accurate recitation of the governing law after *Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544 (2007)), *rev’d on other grounds*, 682 F. App’x 30.

were tangibly connected to those deprivations. *Bass v. Jackson*, 790 F.2d 260, 263 (2d Cir. 1986). Finally, Plaintiff is informed that any such amended complaint will replace the existing Complaint, and must be a wholly integrated and complete pleading that does not rely upon or incorporate by reference any pleading or document previously filed with the Court. *See Shields v. Citytrust Bancorp, Inc.*, 25 F.3d 1124, 1128 (2d Cir. 1994) (“It is well established that an amended complaint ordinarily supersedes the original and renders it of no legal effect.”).

ACCORDINGLY, it is

ORDERED that Plaintiff’s application to proceed *in forma pauperis* (Dkt. No. 2) is **GRANTED**; and it is further

ORDERED that the Clerk of the Court (1) provide the Superintendent of the facility that Plaintiff has designated as his current location with a copy of Plaintiff’s inmate authorization form (Dkt. No. 3) and notify that official that Plaintiff has filed this action and is required to pay the Northern District of New York the entire statutory filing fee of \$350.00 in installments, over time, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915; and (2) provide a copy of Plaintiff’s inmate authorization form (Dkt. No. 3) to the Financial Deputy of the Clerk’s office; and it is further respectfully

RECOMMENDED that the Court **DISMISS** the Complaint (Dkt. No. 1) **WITH LEAVE TO REPLEAD** pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B), 1915A(b); and it is further

ORDERED that the Clerk of the Court shall file a copy of this order, report, and recommendation on the docket of this case and serve a copy upon the parties in accordance with the local rules.⁵

⁵ The Clerk shall also provide Plaintiff with copies of all unreported decisions cited herein in accordance with *Lebron v. Sanders*, 557 F.3d 76 (2d Cir. 2009) (per curiam).

NOTICE: Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1), the parties have fourteen days within which to file written objections to the foregoing report.⁶ Such objections shall be filed with the Clerk of the Court. **FAILURE TO OBJECT TO THIS REPORT WITHIN FOURTEEN DAYS WILL PRECLUDE APPELLATE REVIEW.** 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1) (Supp. 2013); Fed. R. Civ. P. 6(a), 6(d), 72; *Roldan v. Racette*, 984 F.2d 85 (2d Cir. 1993) (citing *Small v. Sec’y of Health and Human Servs.*, 892 F.2d 15 (2d Cir. 1989)).

Dated: April 3, 2024
Binghamton, New York


Miroslav Lovric
U.S. Magistrate Judge

⁶ If you are proceeding *pro se* and served with this report, recommendation, and order by mail, three additional days will be added to the fourteen-day period, meaning that you have seventeen days from the date that the report, recommendation, and order was mailed to you to serve and file objections. Fed. R. Civ. P. 6(d). If the last day of that prescribed period falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday, then the deadline is extended until the end of the next day that is not a Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday. Fed. R. Civ. P. 6(a)(1)(C).

2010 WL 5185047

Only the Westlaw citation is currently available.

United States District Court,
S.D. New York.

David J. CASH, Plaintiff,

v.

BERNSTEIN, MD, Defendant.

No. 09 Civ.1922(BSJ)(HBP).

I

Oct. 26, 2010.

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION¹

PITMAN, United States Magistrate Judge.

*1 TO THE HONORABLE BARBARA S. JONES, United States District Judge,

I. Introduction

By notice of motion dated March 4, 2010 (Docket Item 11), defendant moves pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(g) to revoke plaintiff's *in forma pauperis* ("IFP") status on the ground that plaintiff has previously had at least three Section 1983 actions dismissed as frivolous, malicious or failing to state a claim upon which relief could be granted, and has not shown that he is in imminent danger of serious physical injury. Defendant further seeks an order directing that the action be dismissed unless plaintiff pays the full filing fee within thirty (30) days. For the reasons set forth below, I respectfully recommend that defendant's motion be granted.

II. Facts

Plaintiff, a sentenced inmate in the custody of the New York State Department of Correctional Services, commenced this action on or about January 12, 2009 by submitting his complaint to the Court's Pro Se office. Plaintiff alleges, in pertinent part, that he has "a non-healing ulcer that is gane green [*sic*]" and that defendant Bernstein "did not want to treat the ulcer right" (Complaint, dated March 3, 3009 (Docket Item 2) ("Compl."), at 3).

The action was originally commenced against two defendants—Dr. Bernstein and Dr. Finkelstein. The action was dismissed as to Dr. Finkelstein because the complaint contained no

allegations whatsoever concerning Dr. Finkelstein (Order dated February 18, 2010 (Docket Item 9)).

On March 4, 2010, the sole remaining defendant—Dr. Bernstein—filed the current motion. Plaintiff failed to submit a response. Accordingly, on August 20, 2010, I issued an Order advising plaintiff that if he wished to oppose the motion, he must submit his opposition by September 15, 2010 and that after that date I would consider the motion fully submitted and ripe for decision (Order dated August 20, 2010 (Docket Item 15)). The only submission plaintiff has made in response to my Order is a multi-part form issued by the New York State Department of Correctional Services entitled "Disbursement or Refund Request."² By this form, plaintiff appears to request that the New York State Department of Correctional Services pay the filing fee for this action. The form is marked "Denied."

III. Analysis

28 U.S.C. § 1915 permits an indigent litigant to commence an action in a federal court without prepayment of the filing fee that would ordinarily be charged. Although an indigent, incarcerated individual need not prepay the filing fee at the time at the time of filing, he must subsequently pay the fee, to the extent he is able to do so, through periodic withdrawals from his inmate accounts. 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b); *Harris v. City of New York*, 607 F.3d 18, 21 (2d Cir.2010). To prevent abuse of the judicial system by inmates, paragraph (g) of this provision denies incarcerated individuals the right to proceed without prepayment of the filing fee if they have repeatedly filed meritless actions, unless such an individual shows that he or she is in imminent danger of serious physical injury. See *Ortiz v. McBride*, 380 F.3d 649, 658 (2d Cir.2004) ("[T]he purpose of the PLRA ... was plainly to curtail what Congress perceived to be inmate abuses of the judicial process."); *Nicholas v. Tucker*, 114 F.3d 17, 19 (2d Cir.1997). Specifically, paragraph (g) provides:

*2 In no event shall a prisoner bring a civil action or appeal a judgment in a civil action or proceeding under this section if the prisoner has, on 3 or more prior occasions, while incarcerated or detained in any facility, brought an action or appeal in a court of the United States that was dismissed on the grounds that it is frivolous,

malicious, or fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, unless the prisoner is under imminent danger of serious physical injury.

28 U.S.C. § 1915(g).

If an inmate plaintiff seeks to avoid prepayment of the filing fee by alleging imminent danger of serious physical injury, there must be a nexus between the serious physical injury asserted and the claims alleged. *Pettus v. Morgenthau*, 554 F.3d 293, 298 (2d Cir.2009).

Section 1915(g) clearly prevents plaintiff from proceeding in this action without prepayment of the filing fee. The memorandum submitted by defendant establishes that plaintiff has had his IFP status revoked on at least four prior occasions as a result of his repeatedly filing meritless actions.

- In 2005, plaintiff commenced an action in the United States District Court for the Northern District of New York seeking to have his infected leg amputated. *Nelson³ v. Lee*, No. 9:05–CV–1096 (NAM)(DEP), 2007 WL 4333776 (N.D.N.Y. Dec. 5, 2007). In that matter, the Honorable Norman A. Mordue, Chief United States District Judge, accepted and adopted the Report and Recommendation of the Honorable David E. Peebles, United States Magistrate Judge, that plaintiff had brought three or more prior actions that had been dismissed for failure to state a claim and that plaintiff's IFP status should, therefore, be revoked. 2007 WL 4333776 at *1–*2.
- In *Nelson v. Nesmith*, No. 9:06–CV–1177 (TJM)(DEP), 2008 WL 3836387 (N.D.N.Y. Aug. 13, 2008), plaintiff again filed an action concerning the medical care he was receiving for his left leg. The Honorable Thomas J. McAvoy, United States District Judge, accepted the Report and Recommendation of Magistrate Judge Peebles, and revoked plaintiff's IFP status and dismissed the action on the ground that plaintiff had previously commenced at least three actions that had been dismissed on the merits. 2008 WL 3836387 at *1, *7.
- In *Nelson v. Spitzer*, No. 9:07–CV–1241 (TJM) (RFT), 2008 WL 268215 (N.D.N.Y. Jan. 29, 2008), Judge McAvoy again revoked plaintiff's IFP status

on the ground that plaintiff had commenced three or more actions that constituted “strikes” under Section 1915(g) and had not shown an imminent threat of serious physical injury. 2008 WL 268215 at *1–*2.

- Finally, in *Nelson v. Chang*, No. 08–CV–1261 (KAM)(LB), 2009 WL 367576 (E.D.N.Y. Feb. 10, 2009), the Honorable Kiyoo A. Matsumoto, United States District Judge, also found, based on the cases discussed above, that plaintiff had exhausted the three strikes permitted by Section 1915(g) and could not proceed IFP in the absence of a demonstration of an imminent threat of serious physical injury. 2009 WL 367576 at *2–*3.

*3 As defendant candidly admits, there is one case in which plaintiff's leg infection was found to support a finding of an imminent threat of serious physical injury sufficient to come within the exception to Section 1915(g). *Nelson v. Scoggy*, No. 9:06–CV–1146 (NAM)(DRH), 2008 WL 4401874 at *2 (N.D.N.Y. Sept. 24, 2008). Nevertheless, summary judgment was subsequently granted for defendants in that case, and the complaint was dismissed. Judge Mordue concluded that there was no genuine issue of fact that plaintiff had received adequate medical care for his leg wound and that the failure of the leg to heal was the result of plaintiff's own acts of self-mutilation and interference with the treatment provided. *Nelson v. Scoggy*, No. 9:06–CV–1146 (NAM)(DRH), 2009 WL 5216955 at *3–*4 (N.D.N.Y. Dec. 30, 2009).⁴

In light of the foregoing, there can be no reasonable dispute that plaintiff has exceeded the three “strikes” allowed by Section 1915(g) and that he cannot, therefore, proceed here without prepaying the filing fee unless he demonstrates an imminent threat of serious physical injury. Plaintiff has declined to attempt to make this showing in response to defendant's motion, and the only suggestion in the record of serious physical injury is the bare statement in the complaint that plaintiff “need[s] to go back to a wound speci [a]list before the game green [sic] kills [him]” (Compl. at 5). “However, unsupported, vague, self-serving, conclusory speculation is not sufficient to show that Plaintiff is, in fact, in imminent danger of serious physical harm.” *Merrifweather v. Reynolds*, 586 F.Supp.2d 548, 552 (D.S.C.2008), citing *Ciarpaglini v. Saini*, 352 F.3d 328, 330 (7th Cir.2003) and *White v. Colorado*, 157 F.3d 1226, 1231–32 (10th Cir.1998); see also *Martin v. Shelton*, 319 F.3d 1048, 1050 (8th Cir.2003) (imminent danger exception to Section 1915(g) requires “specific fact allegations of ongoing serious physical injury,

or of a pattern of misconduct evidencing the likelihood of imminent serious physical injury”). Given the plaintiff’s history, as set forth in the cases described above, I conclude that this vague statement is insufficient to support a finding that plaintiff is in imminent danger of serious physical injury.⁵

IV. Conclusion

Accordingly, for all the foregoing reasons, I find that plaintiff has had three or more prior actions dismissed as being frivolous, malicious or failing to state a claim and that plaintiff’s *in forma pauperis* status should, therefore, be revoked. If your Honor accepts this recommendation, I further recommend that the action be dismissed unless plaintiff pays the filing fee in full within thirty (30) days of your Honor’s final resolution of this motion.

V. OBJECTIONS

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(C) and Rule 72(b) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, the parties shall have

fourteen (14) days from receipt of this Report to file written objections. *See also* Fed.R.Civ.P. 6(a). Such objections (and responses thereto) shall be filed with the Clerk of the Court, with courtesy copies delivered to the Chambers of the Honorable Barbara S. Jones, United States District Judge, 500 Pearl Street, Room 1920, and to the Chambers of the undersigned, 500 Pearl Street, Room 750, New York, New York 10007. Any requests for an extension of time for filing objections must be directed to Judge Jones. FAILURE TO OBJECT WITHIN FOURTEEN (14) DAYS **WILL** RESULT IN A WAIVER OF OBJECTIONS AND **WILL** PRECLUDE APPELLATE REVIEW. *Thomas v. Arn*, 474 U.S. 140, 155 (1985); *United States v. Male Juvenile*, 121 F.3d 34, 38 (2d Cir.1997); *IUE AFL–CIO Pension Fund v. Herrmann*, 9 F.3d 1049, 1054 (2d Cir.1993); *Frank v. Johnson*, 968 F.2d 298, 300 (2d Cir.1992); *Wesolek v. Canadair Ltd.*, 838 F.2d 55, 57–59 (2d Cir.1988); *McCarthy v. Manson*, 714 F.2d 234, 237–38 (2d Cir.1983).

All Citations

Not Reported in F.Supp.2d, 2010 WL 5185047

Footnotes

- 1 At the time the action was originally filed, the Honorable Leonard B. Sand, United States District Judge, granted plaintiff’s application for *in forma pauperis* status based on plaintiff’s *ex parte* submission (Docket Item 1). Although the present application seeking to revoke plaintiff’s *in forma pauperis* status is non-dispositive, I address it by way of a report and recommendation to eliminate any appearance of a conflict between the decision of a district judge and that of a magistrate judge.
- 2 Plaintiff sent this form directly to my chambers, and it has not been docketed by the Clerk of the Court. The form will be docketed at the time this Report and Recommendation is issued.
- 3 It appears that plaintiff uses the names David J. Cash and Dennis Nelson interchangeably. In his complaint in this matter, plaintiff states that the Departmental Identification Number, or DIN, assigned to him by the New York State Department of Correctional Services (“DOCS”) is 94–B–0694 (Compl. at 7). DOCS inmate account records submitted by plaintiff in connection with his application for IFP status indicate that DIN 94–B–0694 is assigned to Dennis Nelson. In addition, the DOCS form described in footnote two bears the docket number of this action, but is signed in the name of Dennis Nelson and was sent in an envelope identifying the sender as Dennis Nelson. A subsequent action has been filed in this Court in which the plaintiff identifies himself as Dennis Nelson but lists his DIN as 94–B–0694, the same DIN used by plaintiff here. Finally, plaintiff has submitted nothing to controvert the assertion in defendant’s papers that David Cash and Dennis Nelson are the same person. In light of all these facts, I conclude that David Cash and Dennis Nelson are both names used by plaintiff.

- 4 Although the form complaint utilized by plaintiff expressly asks about prior actions involving the same facts, plaintiff disclosed only the *Scoggy* action and expressly denied the existence of any other actions relating to his imprisonment (Compl. at 6).
- 5 Plaintiff has sent me several letters describing his wound and its symptoms in detail, and I have no doubt that the wound is serious. However, in granting summary judgment dismissing an action last year based on the same allegations, Judge Mordue of the Northern District found that there was no genuine issue of fact that plaintiff's own conduct was responsible for the ineffectiveness of the treatment he was provided:

Furthermore, to the extent that Nelson's medical treatment was delayed, much of the delay was due to his own refusal to cooperate with medical staff and his self-mutilations. Nelson's actions to thwart the medical treatment of his wound cannot be construed as interference or indifference by anyone else.... [T]he medical treatment Nelson received complied with constitutional guarantees as it was appropriate, timely, and delayed only by Nelson's own actions.

*Nelson v. Scoggy, supra, 2009 WL 5216955 at *4.*

Given plaintiff's total failure to respond to the pending motion and his failure to even deny that he is actively thwarting treatment of his wound, it would be sheer speculation for me to conclude that he is in imminent danger of a serious injury as a result of defendant's conduct.

2024 WL 308250

Only the Westlaw citation is currently available.
United States District Court, E.D. New York.

Russell DEFREITAS, and on behalf
of same similarly situated, Plaintiff,

v.

Suffolk County Sheriff Errol D.
TOULON, et al., Defendants.

2:23-cv-5933 (NJC) (AYS)

|

Signed January 26, 2024

Attorneys and Law Firms

Russell DeFreitas, Riverhead, NY, Pro Se.

MEMORANDUM AND ORDER

NUSRAT J. CHOUDHURY, United States District Judge:

*1 Before the Court is an Amended Complaint, two motions seeking leave to proceed *in forma pauperis* (“IFP”), a motion seeking leave to amend the Amended Complaint, and two motions seeking the entry of a temporary restraining order and/or preliminary injunction filed by Russell DeFreitas (“DeFreitas” or “Plaintiff”), acting *pro se*,¹ while incarcerated as a pretrial detainee at the Suffolk County Correctional Facility. (Am. Compl., ECF No. 7; IFP Mot., ECF Nos. 2, 8; Mot. to Amend, ECF No. 9; TRO/PI Mot., ECF Nos. 12, 16.) DeFreitas challenges an underlying, pending state court prosecution and seeks, among other relief, the dismissal of the criminal charges against him. (Am. Compl. at 27, 54.)

On October 12, 2023, this case was reassigned to this Court’s docket. (Elec. Order, Oct. 12, 2023.) Upon review of DeFreitas’s submissions, the Court grants the applications to proceed IFP, grants the motion to amend the Amended Complaint, and dismisses the Amended Complaint as set forth below pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2)(B), 1915A(b). Given the dismissal of the Amended Complaint, the remaining motions (ECF Nos. 12, 16) are denied as moot.

BACKGROUND

DeFreitas commenced this action on July 24, 2023 by filing a twenty-two page Complaint against twenty-eight Defendants together with an application to proceed IFP. (Compl., ECF No. 1; IFP Mot., ECF No. 2.) On August 2, 2023, DeFreitas filed a twenty-seven page Amended Complaint against thirty-three Defendants with an additional thirty-two pages of exhibits and a second motion for leave to proceed IFP. (Am. Compl., ECF No. 7; IFP Mot., ECF No. 8.) On August 21, 2023, DeFreitas filed a letter motion seeking to amend his Amended Complaint to identify the Defendant previously named as “Suffolk County Supreme Court Judge” as “Supreme Court Judge Anthony Sinft [sic].” (Mot. to Amend, ECF No. 9.)

I. The Amended Complaint

DeFreitas submitted the Amended Complaint on the Court’s form for civil rights complaints brought pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983 (“Section 1983”) and names the following thirty-three Defendants: Suffolk County Sheriff Errol D. Toulon (“Sheriff Toulon”); Suffolk County Correctional Facility Warden (“Warden”)²; Suffolk County District Attorney Raymond A. Tierney (“DA Tierney”); Suffolk County Assistant District Attorney Jake Kubitz (“ADA Kubitz”); Suffolk County Assistant District Attorney Raquel Tisi (“ADA Tisi”); Roger B. Rothman, Esq. (“Rothman”); Ian T. Fitzgerald, Esq. (“Fitzgerald”); the Suffolk County District Attorney’s Office (“SCDAO”); the Suffolk County Sheriff’s Office (“SCSO”); Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone (“County Exec. Bellone”); an unnamed “Suffolk County District Court Arraignment Judge”; Suffolk County Supreme Court Judge Sinft (“Judge Senft”)³; Suffolk County; the State of New York (“NYS”); Governor Kathlene [sic] Hochul (“Gov. Hochul”); Suffolk County Police Officer Anthony Siviglia, P.I.D. # 60013 (“P.O. Siviglia”); Suffolk County Police Officer Todd Cracco, P.I.D. # 60533 (“P.O. Cracco”); Suffolk County Police Officer Arthur Scalzo, P.I.D. # 60922 (“P.O. Scalzo”); Suffolk County Police Officer Thomas McLaughlin, P.I.D. # 60341 (“P.O. McLaughlin”); Suffolk County Police Officer Charles Gambina, P.I.D. # 40188 (“P.O. Gambino”); Suffolk County Police Officer Charles Roe, P.I.D. #34492 (“P.O. Roe”); the Suffolk County Police Department (“SCPD”); New York State Police Officer Robert Lynch (“P.O. Lynch”); the New York State Police Department (“NYSPPD”); Suffolk County Police Officer Thomas Bosco, P.I.D. # 33705 (“P.O. Bosco”); the State of

New York Citizen's Policy and Complaint Review Council ("NYCPCRC"); the State of New York Grievance Committee for the Tenth Judicial District ("NY Grievance Committee"), its District Chair Dorian Glover, Esq. ("Glover"), its Chief Attorney Catherine A. Sheridan ("Sheridan"), its Staff Counsel Ann Marie Modica-Schaffer ("Modica-Schaffer"), its Staff Counsel Christopher R. Shannon ("Shannon"), and its Staff Counsel Rachel Merker ("Merker"); and Commissioner Yolanda Canty of the State of New York Commission of Correction's Citizen Policy and Complaint Review Council ("Commissioner Canty" and collectively, "Defendants"). (*See* Am. Compl. at 2–12.)

*2 DeFreitas's claims arise from his March 11, 2023 arrest in the parking lot of the Hampton Inn in Farmingville, New York. (*See id.* at 24.) The Amended Complaint describes that police officers handcuffed DeFreitas in front of his fiancée and took him to a holding pen where he was left handcuffed for hours and was not read Miranda warnings. (*See id.*) At the same time, police officers allegedly brought DeFreitas's fiancée to DeFreitas's home, entered the home without first showing her a warrant, and found drug paraphernalia. (*See id.*) DeFreitas challenges the procedures surrounding his arraignments on the original and superseding indictments and the legal representation provided by his court-appointed defense attorneys, Rothman and Fitzgerald, during those proceedings. (*See id.* at 13.) DeFreitas claims that he did not "consent to a waiver of [his] rights pursuant to CPL 180.10," yet those rights were waived without his knowledge. (*Id.*) DeFreitas also claims that, at the arraignment, he learned that officers had obtained a search warrant and used it to enter the hotel room that he and his fiancée were alleged to occupy and that the search yielded firearms, narcotics, and paraphernalia. (*See id.*) As a result, DeFreitas and his fiancée "were charged with these criminal offenses." (*Id.*) DeFreitas alleges that he informed Rothman that he wanted to be present at the grand jury proceedings. (*See id.*) DeFreitas further alleges that Rothman said he would "waive your 180 for a couple of weeks to give the prosecutor time to sort your case out and I'll see you at the Grand Jury." (*Id.* at 14.)

According to the Amended Complaint, DeFreitas was detained at the Suffolk County Correctional Facility ("the Jail") where, for the first two or three days, his requests for paper, a pencil, and stamped envelopes were denied. (*See id.*) DeFreitas alleges that corrections officers told him to wait until he had funds so that he could buy these items from the commissary. (*See id.* at 14.) DeFreitas claims to have received these items on March 18, 2023, at which time he wrote a letter

to the Suffolk County District Attorney's Office requesting that he and his fiancée be permitted to appear at the grand jury. (*See id.*)

DeFreitas alleges that the "prosecutor's office disregarded the grand jury notice and obtained a defective and invalid indictment" and denied him of his right to appear there. (*Id.* at 15.) DeFreitas also alleges that he was arraigned on this defective indictment on March 27, 2023 before Judge Senft, who appointed 18B attorney Fitzgerald to represent him. (*See id.* at 16.) DeFreitas further alleges that Fitzgerald apprised Judge Senft that DeFreitas had been denied his right to testify before the grand jury and that a motion would be forthcoming. (*See id.*)

According to the Amended Complaint, Fitzgerald later informed DeFreitas that the motion was unlikely to be successful because DeFreitas's prior attorney, Rothman, had claimed that DeFreitas did not want to appear at the grand jury. (*See id.*) DeFreitas alleges that he instructed Fitzgerald to make the motion anyway and that he would get proof that he requested to appear before the grand jury by submitting a Freedom of Information Law request to the prosecutor's office. (*See id.*) DeFreitas alleges that he next spoke with Fitzgerald on May 12, 2023, and learned that the motion was not filed and that the prosecution would be seeking a superseding indictment. (*See id.* at 16–17.) DeFreitas also alleges that Fitzgerald informed him that he did not get the search warrant in discovery because it was sealed. (*See id.* at 17.) DeFreitas complains that Fitzgerald did not challenge the sealing and alleges that he again requested to testify at the grand jury. (*See id.*)

On May 18, 2023, DeFreitas testified before the grand jury and alleges that he was not informed of the charges under consideration "so [he] was unable to present competent or relevant evidence." (*Id.* at 18.) According to the Amended Complaint, DeFreitas learned during his testimony that he "was being accused of selling deadly narcotics, causing numerous overdose [sic] and being arrested with overdose victims cash app debit cards in my possession." (*Id.* at 19.) DeFreitas complains that the two deputy sheriffs who accompanied him to the grand jury were only sworn to secrecy after his first forty-five minutes of testimony had concluded, and alleges that there are "rumor[s] through out [sic] the jail that I was selling deadly narcotics causing overdoses and getting caught with the victims [sic] valuables[.]" (*Id.*)

*3 According to the Amended Complaint, DeFreitas was arraigned on the superseding indictment on May 23, 2023, before Judge Senft, and only then learned that he was being charged with operating as a “major drug trafficker” involved in criminal sales of controlled substances in the first and second degree, criminal possession of a controlled substance in the third degree, and criminal possession of a firearm in the second degree. (*Id.* at 20.) DeFreitas alleges that he complained about his attorney, Fitzgerald, to Judge Senft, and that the judge allegedly “became furious telling me I’m not getting another counselor” and set bail of “5 million over 10 million with a 50 million partially secure bond.” (*Id.* at 21.)

DeFreitas also complains about the timing of the discovery produced by the prosecution and alleges that his attorney, presumably Fitzgerald, did not adequately represent him. (*See id.* at 15–17, 20–22.) According to the Amended Complaint, DeFreitas last spoke with Fitzgerald on July 14, 2023. (*See id.* at 21–23.) DeFreitas alleges that he has filed a grievance against Fitzgerald and is “awaiting a response.” (*Id.* at 23.)

DeFreitas also alleges that, prior to his incarceration, he was involved in a car accident that caused injuries to his neck and back. (*Id.* at 24–25.) According to the Amended Complaint, DeFreitas had physical therapy sessions four times per week prior to his arrest. (*See id.* at 24.) DeFreitas alleges that he has been complaining about back and neck pain and stiffness for months and was treated with a “pill medication” that caused him severe stomach pain and induced vomiting for the three days he was taking it. (*Id.* at 24–25.) DeFreitas describes that he was seen by a doctor who prescribed him a cream to use twice per day, which worked on the pain “for a little while,” but did not help the stiffness in his neck. (*Id.* at 25.) DeFreitas was seen again by a doctor who prescribed a different pill for twenty-one days. (*See id.*) DeFreitas alleges that he has been taking the pill for about a week or two, which has helped to alleviate the pain in his back better than the cream. (*See id.*) However, DeFreitas complains that the pills do “nothing for my neck” and that he is “still complaining to medical” and filed a grievance on July 21, 2023. (*Id.*)

Further, DeFreitas alleges that “years ago the foot doctor in this facility diagnosed that the jail issued sneakers are not for my feet but there was nothing he could do.” (*Id.*) Presently, DeFreitas claims to have developed a **bunion** on his left foot allegedly due to the narrow footwear provided by the jail. (*See id.* at 26.) DeFreitas alleges that he was administered a cortisone shot but claims that his foot still hurts. (*See id.*) DeFreitas describes that he wears slippers instead of sneakers,

but then is restricted to his housing unit where slippers may be worn. (*See id.*) According to the Amended Complaint, a doctor told DeFreitas that they “don’t operate on buyons [sic] here, I have to wait until I go home or upstate.” (*Id.*) DeFreitas then filed a grievance on July 21, 2023, and the present Amended Complaint on August 2, 2023. (*See id.*)

Based on the foregoing allegations, DeFreitas seeks the “dismissal of all criminal charges” against him as well as a damages award in the total sum of \$3.3 million. (*Id.* at 27–28.)

LEGAL STANDARDS

The Second Circuit has established a two-step procedure by which the district court first considers whether a plaintiff qualifies for IFP status, and then considers the merits of the complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915. *See Potnick v. E. State Hosp.*, 701 F.2d 243, 244 (2d Cir. 1983) (*per curiam*) (“If the plaintiff demonstrates poverty, he should be permitted to file his complaint *in forma pauperis*. Then the court may properly consider dismissing the complaint as frivolous.”).

I. *In Forma Pauperis*

*4 Upon review of DeFreitas’s IFP applications (IFP Apps., ECF Nos. 2, 8), the Court finds that DeFreitas is qualified by his financial status to commence this action without the prepayment of the filing fee. Therefore, the applications to proceed IFP are granted.

II. Sufficiency of the Pleadings

Judge Bianco has accurately summarized the standard of review for IFP *pro se* complaints as follows:

Section 1915 of Title 28 requires a district court to dismiss an *in forma pauperis* complaint if the action is frivolous or malicious, fails to state a claim on which relief may be granted, or seeks monetary relief against a defendant who is immune from such relief. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e) (2)(B)(i-iii). The Court is required to dismiss the action as soon as it makes such a determination. *See id.* Courts are obliged to construe the pleadings of a *pro se* plaintiff liberally. *Sealed Plaintiff v. Sealed Defendant*, 537 F.3d 185, 191 (2d Cir. 2008); *McEachin v. McGuinnis*, 357 F.3d 197, 200 (2d Cir. 2004). Moreover, at the pleadings stage of the proceeding, the Court must assume the truth of “all well-pleaded, nonconclusory factual allegations” in the complaint. *Kiobel v. Royal Dutch Petroleum Co.*, 621

F.3d 111, 123 (2d Cir. 2010), *aff'd* — U.S. —, 133 S.Ct. 1659, 185 L.Ed.2d 671 (2013) (citing *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678–80, 129 S.Ct. 1937, 173 L. Ed. 2d 868 (2009)).

However, a complaint must plead sufficient facts to “state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face.” *Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 570, 127 S.Ct. 1955, 167 L.Ed.2d 929 (2007). “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.” *Iqbal*, 556 U.S. at 679, 129 S.Ct. 1937 (citations omitted). If a liberal reading of the complaint “gives any indication that a valid claim might be stated,” the Court must grant leave to amend the complaint. See *Cuoco v. Moritsugu*, 222 F.3d 99, 112 (2d Cir. 2000). However, if amendment of the complaint would not cure the substantive defects of the claim, leave to amend should be denied. *Cuoco*, 222 F.3d at 112.

Caldwell v. Pesce, 83 F. Supp. 3d 472, 480 (E.D.N.Y. 2015) (spacing adjusted), *aff'd*, 639 F. App'x 38 (2d Cir. 2016). Indeed, “[t]hreadbare recitals of the elements of a cause of action, supported by mere conclusory statements ... are not entitled to the assumption of truth.” *Iqbal*, 556 U.S. at 678 (citation omitted). While “detailed factual allegations” are not required, “[a] pleading that offers ‘labels and conclusions’ or ‘a formulaic recitation of the elements of a cause of action will not do.’ ” *Iqbal*, 556 U.S. at 678 (quoting *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 555). Rather, a plaintiff’s factual allegations must be sufficient to give the defendant “fair notice of what the ... claim is and the grounds upon which it rests,” *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 555 (quotation marks omitted). In addition, “a *pro se* complaint, however inartfully pleaded, must be held to less stringent standards than formal pleadings drafted by lawyers.” *Ceara v. Deacon*, 916 F.3d 208, 213 (2d Cir. 2019) (citing *Erickson v. Pardus*, 551 U.S. 89, 94 (2007)).

DISCUSSION

I. Abstention

DeFreitas requests injunctive relief in the form of dismissal of the criminal charges pending against him in the New York State Supreme Court, Suffolk County on the basis of the following allegations: (1) that he was purportedly not properly Mirandized; (2) that the state court arraignment judge allegedly illegally waived his rights under CPL § 180.10; (3) that the district attorney purportedly failed to protect his right to testify before the grand jury; and (4) that

any further prosecution would allegedly violate his right to a speedy trial.⁴ Because the requested relief would require this Court to interfere with a pending state criminal prosecution, these claims squarely trigger the abstention doctrine set forth in *Younger v. Harris*, 401 U.S. 37 (1971), and *Sprint Communications, Inc. v. Jacobs*, 571 U.S. 69 (2013). For the following reasons, this Court must dismiss these claims under *Younger* and *Sprint*.

*5 The doctrine of *Younger* abstention requires federal courts to abstain from exercising jurisdiction over claims when adjudication of those claims would interfere with any one of three types of state-level proceedings that present “exceptional circumstances”: (1) “ongoing state criminal prosecutions”; (2) state “civil enforcement proceedings” that are “akin to criminal prosecutions”; and (3) proceedings that involve state courts “perform[ing] their judicial functions,” including “enforcing the orders and judgments of its courts.” *Sprint*, 571 U.S. at 78 (defining the scope of *Younger* abstention). After applying this categorical approach, courts consider three additional, non-dispositive factors to determine whether *Younger* abstention is appropriate: 1) whether there is a “pending state proceeding,” 2) whether that proceeding “implicates an important state interest,” and 3) whether “the state proceeding affords an adequate opportunity for judicial review of ... federal constitutional claims.” *Falco v. Justices of Matrimonial Parts of Supreme Ct. of Suffolk Cnty.*, 805 F.3d 425, 427 (2d Cir. 2015) (citing *Middlesex Cnty. Ethics Comm. v. Garden State Bar Ass'n*, 457 U.S. 423 (1982)); see, e.g., *Lowell v. Vermont Dep't of Child. & Fams.*, 835 F. App'x 637, 639 (2d Cir. 2020), *as amended* (Dec. 15, 2020) (describing the *Younger/Sprint* abstention analysis). “[E]ven if *Younger*’s prerequisites are satisfied, a federal court may exercise jurisdiction if the plaintiff can make a showing of ‘bad faith, harassment or any other unusual circumstance that would call for equitable relief.’ ” *Lowell*, 835 F. App'x at 639 (quoting *Younger*, 401 U.S. at 54).

Here, DeFreitas asks this Court to dismiss the state criminal charges that are currently pending against him, squarely triggering *Younger*’s first category: interference with an ongoing state criminal prosecution. See *Sprint*, 571 U.S. at 72–73 (“*Younger* exemplifies one class of cases in which federal-court abstention is required: When there is a parallel, pending state criminal proceeding, federal courts must refrain from enjoining the state prosecution.”). Indeed, it has long been held that a federal court may not enjoin a pending state court criminal proceeding in the absence of “‘special circumstances suggesting bad faith, harassment, or irreparable injury that

is both serious and immediate.’ ” *Heicklen v. Morgenthau*, 378 F. App'x 1, 2 (2d Cir. 2010) (citing *Younger*, 401 U.S. at 54, and quoting *Gibson v. Berryhill*, 411 U.S. 564, 573–74 (1973)). Thus, federal courts routinely abstain from intervening in state criminal proceedings “under the principle known as comity [because] a federal district court has no power to intervene in the internal procedures of the state courts.” *Kaufman v. Kaye*, 466 F.3d 83, 86 (2d Cir. 2006) (quotation marks omitted). The Supreme Court has made clear that a pending state prosecution ordinarily provides the accused “a fair and sufficient opportunity for vindication of federal constitutional rights.” *Kugler v. Helfant*, 421 U.S. 117, 124 (1975).

DeFreitas complains that the state court, prosecution, and defense counsel have, *inter alia*, deprived him of his right to receive a speedy trial. (See Am. Compl. at 27.) While a federal constitutional claim seeking to address the present denial of speedy trial rights in a state criminal prosecution may overcome *Younger*'s bar when the claim does not seek dismissal of the state criminal charges, such a claim is properly brought as a habeas petition pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 2241 and must first be properly exhausted within the New York state courts. See *Braden v. 30th Jud. Cir. Ct. of Kentucky*, 410 U.S. 484, 490–92 (1973) (*habeas* petition could be heard before trial where petitioner sought to be brought speedily to trial and “made no effort to abort a state proceeding, or to disrupt the orderly functioning of state judicial processes”); see also *Burns v. Valhalla*, No. 23-CV-6440 (LTS), 2023 WL 7301394, at *2–4 (S.D.N.Y. Nov. 6, 2023). Further, such a federal constitutional claim must be brought “to federal court, not in an effort to forestall a state prosecution, but to enforce the [state]’s obligation to provide him with a state court forum.” *Braden*, 410 U.S. at 491; see also *Burns*, 2023 WL 7301394, at *3–4.

*6 DeFreitas does not allege any facts suggesting that he has presented his speedy trial claim to the state courts or that he has exhausted this claim. (See generally Am. Compl.) Nor does DeFreitas seek to hasten his prosecution; rather, he seeks dismissal of the charges against him altogether. (See Am. Compl. at 27, 54.) In this situation, the *Middlesex* factors weigh strongly in favor of abstention because there is a pending state proceeding implicating New York's important interest in enforcing its criminal laws against the sale and possession of narcotics and unlawful possession of firearms, and there has been no showing that the state proceeding cannot afford an adequate opportunity for judicial review of DeFreitas's speedy trial claim.

Finally, DeFreitas does not plead any facts from which the Court could reasonably find bad faith or harassment in the state criminal prosecution counseling against the application of *Younger* abstention in this action. In order to allege bad faith or harassment, DeFreitas must plead facts that, if true, would show that “the state proceeding was initiated with and is animated by a retaliatory, harassing, or other illegitimate motive” and that he “ha[s] no reasonable expectation of obtaining a favorable outcome.” *Diamond “D” Const. Corp. v. McGowan*, 282 F.3d 191, 199 (2d Cir. 2002). A state proceeding that “is legitimate in its purposes, but unconstitutional in its execution—even when violations of constitutional rights are egregious—will not warrant the application of the bad faith exception” to *Younger* abstention. *Id.* (citation omitted). DeFreitas has not pointed to anything in the record suggesting that his state criminal prosecution for charges of selling and possessing narcotics and unlawfully possessing a firearm is motivated by a retaliatory, harassing, or other illegitimate motive, or that he has no reasonable expectation of obtaining a favorable outcome in the state proceedings.

For all of these reasons, this Court may not intervene in the pending state criminal prosecution of DeFreitas. Accordingly, the Court dismisses DeFreitas's claims for injunctive relief without prejudice. See *Lowell*, 835 F. App'x at 639, (noting that “*Younger* abstention requires federal courts to abstain from exercising jurisdiction” over the state-level proceedings to which it applies) (emphasis supplied); *Diamond “D” Const. Corp.*, 282 F.3d at 197 (“[W]hen *Younger* applies, abstention is mandatory and its application deprives the federal court of jurisdiction in the matter.” (quoting *Colorado Water Conserv. Dist. v. United States*, 424 U.S. 800, 816 n.22 (1976))); *Player v. Sini*, No. 21-CV-5613(JS)(JMW), 2021 WL 5084172, at *2 (E.D.N.Y. Nov. 1, 2021).

The Court next addresses DeFreitas's remaining Section 1983 claims seeking damages. See, e.g., *Kirschner v. Klemons*, 225 F.3d 227, 238 (2d Cir. 2000) (claims for monetary damages should not be dismissed under *Younger* abstention).

II. Eleventh Amendment

The Eleventh Amendment to the United States Constitution provides:

The Judicial power of the United States shall not be construed to extend to any suit in law or equity, commenced or prosecuted against one of the United States by Citizens of another State, or by Citizens or Subjects of any Foreign State.

U.S. CONST. amend. XI. “The reach of the Eleventh Amendment has ... been interpreted to extend beyond the terms of its text to bar suits in federal courts against states, by their own citizens or by foreign sovereigns....” *State Emp’s. Bargaining Agent Coal. v. Rowland*, 494 F.3d 71, 95 (2d Cir. 2007) (citation and quotation marks omitted) (alterations in original). Eleventh Amendment immunity also extends to suits for money damages against state officials in their official capacities. See *Will v. Mich. Dep’t of State Police*, 491 U.S. 58, 71 (1989) (“[A] suit against a state official in his or her official capacity is not a suit against the official but rather is a suit against the official’s office. As such, it is no different from a suit against the State itself.”) (citation omitted). The doctrine further extends to government entities that are “arms of the state.” *Leitner v. Westchester Cmty. Coll.*, 779 F.3d 130, 134–35 (2d Cir. 2015). The Second Circuit has applied two different tests to determine whether government entities are arms of the state immune from suit under the Eleventh Amendment, and has noted that the choice of which test to apply is not outcome determinative. *Id.* at 134–35, 137. Both tests generally require consideration of similar concerns, including the extent to which the state is responsible for paying for any money judgment against the defendant. See *id.* at 137; *Alice Peck Day Mem’l Hosp. v. Samuelson*, No. 2:21-CV-102, 2023 WL 4157434, at *8–9 (D. Vt. June 23, 2023).⁵ Consequently, “[a] suit generally may not be maintained directly ... against an agency or department of the State” absent a waiver of sovereign immunity. *Fla Dep’t of State v. Treasure Salvors, Inc.*, 458 U.S. 670, 684 (1982); see also *Pennhurst State School & Hosp. v. Halderman*, 465 U.S. 89, 100 (1984).

*7 DeFreitas’s claims for money damages against numerous state entities and officials are barred by the Eleventh Amendment. First, at the most basic level, DeFreitas’s claim against New York State itself is barred by the Eleventh Amendment. See U.S. CONST. amend. XI; *Rowland*, 494

F.3d at 95 (Eleventh Amendment bars suits in federal court against states by their own citizens).

Second, DeFreitas’s claims against the New York State Police Department, the State of New York Citizen’s Policy and Complaint Review Council, and the State of New York Grievance Committee for the Tenth Judicial District are barred by the Eleventh Amendment as departments or agencies of New York State or as entities properly considered arms of the state. See *Fla Dep’t of State*, 458 U.S. at 684 (recognizing Eleventh Amendment bar to claims against state departments and agencies); *Weather v. New York State Police*, No. 619CV400GTSATB, 2019 WL 7602170, at *4 (N.D.N.Y. Aug. 14, 2019), report and recommendation adopted, No. 619CV0400GTSATB, 2019 WL 5387448 (N.D.N.Y. Oct. 22, 2019) (finding that the NYSPD “is an arm of the state and may not be sued” for money damages); *Pagan v. Corr. Med. Servs.*, No. 11-CV-1357 ER, 2012 WL 2036041, at *5–6 (S.D.N.Y. June 6, 2012) (reasoning that money damages claims against the NYCPCRC would be barred by the Eleventh Amendment); *McKeown v. N.Y. State Comm’n on Jud. Conduct*, 377 F. App’x 121, 123 (2d Cir. 2010) (affirming that the New York State Grievance Committee, Ninth Judicial District is entitled to Eleventh Amendment immunity). To the extent the Eleventh Amendment does not apply to these entities, DeFreitas’s claims against them are also dismissed because the entities are not considered persons for Section 1983 purposes. See *infra* Section VIII.

Third, DeFreitas’s claims against numerous officials of entities that are departments or agencies of New York State or are otherwise properly considered arms of the state, in their official capacities, are also barred by the Eleventh Amendment. See *Will*, 491 U.S. at 71. This applies to DeFreitas’s claims against: (1) Governor Hochul; (2) New York State Police Officer Lynch; (3) Commissioner Canty of the State of New York Commission of Correction’s Citizen Policy and Complaint Review Council; (4) the following officials of the New York Grievance Committee: District Chair Dorian Glover, Chief Attorney Catherine Sheridan, Staff Counsel Ann Marie Modica-Schaffer, Staff Counsel Christopher Shannon, and Staff Counsel Rachel Merker; (5) Judge Senft; (6) and the prosecutors involved in bringing and prosecuting state criminal charges against DeFreitas: DA Tierney, ADA Kubitz, and ADA Tisi. See *Darcy v. Lippman*, 356 F. App’x 434, 436–37 (2d Cir. 2009) (holding that the Eleventh Amendment bars “claim[s] for damages against the individual defendants in their official capacities” as state officials); *Tsabbar v. Booth*, 115 F. App’x 513, 514 (2d

Cir. 2004) (“claims against the New York State Defendants, challenging the conduct of New York State judges, are barred by either the Eleventh Amendment to the United States Constitution or the doctrine of judicial immunity, or both.”); *Torres v. Spota*, No. 19CV00296JMAGR, 2019 WL 3035522, at *3 n.4 (E.D.N.Y. July 10, 2019) (holding that when a district attorney decides whether to prosecute, that person is representing the State and is entitled to invoke Eleventh Amendment immunity (citing *Ying Jing Gan v. City of New York*, 996 F.2d 522, 536 (2d Cir. 1993))).

*8 For the foregoing reasons, DeFreitas's Section 1983 claims against NYS, the NYSPD, the NYCPCRC, the NY Grievance Committee, as well as DA Tierney, ADA Kubitz, ADA Tisi, Judge Senft, Gov. Hochul, Commissioner Canty, Glover, Sheridan, Modica-Schaffer, Shannon, and Merker in their official capacities are barred by the Eleventh Amendment are thus dismissed without prejudice pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2)(B), 1915A(b). See *Montero v. Travis*, 171 F.3d 757, 760 (2d Cir. 1999) (*per curiam*) (“A complaint will be dismissed as frivolous when it is clear that the defendants are immune from suit.”) (citation and quotation marks omitted).

III. Judicial Immunity

“[J]udges generally have absolute immunity from suits for money damages for their judicial actions.” *Bliven v. Hunt*, 579 F.3d 204, 209 (2d Cir. 2009) (citations omitted). The Supreme Court instructs that this immunity is “from suit, not just from ultimate assessment of damages.” *Mireles v. Waco*, 502 U.S. 9, 11 (1991) (citation omitted). This immunity from money damages claims applies to state court judges who are sued in federal court pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983 for action taken in the judge's judicial capacity. See *Sundwall v. Leuba*, 28 F. App'x 11, *12–13 (2d Cir. 2001) (summary order). The 1996 Congressional amendments to Section 1983 also bar claims for injunctive relief against judges for actions taken in their judicial capacity, providing that “ ‘in any action brought against a judicial officer for an act or omission taken in such officer's judicial capacity, injunctive relief shall not be granted unless a declaratory decree was violated or declaratory relief was unavailable.’ ” *Montero*, 171 F.3d at 761 (quoting Federal Courts Improvement Act of 1996, Pub. L. No. 104–317, § 309(c), 110 Stat. 3847, 3853 (1996) (amending 42 U.S.C. § 1983)). Therefore, a judge is immune from claims for money damages or injunctive relief unless the challenged conduct was taken beyond the judge's judicial capacity, or “ ‘in the complete absence of all jurisdiction.’ ” *Bobrowsky*

v. Yonkers Courthouse, 777 F. Supp. 2d 692, 711 (S.D.N.Y. 2011) (quoting *Mireles*, 502 U.S. at 11).

Here, DeFreitas appears to challenge rulings made by Judge Senft during the underlying state court criminal prosecution. (See Am. Compl. 16, 20–21.) DeFreitas also appears to allege that the Judge Senft set excessive bail. (*Id.* at 21.) As is readily apparent, the challenged rulings were made within Judge Senft's judicial capacity, and DeFreitas has not alleged any facts from which this Court could reasonably find that Judge Senft acted beyond his judicial capacity or in the complete absence of all jurisdiction. (See generally Am. Compl.) As such, Judge Senft is entitled to absolute judicial immunity. See *Sundwall*, 28 F. App'x at *12–13. Further, DeFreitas's excessive bail claims are also barred by absolute judicial immunity because the setting of bail is a judicial function that is entitled to absolute immunity. See *Franklin v. Warren Cty. D.A.'s Office*, No. 1:08CV801(GLS/RFT), 2009 WL 161314, at *5 (N.D.N.Y. Jan. 21, 2009) (absolute judicial immunity barred excessive bail claim against judge because “[j]udges enjoy absolute immunity from personal liability for acts committed within their judicial jurisdiction” (citing *Young v. Selsky*, 41 F.3d 47, 51 (2d Cir. 1994))). Since absolute “judicial immunity is not overcome by allegations of bad faith or malice,” *Mireles*, 502 U.S. at 11, DeFreitas's Section 1983 claims against Judge Senft are not plausible and are dismissed pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2)(B); 1915A(b). See *Mills v. Fischer*, 645 F.3d 176, 177 (2d Cir. 2011) (“Any claim dismissed on the ground of absolute judicial immunity is ‘frivolous’ for purposes of [the IFP statute].”).

IV. Prosecutorial Immunity

*9 Prosecutors have absolute immunity from civil suits for acts committed within the scope of their official duties where the challenged activities are not investigative in nature, but rather are “intimately associated with the judicial phase of the criminal process.” *Imbler v. Pachtman*, 424 U.S. 409, 430 (1976); see also *Simon v. City of New York*, 727 F.3d 167, 171 (2d Cir. 2013). The actions for which a prosecutor is entitled to absolute immunity “include deciding whether to bring charges and presenting a case to a grand jury or a court.” *Simon*, 727 F.3d at 171; *Shmueli v. City of New York*, 424 F.3d 231, 237 (2d Cir. 2005). In addition, prosecutors have absolute immunity from suit for acts that may be administrative obligations but are “directly connected with the conduct of a trial.” *Van de Kamp v. Goldstein*, 555 U.S. 335, 344 (2009); see also *Ogunkoya v. Monaghan*, 913 F.3d 64, 70–72 (2d Cir. 2019) (holding that prosecutors’ direction as to where a criminal defendant would be arraigned was in

preparation for a court proceeding in which the prosecutors were acting as advocates, and ADAs were therefore shielded by absolute immunity (citing, *inter alia*, *Goldstein*, 555 U.S. at 344)).

Here, DeFreitas challenges the prosecutors' decisions to charge him and to disregard his request to be present and to testify at the original grand jury. (Am Compl. at 16.)⁶ DeFreitas also complains generally about the prosecution's discovery production. (*Id.* at 17.) The decision to bring and pursue such charges fall squarely within the scope of the judicial phase of the criminal process for which the prosecutors have absolute immunity from suit.

Accordingly, even if DeFreitas had alleged a plausible malicious prosecution claim, *see infra* at 25–26, DA Tierney, ADA Kubitz and ADA Tisi are shielded from suit by absolute prosecutorial immunity. Moreover, it is well-established that “there is no federal constitutional right to testify before a grand jury, nor, for that matter, is there even a federal right to a grand jury in state criminal proceedings.” *United States v. Mandujano*, 425 U.S. 564, 571–72 (1976); *see also Franklin*, 2009 WL 161314, at *2. Accordingly, these claims are frivolous and thus are dismissed pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2)(B), 1915A(b). *See Collazo v. Pagano*, 656 F.3d 131, 134 n.2 (2d Cir. 2011) (holding that claim against prosecutor is frivolous if it arises from conduct that is “intimately associated with the judicial phase of the criminal process”).

V. Individual Capacity Claims

DeFreitas's November 7, 2023 letter states that his claims are brought against the named Defendants “in their individual capacities.” (ECF No. 7.) DeFreitas's allegations suggest that he seeks to impose liability upon the individual Defendants—Judge Senft, DA Tierney, ADA Kubitz, ADA Tisi, Gov. Hochul, P.O. Lynch, Commissioner Canty, and the following officials of the NY Grievance Committee: District Chair Dorian Glover, Chief Attorney Catherine Sheridan, Staff Counsel Ann Marie Modica-Schaffer, Staff Counsel Christopher Shannon, and Staff Counsel Rachel Merker—for actions taken in their official capacity as a state judge, prosecutors, a state police officer, a member of the NY Commission of Correction's Citizen's Policy and Complaint Review Council, and members of the NY Grievance Committee in the state criminal proceeding against him on charges for unlawfully selling and possessing narcotics and unlawfully possessing firearms.⁷ DeFreitas's

claims against each of these Defendants are barred by judicial immunity, prosecutorial immunity, or Eleventh Amendment sovereign immunity as discussed above. To the extent that DeFreitas seeks to bring claims against these Defendants for actions taken in their individual capacity, the Amended Complaint fails to allege any plausible basis for individual liability against any of these Defendants. Consequently, any such claims against these specific Defendants are dismissed pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2)(B), 1915A(b).

VI. State Action

*10 DeFreitas also brings Section 1983 claims against the defense attorneys alleged to have been appointed by the state court to represent him in the underlying criminal prosecution. Section 1983 “constrains only state conduct, not the ‘acts of private persons or entities.’” *Hooda v. Brookhaven Nat'l Lab.*, 659 F. Supp. 2d 382, 393 (E.D.N.Y. 2009) (quoting *Rendell-Baker v. Kohn*, 457 U.S. 830, 837 (1982)). Accordingly, “a litigant claiming that his constitutional rights have been violated must first establish that the challenged conduct constitutes state action.” *Flagg v. Yonkers Sav. & Loan Ass'n*, 396 F.3d 178, 186 (2d Cir. 2005) (quotation marks and citation omitted); *Fabrikant v. French*, 691 F.3d 193, 206 (2d Cir. 2012) (“A plaintiff pressing a claim of violation of his constitutional rights under § 1983 is [] required to show state action.”) (quotation marks and citation omitted). Indeed, “the under-color-of-state-law element of § 1983 excludes from its reach merely private conduct, no matter how discriminatory or wrongful.” *Am. Mfrs. Mut. Ins. Co. v. Sullivan*, 526 U.S. 40, 50 (1999) (quotation marks and citation omitted).

Here, insofar as DeFreitas brings claims under Section 1983 for alleged violations of his constitutional rights against his defense attorneys, Rothman and Fitzgerald, such claims are not plausible because these Defendants are not state actors. Attorneys, whether court-appointed or privately retained, are generally not state actors for purposes of Section 1983. *See, e.g., Polk County v. Dodson*, 454 U.S. 312, 325 (1981) (“With respect to [] § 1983 claims ... a public defender does not act under color of state law when performing a lawyer's traditional functions as counsel to a defendant in a criminal proceeding.”); *see also Rodriguez v. Weprin*, 116 F.3d 62, 65–66 (2d Cir. 1997) (“[I]t is well-established that court-appointed attorneys performing a lawyer's traditional functions as counsel to [a] defendant [in a criminal proceeding] do not act ‘under color of state law’ and therefore are not subject to suit under 42 U.S.C. § 1983.”).

A private actor may, however, be considered as acting under the color of state law for purposes of Section 1983 if the private actor was a “ ‘willful participant in joint activity with the State or its agents.’ ” *Ciambriello v. County of Nassau*, 292 F.3d 307, 324 (2d Cir. 2002) (quoting *Adickes v. S.H. Kress & Co.*, 398 U.S. 144, 152 (1970)). Section 1983 liability may also extend to a private party who conspires with a state actor to violate a plaintiff’s constitutional rights. See *Ciambriello*, 292 F.3d at 323–24. In order to state a Section 1983 conspiracy claim, a plaintiff must allege: “(1) an agreement between a state actor and a private party; (2) to act in concert to inflict an unconstitutional injury; and (3) an overt act done in furtherance of that goal causing damages.” *Id.* at 324–25 (citing *Pangburn v. Culbertson*, 200 F.3d 65, 72 (2d Cir. 1999)). Indeed, “[a] merely conclusory allegation that a private entity acted in concert with a state actor does not suffice to state a § 1983 claim against the private entity.” *Id.* at 324 (quotation marks omitted).

As is readily apparent, DeFreitas has not sufficiently alleged that Rothman or Fitzgerald acted jointly with a state actor or conspired with a state actor to deprive him of some constitutional right. (See Am. Compl., *in toto*.) Thus, in the absence of any state action, DeFreitas’s Section 1983 claims against Rothman and Fitzgerald are not plausible as a matter of law. See *Ciambriello*, 292 F.3d at 325. Hence, DeFreitas’s Section 1983 claims against Rothman and Fitzgerald are dismissed pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2)(B)(i)-(ii), 1915A(b)(1).

VII. Personal Involvement and Supervisory Liability

Although DeFreitas seeks to impose Section 1983 liability upon Sheriff Toulon, the Warden, County Exec. Bellone, Gov. Hochul, Glover, Sheridan, Modica-Schaffer, Shannon, Merker, and Canty, his scant allegations are insufficient to support plausible claims. As the Second Circuit has made clear, in order “[t]o hold a state official liable under § 1983, a plaintiff must plead and prove the elements of the underlying constitutional violation directly against the official without relying on a special test for supervisory liability.” *Tangreti v. Bachmann*, 983 F.3d 609, 620 (2d Cir. 2020).

*11 DeFreitas has not alleged any conduct or inaction attributable to any of these individuals and it appears that DeFreitas has brought Section 1983 claims against them solely due to the supervisory positions they hold. Indeed, apart from the list of Defendants, DeFreitas has not mentioned any of these Defendants in the body of the Amended Complaint. “Dismissal is appropriate where

a defendant is listed in the caption, but the body of the complaint fails to indicate what the defendant did to the plaintiff.” *Cipriani v. Buffardi*, No. 06-CV-0889, 2007 WL 607341, at *1 (N.D.N.Y. Feb. 20, 2007) (citing *Gonzalez v. City of New York*, No. 97-CV-2246, 1998 WL 382055, at *2 (S.D.N.Y. Jul. 9, 1998)); see also *Crown v. Wagenstein*, No. 96-CV-3895, 1998 WL 118169, at *2 (S.D.N.Y. Mar. 16, 1998) (dismissing claims asserted against the defendant-superintendent because the complaint “mention[ed him] only in the caption, and fail[ed] to allege any act or omission by [him]”). Thus, DeFreitas’s Section 1983 claims against Sheriff Toulon, the Warden, County Exec. Bellone, Gov. Hochul, Glover, Sheridan, Modica-Schaffer, Shannon, Merker, and Commissioner Canty in their individual capacities are dismissed without prejudice pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2)(B), 1915A(b).

Further, DeFreitas has named P.O. Siviglia, P.O. Cracco, P.O. Scalzo, P.O. McLaughlin, P.O. Gambino, P.O. Roe, P.O. Lynch, and P.O. Bosco as Defendants. There are no allegations about any of these Defendants, however, in the body of the Amended Complaint. (See Am. Compl., ECF No. 7, *in toto*.) “It is well settled that, in order to establish a defendant’s individual liability in a suit brought under § 1983, a plaintiff must show, *inter alia*, the defendant’s personal involvement in the alleged constitutional deprivation.” *Grullon v. City of New Haven*, 720 F.3d 133, 138 (2d Cir. 2013). Thus, “a Section 1983 plaintiff must ‘allege a tangible connection between the acts of the defendant and the injuries suffered.’ ” *Austin v. Pappas*, No. 04-CV-7263, 2008 WL 857528, *2 (S.D.N.Y. Mar. 31, 2008) (quoting *Bass v. Jackson*, 790 F.2d 260, 263 (2d Cir. 1986)).

Here, DeFreitas has not included factual allegations of conduct or inaction attributable to any of these police officers. The failure to allege any facts demonstrating these Defendants’ personal involvement is fatal to DeFreitas’s Section 1983 claims against them. See *Spavone v. N.Y. State Dep’t of Corr. Serv.*, 719 F.3d 127, 135 (2d Cir. 2013) (holding that a plaintiff proceeding under Section 1983 must allege facts showing the defendants’ personal involvement in the alleged constitutional deprivation); *Avant v. Miranda*, No. 21-CV-0974(JS)(SIL), 2021 WL 1979077, at *4 (E.D.N.Y. May 18, 2021) (dismissing Section 1983 claims against individual police officers for failure to allege their personal involvement in the challenged conduct). Accordingly, DeFreitas’s Section 1983 claims against P.O. Siviglia, P.O. Cracco, P.O. Scalzo, P.O. McLaughlin, P.O. Gambino, P.O. Roe, P.O. Lynch, and P.O. Bosco are not

plausible and are dismissed without prejudice pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2)(B)(ii), 1915A(b).

VIII. Persons Under Section 1983

DeFreitas's Section 1983 claims against the SCDAO, the SCSO, the SCPD, NYS, the NYSPD, NYCPCRC, and the NY Grievance Committee must also be dismissed.⁸ Section 1983 provides that an action may be maintained against a “person” who has deprived another of rights under the “Constitution and laws.” 42 U.S.C. § 1983. None of these entities are “persons” within the meaning of Section 1983. See *Will*, 491 U.S. at 71 (state is not a “person” for the purpose of Section 1983 claims); *Curtis v. Rockland Cnty. Drug Task Force*, No. 21-CV-4294 (PMH), 2021 WL 2418466, at *1 (S.D.N.Y. June 14, 2021) (dismissing claims against “Rockland County Drug Task force” and “Rockland County Office of the Sheriff Department, [...] because neither a task force nor a sheriff’s department qualify as a ‘person’ within the meaning of § 1983”); *Hester-Bey v. Police Dep’t*, No. 12-CV-3320 KAM, 2012 WL 4447383, at *1 (E.D.N.Y. Sept. 24, 2012) (explaining that “Section 1983 provides that an action may only be maintained against a ‘person’ who has deprived another of rights under the ‘Constitution and Laws,’ ” and holding that, because “[t]he New York City Police Department is not a ‘person’ within the meaning of section 1983 [it] is therefore[] not a suable entity” (quoting 42 U.S.C. § 1983)); *Whitley v. Westchester Cnty. Corr. Fac. Admin.*, No. 97CIV 0420 (SS), 1997 WL 659100, at *7 (S.D.N.Y. Oct. 22, 1997) (correctional facility or jail not a “person” within the meaning of Section 1983). Therefore, DeFreitas's Section 1983 claims against SCDAO, the SCSO, the SCPD, NYS, the NYSPD, NYCPCRC, and the NY Grievance Committee are not plausible and are thus dismissed with prejudice pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2)(B)(i)-(ii), 1915A(b)(1).

IX. Municipal Liability

*12 Given DeFreitas's *pro se* status and this Court's obligation to liberally construe his pleadings, the Court has considered whether he has alleged a plausible claim when construing his allegations against SCDAO, the SCSO, the SCPD, the NYCPCRC as against the respective municipality, as well as DeFreitas's Section 1983 claims alleged directly against Suffolk County. (See generally Am Compl.) For the reasons that follow, DeFreitas has not alleged plausible claims for municipal liability.

In order to prevail on a Section 1983 claim against a municipal entity, a plaintiff must show: “(1) actions taken under color of

law; (2) deprivation of a constitutional or statutory right; (3) causation; (4) damages; and (5) that an official policy of the municipality caused the constitutional injury.” *Roe v. City of Waterbury*, 542 F.3d 31, 36 (2d Cir. 2008) (citing *Monell v. Dep’t of Social Servs.*, 436 U.S. 658, 690–91 (1978)). Thus, “a municipality can be held liable under Section 1983 if the deprivation of the plaintiff’s rights under federal law is caused by a governmental custom, policy, or usage of the municipality.” *Jones v. Town of E. Haven*, 691 F.3d 72, 80 (2d Cir. 2012). “The Supreme Court has made clear that ‘a municipality cannot be made liable’ under § 1983 for acts of its employees ‘by application of the doctrine of *respondeat superior*.’ ” *Roe*, 542 F.3d at 36 (citing *Pembaur v. City of Cincinnati*, 475 U.S. 469, 478 (1986)).

DeFreitas has not alleged any facts from which this Court could reasonably construe that the challenged conduct was undertaken pursuant to a municipal custom, policy or practice. Thus, these claims are implausible, and are dismissed without prejudice pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2)(B)(i)-(ii), 1915A(b)(1).

X. Malicious Prosecution

Affording the *pro se* Amended Complaint a liberal construction, it appears that DeFreitas purports to allege malicious prosecution claims against DA Tierney, ADA Kubitz, and ADA Tisi. (See generally Am Compl.) To state a claim for malicious prosecution, a plaintiff must allege that criminal proceedings were initiated or continued against him, with malice and without probable cause, and were terminated in his favor. See *Mitchell v. City of New York*, 841 F.3d 72, 79 (2d Cir. 2016); *Thompson v. Clark*, 596 U.S. 36, 39 (2022) (holding that a plaintiff bringing a malicious prosecution claim needs to show that the criminal prosecution ended with a favorable termination, such as without a conviction). “Claims of malicious prosecution accrue when the relevant criminal proceedings terminate in a plaintiff’s favor.” *Lesane v. Doe I*, No. 21-CV-4746, 2021 WL 3173056, at *3–5 (S.D.N.Y. July 26, 2021) (citing *Bumbury v. City of New York*, 62 A.D. 3d 621 (N.Y. App. Div. 1st Dep’t 2009)).

Here, DeFreitas's malicious prosecution claims necessarily fail given the on-going criminal prosecution against him. Indeed, DeFreitas has not—and cannot at this juncture—allege that the proceedings ended in a manner that affirmatively indicates his innocence. Further, a conviction would be fatal to his malicious prosecution claim because it would mean that the proceedings have not terminated in his favor. DeFreitas's malicious prosecution claims are thus

premature, at best. The Court therefore dismisses without prejudice DeFreitas's malicious prosecution claims with leave to replead within two (2) weeks of the conclusion of the underlying, pending state criminal proceeding, if so warranted at that time.

XI. Stay Pending Resolution of Criminal Case

*13 The Court next addresses DeFreitas's false arrest claims. A claim for false arrest under Section 1983 looks to state law as a starting point to determine the elements of a claim for false arrest. See *Manuel v. City of Joliet, Ill.*, 580 U.S. 357, 378 (2017) (“[T]o flesh out the elements of this constitutional tort, we must look for ‘tort analogies.’”); *Boyd v. City of New York*, 336 F.3d 72, 75 (2d Cir. 2003).

To establish a false arrest claim under New York law, a plaintiff must show that: “(1) the defendant intended to confine [the plaintiff], (2) the plaintiff was conscious of the confinement, (3) the plaintiff did not consent to the confinement and (4) the confinement was not otherwise privileged.” *Liranzo v. United States*, 690 F.3d 78, 95 (2d Cir. 2012). An arrest is privileged if it is based on probable cause. *Jenkins v. City of New York*, 478 F.3d 76, 84 (2d Cir. 2007) (“The existence of probable cause to arrest constitutes justification and is a complete defense to an action for false arrest.”) (quoting *Weyant v. Okst*, 101 F.3d 845, 852 (2d Cir. 1996)) (quotation marks omitted). Further, “[a]n arrest is privileged as a matter of law if the individual claiming false arrest is convicted of the crime for which he or she was arrested.” *Icangelo v. Doe*, No. 13-CV-1638, 2013 WL 1455313, at *2 (E.D.N.Y. Apr. 2, 2013) (citation omitted); see also *Sanchez v. Miller*, No. 20-CV-0620, 2020 WL 1140843, at *6 (S.D.N.Y. Mar. 6, 2020) (“[A] civil rights plaintiff cannot pursue claims that would necessarily be inconsistent with a conviction.”) (citation omitted).

Here, given that the charges stemming from the challenged arrest are pending, DeFreitas's “false arrest claim is premature.” *Hall v. Salaway*, No. 20-CV-4651, 2021 WL 826169, at *4 (E.D.N.Y. Mar. 3, 2021). Because DeFreitas's state criminal case is ongoing, as noted above, together with the fact that a false arrest claim accrues at the time of commencement of legal process, adjudication of these claims is stayed pending the conclusion of the underlying criminal proceeding. *Wallace v. Kato*, 549 U.S. 384, 393–94, 397 (2007) (“If a plaintiff files a false arrest claim before he has been convicted (or files any other claim related to rulings that will likely be made in a pending or anticipated criminal trial), it is within the power of the district court, and in accord with

common practice, to stay the civil action until the criminal case or the likelihood of a criminal case is ended.”) (citations omitted); *Stegemann v. Rensselaer Cty. Sheriff's Office*, 648 F. App'x 73, 78 (2d Cir. 2016) (noting where, as here, the “underlying criminal action is ongoing, the better course might be for the District Court to hold [the plaintiff's] civil action in abeyance until a judgment of conviction has been entered in [the underlying] criminal case”); see also *Hall*, 2021 WL 826169, at *6 (collecting cases).

Given the stay, DeFreitas shall request, in writing, that the stay be lifted within two (2) weeks after the conclusion of his state court criminal proceeding, if so warranted at that time.

XII. Leave to Further Amend the Complaint

District courts generally grant a *pro se* plaintiff an opportunity to amend a complaint to cure its defects, but leave to amend is not required where it would be futile. See *Hill v. Curcione*, 657 F.3d 116, 123–24 (2d Cir. 2011); *Salahuddin v. Cuomo*, 861 F.2d 40, 42 (2d Cir. 1988). Because the defects in DeFreitas's claims seeking this Court's intervention in the pending state criminal prosecution cannot presently be cured by amendment, the Court declines to grant leave to amend these claims at this time. Should DeFreitas properly exhaust his speedy trial claims, however, he may seek leave to further amend the operative complaint at that time.

*14 Similarly, further amendment of DeFreitas's claims against NYS, the NYSPD, the NYCPCRC, the NY Grievance Committee, DA Tierney, ADA Kubitz, ADA Tisi, Judge Senft, Gov. Hochul, P.O. Lynch, Commissioner Canty, Glover, Sherida, Modica-Schaffer, Shannon, Merker, Rothman and Fitzgerald would be futile for the reasons set forth above. Thus, the Court denies leave to amend these claims.

Further, in light of DeFreitas's ongoing criminal prosecution, the Court stays amendment of any claims surrounding his arrest and dismisses the malicious prosecution claim. Rather, the Court grants DeFreitas leave to file an amendment to the operative complaint upon resolution of the underlying criminal case to pursue the false arrest claim and to replead the malicious prosecution claim, if so warranted at that time. DeFreitas shall seek leave to lift the stay of the false arrest claim and/or to replead the malicious prosecution claim within two (2) weeks of the conclusion of the underlying state criminal proceedings.

The Court finds that it would not be futile to permit amendment now with regard only to DeFreitas's claims concerning the conditions of his confinement. Accordingly, DeFreitas is granted leave to file a Second Amended Complaint within thirty (30) days from the date of this Order against a proper defendant relating to the alleged deliberate indifference to his medical needs. *Cruz v. Gomez*, 202 F.3d 593, 596–98 (2d Cir. 2000) (*pro se* plaintiffs should be afforded an opportunity to amend complaint prior to dismissal). To be clear, DeFreitas shall name as defendants, to the best of his ability, the individuals personally involved in the challenged conduct or inaction concerning his neck, back, and foot issues. See *Brock v. Wright*, 315 F.3d 158, 164 (2d Cir. 2003) (stating that plaintiff must show deliberate indifference on the part of a “particular defendant”). While pleading these facts, DeFreitas should specify what each individual defendant did or failed to do. The Court reminds DeFreitas that it is important to link the defendants named in the caption to the events described in the body of any Second Amended Complaint. If DeFreitas does not presently know the identity of any such individual, he shall name them as a “John Doe” or “Jane Doe” and describe such individuals including the date, time, and location of the alleged constitutional violation in which each John or Jane Doe defendant was involved.

Any Second Amended Complaint shall be clearly titled “Second Amended Complaint,” bear docket number 23-5933(NJC)(AYS), and contain a short and plain statement of DeFreitas's deliberate indifference claim against each individual or entity named as a defendant. If DeFreitas does not timely file a Second Amended Complaint, absent a showing of good cause, the Court shall administratively close this case with leave to re-open upon conclusion of the underlying state court criminal proceedings.

CONCLUSION

For the reasons stated above, the Court grants DeFreitas's applications to proceed *in forma pauperis*, IFP Mot., ECF Nos. 2, 8, and grants his Motion to Amend the Amended Complaint, Mot. to Amend, ECF No. 9. Additionally, for the reasons stated above, this Court dismisses the Amended Complaint pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2)(B), 1915A(b) as follows: (1) the injunctive relief claims seeking this Court's intervention in the pending state criminal prosecution are dismissed without prejudice and without leave to amend at this time; (2) the Section 1983 claims against SCDAO, the SCSO, the SCPD, NYS, the NYSPD, NYCPCRC, and the

NY Grievance Committee are dismissed with prejudice; (3) any other claims against NYS, the NYSPD, NYCPCRC, and the NY Grievance Committee that can be construed upon a liberal reading of the Amended Complaint are dismissed without prejudice and with leave to pursue any valid claims in state court; (4) the claims against Gov. Hochul, Commissioner Canty, Glover, Sheridan, Modica-Schaffer, Shannon, and Merker are dismissed without prejudice and with leave to pursue any valid claims in state court; (5) the money damages claims against DA Tierney, ADA Kubitz, ADA Tisi, Judge Senft, Rothman, and Fitzgerald are dismissed with prejudice; and (6) the claims against Sheriff Toulon, the Warden, P.O. Siviglia, P.O. Cracco, P.O. Scalzo, P.O. McLaughlin, P.O. Gambino, P.O. Roe, and P.O. Bosco are dismissed without prejudice. In light of DeFreitas's on-going criminal prosecution, the amendment of any claim surrounding his arrest is stayed at this time and the malicious prosecution claim is dismissed without prejudice.⁹

*15 DeFreitas is granted leave to file a Second Amended Complaint within thirty (30) days from the date of this Order against a proper defendant relating to the alleged deliberate indifference to his medical needs. If DeFreitas does not presently know the identity of any such individual, he shall name him or her as a “John Doe” or “Jane Doe” and describe such individuals including the date, time, and location of the alleged constitutional violation in which each John or Jane Doe defendant was involved.

Any amended complaint shall be clearly titled “Second Amended Complaint,” bear docket number 23-5933(NJC)(AYS), and contain a short and plain statement of DeFreitas's deliberate indifference claim against each individual or entity named as a defendant. If DeFreitas does not timely file a Second Amended Complaint, absent a showing of good cause, the Court shall administratively close this case with leave to reopen upon conclusion of the underlying state court criminal proceedings.

Given the dismissal of the Amended Complaint, DeFreitas's remaining motions (ECF Nos. 12, 16) are denied as moot.

The Court certifies pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(3) that any appeal from this Order would not be taken in good faith and therefore *in forma pauperis* status is denied for the purpose of any appeal. See *Coppedge v. United States*, 369 U.S. 438, 444–45 (1962).

All Citations

Slip Copy, 2024 WL 308250

Footnotes

- 1 Although DeFreitas styles his Amended Complaint as brought on behalf of himself and others similarly situated, DeFreitas may represent only himself. See *Iannaccone v. Law*, 142 F.3d 553, 558 (2d Cir. 1998) (“[B]ecause *pro se* means to appear for one’s self, a person may not appear on another person’s behalf in the other’s cause.”); 28 U.S.C. § 1654 (“In all courts of the United States the parties may plead and conduct *their own cases personally* or by counsel”) (emphasis added).
- 2 The Warden is identified in DeFreitas’s November 6, 2023 TRO Motion as Michael Franchi. (See ECF No. 12 at 2.)
- 3 Despite the misspelling, the Court understands that DeFreitas intends to name Suffolk County Supreme Court Judge Anthony Senft, Jr. Further, although DeFreitas’s Motion to Amend the Amended Complaint (ECF No. 9) seeks to add Judge Senft as a Defendant, DeFreitas had already included him as a Defendant in his Amended Complaint (ECF No. 7) albeit without his first name. For the avoidance of any doubt, Judge Senft is included in this action as a Defendant.
- 4 According to the information maintained by the New York State Office of Court Administration on its public site, DeFreitas pled not guilty on May 30, 2023 to a multi-count indictment under Indictment No. 71385-23/001. See New York State Office of Court Administration Indictment No. 71385-23/001 Page, <https://perma.cc/NPE2-UN7Y> (last visited on January 25, 2024).
- 5 The first arm-of-the-state test recognized by the Second Circuit requires consideration of (1) “the extent to which the state would be responsible for satisfying any judgment that might be entered against the defendant entity”, and (2) “the degree of supervision exercised by the state over the defendant entity.” *Clissuras v. City Univ. of N.Y.*, 359 F.3d 79, 82 (2d Cir. 2004) (quotation marks omitted). The second arm-of-the state test requires consideration of six factors:

(1) how the entity is referred to in the documents that created it; (2) how the governing members of the entity are appointed; (3) how the entity is funded; (4) whether the entity’s function is traditionally one of local or state government; (5) whether the state has a veto power over the entity’s actions; and (6) whether the entity’s obligations are binding upon the state.

Mancuso v. New York State Thruway Auth., 86 F.3d 289, 293 (2d Cir. 1996). If the factors from the second test do not lean in a clear direction, a court must consider “the twin reasons for the Eleventh Amendment: (1) protecting the dignity of the state, and (2) preserving the state treasury.” *Woods v. Rondout Valley Cent. Sch. Dist. Bd. of Educ.*, 466 F.3d 232, 240 (2d Cir. 2006) (citing *Mancuso*, 86 F.3d at 293). If consideration of these two reasons does not clarify the determination, the Court then focuses on “whether a judgment against the governmental entity would be paid out of the state treasury” *Id.* at 241.
- 6 The Amended Complaint does not specify which prosecutor made the decision to charge DeFreitas or disregard his request to be present and testify at the grand jury. (See Am Compl. at 16–17.)
- 7 The Court makes this assumption based on DeFreitas’s subsequent filing (ECF No. 12), even though he does not mention anywhere in the body of the Amended Complaint Gov. Hochul, P.O. Lynch, Commissioner

Canty, or the following officials of the NY Grievance Committee: District Chair Dorian Glover, Chief Attorney Catherine Sheridan, Staff Counsel Ann Marie Modica-Schaffer, Staff Counsel Christopher Shannon, and Staff Counsel Rachel Merker. (See Am. Compl. at 15, 17–22, 54 (discussing state criminal proceedings against DeFreitas).)

- 8 As noted above, DeFreitas's claims against NYS, the NYSPD, NYCPD, and the NY Grievance Committee are also dismissed on the basis of Eleventh Amendment sovereign immunity. See *supra* Section II.
- 9 As set forth above (see *supra* at 26–28), DeFreitas is granted leave to file an amended complaint to pursue any claims relating to his arrest and prosecution upon resolution of the underlying criminal case if so warranted at that time. DeFreitas shall seek leave to lift the stay as to the false arrest claim and/or to replead the malicious prosecution claim within two (2) weeks of the conclusion of those proceedings.

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2021 WL 3518439

Only the Westlaw citation is currently available.
United States District Court, N.D. New York.

Myrna Althia Alicia WALKER, Plaintiff,

v.

CIBC LIMITED, Defendant.

1:20-CV-1337 (TJM/CFH)

|

Signed 04/13/2021

Attorneys and Law Firms

Myrna Althia Alicia Walker, 841 Western Avenue, Apartment 2A, Albany, New York 12203, Plaintiff pro se.

REPORT-RECOMMENDATION & ORDER

CHRISTIAN F. HUMMEL, UNITED STATES
MAGISTRATE JUDGE

I. In Forma Pauperis

*1 Plaintiff pro se Myrna Althia Alicia Walker purported to commence this action on October 28, 2020, by submitting a complaint and application to proceed in forma pauperis (“IFP”) in lieu of paying the Court’s filing fee. See Dkt. No. 1 (“Compl.”); Dkt. No. 2. On March 15, 2021, plaintiff submitted a supplement to her complaint. Dkt. No. 4. On April 6, 2021, plaintiff submitted an additional filing entitled “Emergency Petition for the Death Penalty Against Adethia Keshia Fitten and Others on the Principle Found in the Law of Necessity.” Dkt. No. 5. On April 7, 2021, plaintiff submitted additional 86 pages to supplement to her complaint. Dkt. Nos. 6, 7. On April 8, 2021, plaintiff submitted additional exhibits and a letter requesting to file those exhibits under seal. Dkt. No. 8.

The Court has reviewed plaintiff’s IFP application and determines that she financially qualifies to proceed IFP for purposes of filing only.¹

II. Legal Standards

Section 1915(e) of Title 28 of the United States Code directs that, when a plaintiff seeks to proceed IFP, “the court shall dismiss the case at any time if the court determines that ... the action or appeal (i) is 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). It is a court’s responsibility to determine that a plaintiff may properly maintain his complaint before permitting her to proceed with her action. As plaintiff is representing himself, the court must afford plaintiff special solicitude; thus, it is to consider her claims “liberally” and “interpret them ‘to raise the strongest arguments that they suggest.’ ” Cold Stone Creamery, Inc. v. Gorman, 361 F. App’x 282, 286 (2d Cir. 2010) (summary order) (quoting Brownell v. Krom, 446 F.3d 305, 310 (2d Cir. 2006)).

Pleading guidelines are set forth in the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure. Specifically, Rule 8 provides that a pleading which sets forth a claim for relief shall contain, inter alia, “a short and plain statement of the claim showing that the pleader is entitled to relief.” See FED. R. CIV. P. 8(a)(2). “The purpose ... is to give fair notice of the claim being asserted so as to permit the adverse party the opportunity to file a responsive answer, prepare an adequate defense and determine whether the doctrine of res judicata is applicable.” Flores v. Graphdex, 189 F.R.D. 54, 54 (N.D.N.Y. 1999) (internal quotation marks and citations omitted). Rule 8 also requires the pleading to include:

- (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

FED. R. CIV. P. 8(a). Although “[n]o technical form is required,” the Federal Rules make clear that each allegation contained in the pleading “must be simple, concise, and direct.” Id. at 8(d).

*2 Further, Rule 10 of the Federal Rules provides in pertinent part that:

[a] party must state its claims or defenses in numbered paragraphs, each limited as far as practicable to a single set of circumstances. A later

pleading may refer by number to a paragraph in an earlier pleading. If doing so would promote clarity, each claim founded on a separate transaction or occurrence – and each defense other than a denial – must be stated in a separate count or defense.

[FED. R. CIV. P. 10\(b\)](#). This serves the purpose of “provid[ing] an easy mode of identification for referring to a particular paragraph in a prior pleading[.]” [Flores](#), 189 F.R.D. at 54 (internal quotation marks and citations omitted). A complaint that fails to comply with the pleading requirements “presents far too a heavy burden in terms of defendants’ duty to shape a comprehensive defense and provides no meaningful basis for the Court to assess the sufficiency of their claims.” [Gonzales v. Wing](#), 167 F.R.D. 352, 355 (N.D.N.Y. 1996). As the Second Circuit has held, “[w]hen a complaint does not comply with the requirement that it be short and plain, the court has the power, on its own initiative ... to dismiss the complaint.” [Salahuddin v. Cuomo](#), 861 F.2d 40, 42 (2d Cir. 1988) (citations omitted). However, “[d]ismissal ... is usually reserved for those cases in which the complaint is so confused, ambiguous, vague, or otherwise unintelligible that its true substance, if any, is well disguised.” *Id.* (citations omitted). In such cases of dismissal, particularly when reviewing a *pro se* complaint, the court generally affords the plaintiff leave to amend the complaint. [Simmons v. Abruzzo](#), 49 F.3d 83, 86-87 (2d Cir. 1995). A court should not dismiss a complaint if the plaintiff has stated “enough facts to state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face.” [Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly](#), 550 U.S. 544, 570 (2007). “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.” [Ashcroft v. Iqbal](#), 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009) (citation omitted).

III. Initial Review

A. Plaintiff’s Complaint

Plaintiff purports to bring this action pursuant to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 2000, et seq. On her form Title VII complaint, she indicates that defendant discriminated against her due to her race and color, religion, sex, and “my date of birth – Easter.”

Compl. at 2. Plaintiff further indicates, through checking the boxes on the form complaint, that defendant terminated her employment, failed to promote, engaged in unequal terms and conditions of employment, retaliated against her, and “forced prostitution; [i]dentity theft, which is used to do Bank frauds & Poisonings.” *Id.*

Plaintiff’s complaint, inclusive of exhibits, is 158 pages long. Dkt. No. 1. Included with the exhibits to the complaint is an Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (“EEOC”) dismissal notice² noting that plaintiff’s EEOC charge was not timely filed and the EEOC was closing its file. Dkt. No. 1-1. The remainder of the exhibits appended to the complaint appear to be an 80-page letter relating to apparent visa fraud that plaintiff sent to The US Department of Justice; the United States Department of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement; and the Federal Bureau of Investigation; as well as an incident report dated May 29, 2019, regarding an apparent rape of plaintiff. Dkt. No. 1-2 at 81-82.

*3 The supplement plaintiff filed on March 15, 2021, is 112 pages long. Dkt. No. 4. The supplement appears to be filings from a complaint plaintiff had before Supreme Court, Rensselaer County against Unity House of Troy and Joseph Posa. *Id.* The “emergency motion,” filed on April 4, 2021, is 22 pages long, with 70 additional pages of exhibits. Dkt. No. 5. These exhibits are (1) various transfer orders and orders of protection plaintiff either sought or obtained against various individuals in family court proceedings in different counties (dkt. no. 5-1); (2) a residential lease agreement from July 2018, for a property in Troy, New York, with landlord Joseph Posa (dkt. no. 5-2); (3) records from a proceeding before the Rensselaer County Supreme Court in a case captioned Myrna Althia Alicia Walker vs. “Change of Name” Heidi Elizabeth Zuach (dkt. no. 5-3); and (4) a lease agreement dated May 2, 2017, between Capital Group Management LLC and plaintiff for a property in Troy, New York (dkt. no. 5-4). The submission filed on April 7, 2021, is 59 pages long and includes various orders of protection, a USPS tracking number report, a Unity House Domestic Violence Services Transitional Housing Program Handbook, a form from the Rensselaer County Department of Social Services, earnings statements, a New York State incident report from 2018, an eviction notice, a letter from the Unity House Transitional Housing program, a “notice” letter, and a “birth registration” form. Dkt. No. 6-6. The exhibits filed on April 7, 2021, appear to be letters plaintiff sent to the New York State Department of Labor, United States

Department of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and the EEOC, apparently related to “pandemic unemployment compensation benefits.” See dkt. no. 7.

Plaintiff’s complaint discusses Allison Carolyn Rattray, the Corporate Secretary and Legal Counsel of defendant CIBC First Caribbean International Bank (Jamaica) Limited. Dkt. No. 1 at 3. Plaintiff contends that Ms. Rattray kills unidentified people “with her married name” and drinks plaintiff’s blood. Id. Apparently, plaintiff contends that Ms. Rattray is or was her “employer” who “uses the drinking blood of the employee to kill the employing the employment agreement and the incomes paid by direct deposit as the consideration for the blood that is drank before the killings and the doomings if [sic] innocent persons.” Id. at 4. Plaintiff also appears to suggest that Ms. Rattray and her husband, “Barrington Andrew Rattray, Senior Judge, The Commercial Division, The Supreme Court of Jamaica,” force plaintiff to use “illegal psychotropic medicines,” cocaine, and alcohol. Id. at 5. Plaintiff refers to an employment agreement she signed with Ms. Rattray in 1995 and appears to suggest that since that date, Ms. Rattray “has been stalking the Plaintiff inside her bedroom, bathroom mirror, on her cell phone from 1995 even until today October 20, 2020 even the bathroom stables has visual and audio devices inside of them.” Id. at 6. The Complaint then appears to proceed to explain why Ms. Rattray and her various family members are carrying out unspecified killings. See generally Dkt. No. 1. Plaintiff further suggests that through her employment with defendant, both defendant and the Commercial Division of the Supreme Court of Jamaica

has been using me as a sex doll; as sex services; as sex product also incorporating The University of the West Indies Hospital to do surgeries; using illegal force of The Jamaican police; using the illegal Force of the Jamaican Army; using the illegal force of the Jamaican parliament to have men from any where have sex with The Plaintiff because The Plaintiff was born on the day the crucifixion was celebrated, that is Easter and Good Friday.

Id. at 13. Plaintiff asks the Court for

an Injunction to stop, restrain and prevent Allison Carolyn Rattray (maiden name Smith), Corporate Secretary and Legal Counsel, CIBC FirstCaribbean Jamaica; her husband, Barrington Andrew Rattray, Senior Judge, The Commercial Division, The Supreme Court of Jamaica, King Street, Kingston, Jamaica, West Indies Deryke Smith, her brother; Lancelles Smith retired lecturer The University of the West Indies, Jamaica, West Indies; and the Rhoda Ford children and others from practicing their religion in a way that results in the death or harm or injury of The Rights of The Plaintiff and or the mother of The Plaintiff and or the siblings of The Plaintiff; and or any member of The Public, which includes anyone in the global community.

Id. at 14.

As for plaintiff’s causes of action, plaintiff lists:

forced religion imposed on The Plaintiff whom is the employee by The Employer, CIBC Limited. The Forced Religion imposed on Myrna Althia Alicia Walker [] to kill innocent Persons. The daily murders of innocent Persons is used to supply the demands of the global organ Donor list. The staff is Allison Carolyn Rattray.

*4 Dkt. No. 1 at 69. As for a second cause of action is

employment discrimination – I chose a career path to be an Attorney-At-Law. Allison Carolyn Rattray (maiden name Smith) my (former) then manager at

CIBC had be fired; told me that (1) I am not worthy to be an Attorney-at-Law because of my Race (2) I was not worthy to be in the same Profession as her. She has been defaming my character ever since.

Id. at 70. Third cause of action is listed as employment discrimination - compensation: denied increases in my salary verbally communicated to be by Ms. Cheryl Blackman my Senior Manager of 3% in 2004; Denied Promotion communicated to be my Human Resources Regional Director, Jerime Cjnttihs-Bell; denied fringe benefits that accompanied my five (5) CIBC Achievers awards – my salary was split and part paid to my aunt.” Id. In the prayer for relief, plaintiff requests:

(1) an Injunction(s) for Criminal Indictment(s) of Allison Carolyn (Smith) Rattray, Corporate Secretary and Legal Counsel CIBC for her forced Prostitution of The Plaintiff and Others; (2)An Injunction to prevent and stop all Prostitution or abuse of The Plaintiff; (3) Restitution(s) by CIBC for lost Incomes and fringe benefits[; and] (4) Job Reference letter from CIBC and an apology and my land Title Deed.

Id. at 71.

B. Analysis

First, plaintiff's complaint fails to meet the pleading requirements of [Rules 8](#) and [10](#). Her complaint does not present a short and plain statement of the claim showing that she is entitled to relief. [FED. R. CIV. P. 8](#). Further, she does not present her claims in numbered paragraphs, limited to one “circumstance” per paragraph. [FED. R. CIV. P. 10](#). Instead, her complaint is a lengthy, disjointed, difficult to follow narrative. Her complaint clearly “presents far too a heavy burden in terms of defendants’ duty to shape a comprehensive defense and provides no meaningful basis for the Court to

assess the sufficiency of their claims.” [Gonzales](#), 167 F.R.D. at 355.

Second, plaintiff's claims, insofar as she seeks to bring them under Title VII are (1) barred by the statute of limitations, and (2) fail to state a claim for employment discrimination in violation of Title VII.³ To the extent plaintiff suggests that she was discriminated against in violation of Title VII insofar as she was told that she was inadequate due to her race or denied promised promotions because of her race, dkt. no. 1 at 70, even if plaintiff could provide additional factual support and clarification for the alleged discrimination, plaintiff provides that the alleged discrimination occurred as early as 1995 until 2004, and would be beyond the statute of limitations of Title VII. Indeed, plaintiff's entire employment with defendant occurred outside of the statute of limitations as she suggests that her employment began in January 1995 and that she was terminated in March 2009. Dkt. No. 1 at 52-53. Thus, the complained-of actions occurred more than 300 days prior to when plaintiff appears to have filed a complaint with the EEOC. See [Gunning v. New York State Just. Ctr. for Prot. of People with Special Needs](#), No. 1:19-CV-1446 (GLS/CFH), 2020 WL 5203673, at *3 (N.D.N.Y. Sept. 1, 2020) (“Title VII's statute of limitations bars claims based upon events that occurred more than 300 days prior to filing a charge of discrimination with a state or local employment agency, and, therefore, “[a] plaintiff may bring a claim under Title VII only for acts of discrimination that occurred within the statutory period set by 42 U.S.C. § 2000e-5(e)(1).”) (quoting [Patterson v. Cnty. of Oneida](#), 375 F.3d 206, 220 (2d Cir. 2004)). The undersigned notes that plaintiff does not indicate when she filed a complaint with the EEOC. However, she submits the EEOC's dismissal letter, dated September 10, 2020, which states that plaintiff did not timely file a complaint with the EEOC. Dkt. No. 1-1. As plaintiff likely filed her EEOC complaint in 2020,⁴ appears to have been last employed by defendant in 2009, and complains of alleged employment discrimination occurring as early as 1995, her filing of an EEOC complaint in 2020 is clearly more than 300 days after the alleged discrimination occurred. Thus, any cognizable Title VII claims arising out of her employment with defendant are barred by the statute of limitations.

*5 However, even if the statute of limitations was not an issue, plaintiff's claims still must fail because plaintiff's claims fail to state any cognizable legal claim under the United States Constitution, federal statute, or state law, and ultimately fails establish this Court's jurisdiction under federal question or diversity jurisdiction.⁵ Plaintiff makes several disjointed,

confusing claims about being sold as a prostitute against her will by defendant's employees and other nonparties, defendant's employees and others murdering innocent people, defendant's employees drinking plaintiff's blood, and being stalked and prostituted by various officials from Jamaica and employees of defendant's company. See generally dkt. nos. 1, 4, 6, 7. Plaintiff makes several allegations against her former supervisor, Ms. Rattray, and says the various physical wrongdoings Ms. Rattray committed against plaintiff were all due to "The employment agreement between The Plaintiff and CIBC FirstCaribbean Jamaica." Dkt. No. 1 at 60-61. Although plaintiff's submissions seem to suggest that she was employed by defendant at some point in time, and that a supervisor told her she could not be a lawyer due to her race and denied promised salary increases for unclear reasons, nothing about the factual allegations pleadings suggest that she presents a valid employment discrimination claim under Title VII or any other statute.

The Court is at a loss as to how the allegations in the complaint relate to a valid employment discrimination claim or any valid legal claim. Plaintiff presents a difficult to comprehend series of allegations against various individuals – many of whose connections to her apparent former employer is difficult, if not impossible, to comprehend – who she alleges forced her into prostitution, performed plastic surgeries on her against her will, installed "spying devices" into plaintiff's body, forced her to undergo various injections, and involved plaintiff in murder scheme that is somehow related to her Easter birthday. See Dkt. No. 1 at 56-60. Plaintiff also sets forth unexplained allegations that appear to involve Ms. Rattray and others, such as "an abuse of a veteran of the United States Army by the said Allison Carolyn Rattray" (dkt. no. 1 at 54). Plaintiff submits dozens of pages of exhibits and supplements that appear to relate to cases filed in other courts, orders of protection obtained in other courts, unemployment insurance issues, police reports, and documents sent to various federal agencies. See dkt. nos. 4, 5, 6, 7. The relevance of this deluge of documents is entirely unclear.

Further, to the extent plaintiff requests injunctions (dkt. no. 1 at 71) to prevent defendant's employees from prostituting or harming plaintiff or seeks some kind of prosecution of defendant's employees for criminal conduct, this Court does not have authority to direct persons to cease engaging in illegal activity through a civil suit as it is not a law enforcement agency. It appears plaintiff is either seeking the criminal prosecution of an individual or individuals or a law enforcement investigation, which is beyond this Court's

jurisdiction. See generally Linda R.S. v. Richard D., 410 U.S. 614, 619 (1973) ("[A] private citizen lacks a judicially cognizable interest in the prosecution or nonprosecution of another."); McFadden v. Ortiz, 5:12-CV-1244(MAD/ATB), 2013 WL 1789593 (N.D.N.Y. Apr. 26, 2013) (noting that there is no private right of action to enforce either state or federal criminal statutes).

Next, plaintiff files an "emergency motion" for the Death Penalty,⁶ which appears to ask the United States Supreme Court to enforce the death penalty against various individuals who plaintiff contends engaged in "drug assisted surgeries on The Plaintiff herein to induce The Coronavirus ahead of the proposed mass vaccination of the US public, which is set for May 1, 2021[.]" implanting maggots into plaintiff's bones, releasing poisons into plaintiff's body, "install[ing] television" and "Netflix Television" into plaintiff's eye and spinal cord, "alter[ing]" plaintiff's "joints to make [her] walk in [sic] all four" to be "displayed as a naked dog on a lease [sic]," and other similar allegations. See Dkt. No. 5. As discussed above, this Court does not have the authority or jurisdiction to sua sponte impose the death penalty in a civil case nor can it seek the criminal prosecution of individuals or at the request of a plaintiff or decide the ultimate punishment if convicted after a criminal trial.

*6 Generally, in cases involving pro se plaintiffs, a court should not dismiss a complaint without granting leave to amend "at least once" "when a liberal reading of the complaint gives any indication that a valid claim might be stated." Branum v. Clark, 927 F.2d 698, 704-05 (2d Cir. 1991). However, an opportunity to amend is not required where "the problem with [the plaintiff's] causes of action is substantive" such that "better pleading will not cure it." Cuoco v. Moritsugu, 222 F.3d 99, 112 (2d Cir. 2000); see also Cortec Indus. Inc. v. Sum Holding L.P., 949 F.2d 42, 48 (2d Cir. 1991) ("Of course, where a plaintiff is unable to allege any fact sufficient to support its claim, a complaint should be dismissed with prejudice."). The Court, however, also has an overarching obligation to determine that a claim is not legally frivolous before permitting a pro se plaintiff's complaint to proceed. See, e.g., Fitzgerald v. First East Seventh St. Tenants Corp., 221 F.3d 362, 363 (2d Cir. 2000) (holding that a district court may sua sponte dismiss a frivolous complaint, notwithstanding the fact that the plaintiff paid the statutory filing fee). "Legal frivolity ... occurs where 'the claim is based on an indisputably meritless legal theory [such as] when either the claim lacks an arguable basis in law, or a dispositive defense clearly exists on the face of

the complaint.’ ” [Aguilar v. United States](#), 99-MC-0304, 99-MC-0408, 1999 WL 1067841, at *2 (D. Conn. Nov. 8, 1999) (quoting [Livingston v. Adirondack Beverage Co.](#), 141 F.3d 434, 437 (2d Cir. 1998)); see also [Neitzke v. Williams](#), 490 U.S. 319, 325 (1989) (“[D]ismissal is proper only if the legal theory ... or factual contentions lack an arguable basis.”); [Pino v. Ryan](#), 49 F.3d 51, 53 (2d Cir. 1995) (“[T]he decision that a complaint is based on an indisputably meritless legal theory for purposes of dismissal under section 1915(d), may be based upon a defense that appears on the face of the complaint.”). Thus, although the Court must show special solicitude to pro se litigants, see [Nance v. Kelly](#), 912 F.2d 605, 606 (2d Cir. 1990) (per curiam), and is to exercise “extreme caution ... in ordering sua sponte dismissal of a pro se complaint before the adverse party has been served and both parties (but particularly the plaintiff) have had an opportunity to respond, ...” [Anderson v. Coughlin](#), 700 F.2d 37, 41 (2d Cir. 1983) (internal citations omitted), the Court also has a responsibility to determine that a claim is not frivolous before permitting a plaintiff to proceed with an action in forma pauperis.

Even if, arguendo, the statute of limitations was not a jurisdictional bar and plaintiff had been able to establish this Court's jurisdiction, the undersigned would still recommend dismissal with prejudice on its initial review as plaintiff's complaint is “factually frivolous.” See [Bennett v. Mnuchin](#), 6:20-CV-243 (BKS/TWD), 2020 WL 1674068 (citing [Denton v. Hernandez](#), 504 U.S. 25, 32-33 (1992)) (holding that a court may dismiss a factually frivolous claim when the allegations are “clearly baseless,” including claims that “describ[e] fantastic or delusional scenarios.”); [Brown v. New York State Educ. Dept.](#), 8:18-CV-169 (TJM/CFH), 2018 WL 1865547, at *2 (N.D.N.Y. Mar. 19, 2018) (dismissing pro se plaintiff's complaint with prejudice where “it is clear that no federal claim can be stated on these facts[.]”). Accordingly, the undersigned recommends dismissal with

prejudice pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(i) as any leave to amend would be clearly futile.

IV. Conclusion

WHEREFORE, for the reasons set forth herein, it is hereby

ORDERED, that plaintiff's in forma pauperis application (dkt. no. 2) be granted for purposes of filing only; and it is

RECOMMENDED, that plaintiff's complaint (dkt. no. 1) be **DISMISSED WITH PREJUDICE**; and it is further

RECOMMENDED, that plaintiff's “Emergency Motion for the Death Penalty” (dkt. no. 5) be **DISMISSED**; and it is further

RECOMMENDED, that plaintiff's letter motion to file exhibits under seal (dkt. no. 8) be **DISMISSED AS MOOT**.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1), plaintiff has FOURTEEN (14) days within which to file written objections to the foregoing report. Such objections shall be filed with the Clerk of the Court. FAILURE TO OBJECT TO THIS REPORT WITHIN FOURTEEN (14) DAYS WILL PRECLUDE APPELLATE REVIEW. [Roldan v. Racette](#), 984 F.2d 85, 89 (2d Cir. 1993) (citing [Small v. Sec'y of Health and Human Servs.](#), 892 F.2d 15 (2d Cir. 1989)); see also 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1); FED. R. CIV. P. 72 & 6(a).⁷

All Citations

Not Reported in Fed. Supp., 2021 WL 3518439

Footnotes

- 1 Plaintiff is still financially responsible for any other fees or costs she may incur.
- 2 It appears that the EEOC dismissal notice is dated September 10, 2020. Dkt. No. 1-1.
- 3 A plaintiff establishes “a prima facie case of discrimination by showing that (1) he is a member of a protected class; (2) he is competent to perform the job or is performing his duties satisfactorily; (3) he suffered an adverse employment decision or action; and (4) the decision or action occurred under circumstances giving

rise to an inference of discrimination based on his membership in the protected class.” [Dawson v. Bumble & Bumble](#), 398 F.3d 211, 216 (2d Cir. 2005) overruled on other grounds [Zarda v. Altitude Express, Inc.](#), 883 F.3d 100 (2d Cir. 2018).

- 4 As the EEOC dismissal notice is dated September 10, 2020, the Court makes the reasonable inference that plaintiff filed her EEOC complaint some time in 2020.
- 5 Even if this Court were to assess this case as seeking to proceed under diversity jurisdiction pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1332(a), the plaintiff has also failed to set forth a cognizable state law claim. [Scherer v. Equitable Life Assur. Soc'y of the United States](#), 347 F.3d 394, 397 (2d Cir. 2003) (quoting 28 U.S.C. § 1332(a)) (noting that diversity jurisdiction “confers original jurisdiction on the federal district courts with respect to ‘all civil actions where the matter in controversy exceeds the sum or value of \$75,000, exclusive of interest and costs, and is between ... citizens of different States.’ ”).
- 6 This “emergency motion” notes that it is presented to the United States Supreme Court, but contains a caption including this Court. It is unclear if this is a document plaintiff intends to submit before this Court, or before the United States Supreme Court. See dkt. no. 5.
- 7 If you are proceeding pro se and are served with this Report-Recommendation & Order by mail, three (3) additional days will be added to the fourteen (14) day period, meaning that you have seventeen (17) days from the date the Report-Recommendation & Order was mailed to you to serve and file objections. [FED. R. CIV. P. 6\(d\)](#). If the last day of that prescribed period falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday, then the deadline is extended until the end of the next day that is not a Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday. [Id.](#) § 6(a)(1)(c).

2021 WL 3204860

Only the Westlaw citation is currently available.
United States District Court, N.D. New York.

Myrna Althia Alicia WALKER, Plaintiff,

v.

CIBC LIMITED, Defendant.

1:20-CV-1337 (TJM/CFH)

|

Signed 07/29/2021

Attorneys and Law Firms

Myrna Althia Alicia Walker, Albany, NY, Pro Se.

DECISION and ORDER

THOMAS J. McAVOY, Senior United States District Judge

I. INTRODUCTION

*1 This case was before the Hon. Christian F. Hummel, United States Magistrate Judge, for an initial review of plaintiff's complaint and other filings pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B). Judge Hummel recommends that plaintiff's complaint (dkt. no. 1) be dismissed with prejudice; that plaintiff's "Emergency Motion for the Death Penalty" (dkt. no. 5) be dismissed; and that plaintiff's letter motion to file exhibits under seal (dkt. no. 8) be dismissed as moot. See April 13, 2021 Report-Recommendation & Order, dkt. no. 10. Plaintiff did not file objections directed to Judge Hummel's recommendations, and the time to do so has expired. Plaintiff did, however, file an amended complaint. For the reasons that follow, the Court adopts Judge Hummel's recommendations, and independently reviews plaintiff's amended complaint and finds it fails to assert viable causes of action.

II. DISCUSSION

a. Complaint

As Judge Hummel explains, plaintiff *pro se* Myrna Althia Alicia Walker purported to commence this action on October 28, 2020, by submitting a complaint and application to proceed in forma pauperis ("IFP") in lieu of paying the Court's filing fee. See Dkt. No. 1 ("Compl."); Dkt. No. 2. On March 15, 2021, plaintiff submitted a supplement to her complaint. Dkt. No. 4. On April 6, 2021, plaintiff submitted an additional filing entitled "Emergency Petition for the Death Penalty

Against Adethia Keisha Fitten and Others on the Principle Found in the Law of Necessity." Dkt. No. 5. On April 7, 2021, plaintiff submitted an additional 86 pages to supplement to her complaint. Dkt. Nos. 6, 7. On April 8, 2021, plaintiff submitted additional exhibits and a letter requesting to file those exhibits under seal. Dkt. No. 8.

Plaintiff purports to bring this action pursuant to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 2000, *et seq.* On her form Title VII complaint, she indicates that defendant discriminated against her due to her race and color, religion, sex, and "my date of birth – Easter." Compl. at 2. Plaintiff further indicates, through checking the boxes on the form complaint, that defendant terminated her employment, failed to promote, engaged in unequal terms and conditions of employment, retaliated against her, and "forced prostitution; [i]dentity theft, which is used to do Bank frauds & Poisonings." *Id.* Plaintiff's complaint, inclusive of exhibits, is 158 pages long. Dkt. No. 1. The exhibits include an 80-page letter relating to apparent visa fraud that plaintiff sent to the US Department of Justice, the United States Department of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, as well as an incident report dated May 29, 2019, regarding an apparent rape of plaintiff.

The supplement plaintiff filed on March 15, 2021 is 112 pages long. Dkt. No. 4. The supplement appears to be filings from a complaint plaintiff had before the Supreme Court, Rensselaer County against Unity House of Troy and Joseph Posa. *Id.* The "emergency motion," filed on April 4, 2021, is 22 pages long, with 70 additional pages of exhibits. Dkt. No. 5. These exhibits are (1) various transfer orders and orders of protection plaintiff either sought or obtained against various individuals in family court proceedings in different counties (dkt. no. 5-1); (2) a residential lease agreement from July 2018, for a property in Troy, New York, with landlord Joseph Posa (dkt. no. 5-2); (3) records from a proceeding before the Rensselaer County Supreme Court in a case captioned Myrna Althia Alicia Walker vs. "Change of Name" Heidi Elizabeth Zuach (dkt. no. 5-3); and (4) a lease agreement dated May 2, 2017, between Capital Group Management LLC and plaintiff for a property in Troy, New York (dkt. no. 5-4). The submission filed on April 7, 2021, is 59 pages long and includes various orders of protection, a USPS tracking number report, a Unity House Domestic Violence Services Transitional Housing Program Handbook, a form from the Rensselaer County Department of Social Services, earnings statements, a New York State

incident report from 2018, an eviction notice, a letter from the Unity House Transitional Housing program, a “notice” letter, and a “birth registration” form. Dkt. No. 6-6. The exhibits filed on April 7, 2021 appear to be letters plaintiff sent to the New York State Department of Labor, United States Department of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and the EEOC, apparently related to “pandemic unemployment compensation benefits.” See dkt. no. 7.

*2 Plaintiff’s complaint discusses Allison Carolyn Rattray, allegedly the Corporate Secretary and Legal Counsel of defendant CIBC First Caribbean International Bank (Jamaica) Limited. Dkt. No. 1 at 3. Plaintiff contends that Ms. Rattray kills unidentified people “with her married name” and drinks plaintiff’s blood. *Id.* Apparently, plaintiff contends that Ms. Rattray is or was her “employer” who “uses the drinking blood of the employee to kill employing the employment agreement and the incomes paid by direct deposit as the consideration for the blood that is drank before the killings and the doomings if [sic] innocent persons.” *Id.* at 4. Plaintiff also appears to suggest that Ms. Rattray and her husband, “Barrington Andrew Rattray, Senior Judge, The Commercial Division, The Supreme Court of Jamaica,” forced plaintiff to use “illegal psychotropic medicines,” cocaine, and alcohol. *Id.* at 5. Plaintiff refers to an employment agreement she signed with Ms. Rattray in 1995 and appears to suggest that since that date, Ms. Rattray “has been stalking the Plaintiff inside her bedroom, bathroom mirror, on her cell phone from 1995 even until today October 20, 2020 even the bathroom staples [sic] has visual and audio devices inside of them.” *Id.* at 6. The Complaint then appears to proceed to explain why Ms. Rattray and her various family members are carrying out unspecified killings. See generally Dkt. No. 1. Plaintiff further suggests that through her employment with defendant, both defendant and the Commercial Division of the Supreme Court of Jamaica

has been using me as a sex doll; as sex services; as sex product also incorporating The University of the West Indies Hospital to do surgeries; using illegal force of The Jamaican police; using the illegal Force of the Jamaican Army; using the illegal force of the Jamaican parliament to have men from any where have sex with The Plaintiff because The Plaintiff was

born on the day the crucifixion was celebrated, that is Easter and Good Friday.

Id. at 13. Plaintiff asks the Court for

an Injunction to stop, restrain and prevent Allison Carolyn Rattray (maiden name Smith), Corporate Secretary and Legal Counsel, CIBC First Caribbean Jamaica; her husband, Barrington Andrew Rattray, Senior Judge, The Commercial Division, The Supreme Court of Jamaica, King Street, Kingston, Jamaica, West Indies Deryke Smith, her brother; Lacelles Smith retired lecturer The University of the West Indies, Jamaica, West Indies; and the Rhoda Ford children and others from practicing their religion in a way that results in the death or harm or injury of The Rights of The Plaintiff and or the mother of The Plaintiff and or the siblings of The Plaintiff; and or any member of The Public, which includes anyone in the global community.

Id. at 14.

As for plaintiff’s first cause of action, plaintiff lists:

forced religion imposed on The Plaintiff whom is the employee by The Employer, CIBC Limited. The Forced Religion imposed on Myrna Althia Alicia Walker [] to kill innocent Persons. The daily murders of innocent Persons is used to supply the demands of the global organ Donor list. The staff is Allison Carolyn Rattray.

Dkt. No. 1 at 69. As for a second cause of action is

employment discrimination – I chose a career path to be an Attorney-At-Law. Allison Carolyn Rattray (maiden name Smith) my (former) then manager at CIBC had me fired; told me that (1) I am not worthy to be an Attorney-at-Law because of my Race (2) I was not worthy to be in the same Profession as her. She has been defaming my character ever since.

Id. at 70. The third cause of action is listed as

employment discrimination - compensation: denied increases in my salary verbally communicated to me by Ms. Cherlyn Blackman my Senior Manager of 3% in 2004; Denied Promotion communicated to me by Human Resources Regional Director, Jerime Cjnttihs-Bell; denied fringe benefits that accompanied my five (5) CIBC Achievers awards – my salary was split and part paid to my aunt.

Id. In the prayer for relief, plaintiff requests:

(1) an Injunction(s) for Criminal Indictment(s) of Allison Carolyn (Smith) Rattray, Corporate Secretary and Legal Counsel CIBC for her forced Prostitution of The Plaintiff and Others; (2) An Injunction to prevent and stop all Prostitution or abuse of The Plaintiff; (3) Restitution(s) by CIBC for lost Incomes and fringe benefits; and] (4) Job Reference letter from CIBC and an apology and my land Title Deed.

Id. at 71.

Judge Hummel found (a) that plaintiff's complaint fails to meet the pleading requirements of Fed. R. Civ. P. 8 and 10, *see* Dkt. 10 at 8-9; (b) plaintiff's claims under Title VII (1) are barred by the statute of limitations, and (2) fail to state a claim for employment discrimination in violation of Title VII, *see id.* at 9-10; and (c) apart from the Title VII claims, “plaintiff's claims fail to state any cognizable legal claim under the United States Constitution, federal statute, or state law, and ultimately fails [to] establish this Court's jurisdiction under federal question or diversity jurisdiction.” *Id.* at 10. Judge Hummel indicated that he was

*3 at a loss as to how the allegations in the complaint relate to a valid employment discrimination claim or any valid legal claim. Plaintiff presents a difficult to comprehend series of allegations against various individuals – many of whose connections to her apparent former employer is difficult, if not impossible, to comprehend – who she alleges forced her into prostitution, performed plastic surgeries on her against her will, installed “spying devices” into plaintiff's body, forced her to undergo various injections, and involved plaintiff in a murder scheme that is somehow related to her Easter birthday. *See* Dkt. No. 1 at 56-60. Plaintiff also sets forth unexplained allegations that appear to involve Ms. Rattray and others, such as “an abuse of a veteran of the United States Army by the said Allison Carolyn Rattray” (dkt. no. 1 at 54). Plaintiff submits dozens of pages of exhibits and supplements that appear to relate to cases filed in other courts, orders of protection obtained in other courts, unemployment insurance issues, police reports, and documents sent to various federal agencies. *See* dkt. nos. 4, 5, 6, 7. The relevance of this deluge of documents is entirely unclear.

Id. at 11.

Judge Hummel also concluded that to the extent plaintiff requests injunctions (dkt. no. 1 at 71) to prevent defendant's employees from prostituting or harming plaintiff or seeks some kind of prosecution of defendant's employees for criminal conduct, this Court does not have authority to direct persons to cease engaging in illegal activity through a civil suit as it is not a law enforcement agency. *Id.* at 11-12.

As to plaintiff's “emergency motion” for the Death Penalty, Judge Hummel found that it appears to ask the United States Supreme Court to enforce the death penalty against various individuals who plaintiff contends engaged in “drug assisted surgeries on The Plaintiff herein to induce The Coronavirus

ahead of the proposed mass vaccination of the US public, which is set for May 1, 2021[,]” implanting maggots into plaintiff’s bones, releasing poisons into plaintiff’s body, “install[ing] television” and “Netflix Television” into plaintiff’s eye and spinal cord, “alter[ing]” plaintiff’s “joints to make [her] walk in [sic] all four” to be “displayed as a naked dog on a lease [sic],” and other similar allegations. See Dkt. No. 5. Judge Hummel concluded that “this Court does not have the authority or jurisdiction to *sua sponte* impose the death penalty in a civil case nor can it seek the criminal prosecution of individuals or at the request of a plaintiff or decide the ultimate punishment if convicted after a criminal trial.” Dkt. 10 at 12.

Judge Hummel concluded that although the Court must show special solicitude to *pro se* litigants, and is to exercise “extreme caution ... in ordering sua sponte dismissal of a *pro se* complaint before the adverse party has been served and both parties (but particularly the plaintiff) have had an opportunity to respond, ...” *id.* at 14 (quoting *Anderson v. Coughlin*, 700 F.2d 37, 41 (2d Cir. 1983) (internal citations omitted)), the Court also has a responsibility to determine that a claim is not frivolous before permitting a plaintiff to proceed with an action *in forma pauperis*. *Id.* Judge Hummel concluded:

Even if, *arguendo*, the statute of limitations was not a jurisdictional bar and plaintiff had been able to establish this Court’s jurisdiction, the undersigned would still recommend dismissal with prejudice on its initial review as plaintiff’s complaint is “factually frivolous.” See *Bennett v. Mnuchin*, 6:20-CV-243 (BKS/TWD), 2020 WL 1674068 (citing *Denton v. Hernandez*, 504 U.S. 25, 32-33 (1992)) (holding that a court may dismiss a factually frivolous claim when the allegations are “clearly baseless,” including claims that “describ[e] fantastic or delusional scenarios.”); *Brown v. New York State Educ. Dept.*, 8:18-CV-169 (TJM/CFH), 2018 WL 1865547, at *2 (N.D.N.Y. Mar. 19, 2018) (dismissing *pro se* plaintiff’s complaint with prejudice where “it is clear that no federal claim can be stated on these facts[.]”). Accordingly, the undersigned recommends dismissal with prejudice pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(i) as any leave to amend would be clearly futile.

*4 *Id.* at 14. As indicated above, Judge Hummel also recommends that plaintiff’s “Emergency Motion for the Death Penalty” (dkt. no. 5) be dismissed, and that plaintiff’s letter motion to file exhibits under seal (dkt. no. 8) be dismissed as moot. *Id.* at 15.

After examining the record, this Court has determined that the recommendations in the Report-Recommendation and Order are not subject to attack for plain error or manifest injustice. Further, even if plaintiff’s amended complaint is treated as an objection, the Court has completed a *de novo* review and has determined to adopt Magistrate Judge Hummel’s recommendations for the reasons stated in his report.

b. Amended Complaint

As indicated, plaintiff filed an amended complaint after Judge Hummel recommended that the complaint be dismissed with prejudice. After a review of the amended complaint, the Court finds that it too must be dismissed with prejudice.

Plaintiff’s amended complaint is a form Title VII complaint. See dkt. no. 11. She indicates that the defendant is “CIBC Limited/Michael Capatide CEO CIBC.” *Id.* at ¶ 3(b).¹ Plaintiff checks the boxes indicating that the defendant discriminated against her on account of her “race or color,” “religion,” “sex (or sexual harassment),” “national origin,” and “other” indicating on the line that follows: “my right to marry; my right to life; my right to work and provide for my daily living expenses.” *Id.* at ¶ 6. Where plaintiff is asked to indicate what the complained-of conduct involves, she checked the boxes for “failure to employ,” “termination of employment,” “failure to promote,” “unequal terms and conditions of employment,” “retaliation,” and “other acts as specified below” after which she writes: “I am being sex trafficked by CIBC First Caribbean staff in lieu of my salary.” *Id.* at ¶ 7. In the section of the amended complaint asking for the facts underlying her claims, plaintiff asserts she is being sex trafficked because she was born on Easter and that the sex trafficking is in lieu of her salary paid to her by CIBC First Caribbean Jamaica.” *Id.* ¶ 8. She also asserts that “the force” of the Jamaican Police, the Jamaican Judiciary, the Jamaican Hospital, and the University of the West Indies are conspiring with her “Walker relatives used to commit crimes with my identity using identity theft of Myrna Suzette Walker employed by Jamaican government Judge Barrington Andrew Rattray & Allison Carolyn Rattray.” *Id.* In addition, she asserts that “Adethia Keisha Fitten is physically cutting me to create presumed consent for the crimes organized by Judge Barrington Andrew Rattray.” *Id.*

The First Cause of Action alleges “forced organized criminality using the salary that was paid to the plaintiff by CIBC First Caribbean Jamaica January 1, 1995 to March 28, 2009.” It also asserts that Myrna Suzette Walker “is a

thief,” and that “Allison Carolyn Rattray ... hired Myrna Suzette Walker and her five (5) children and Adethia Keisha Fitten to steal and to say that the stealing was done by the plaintiff.” Plaintiff also appears to indicate that “to do the stealing,” Myrna Suzette Walker “and others” repeatedly physically injure plaintiff. As discussed by Judge Hummel, these allegations do not provide plaintiff with a timely Title VII cause of action, *see, e.g.*, Am. Compl. attach. 4, dkt. no. 11-4 at 1,² nor do they provide a basis for the relief plaintiff seeks. *See* Dkt. 11, at 5.³

*5 The Second Cause of Action asserts violations of the “Human Rights Act of 1998.” The Human Rights Act of 1998 appears to be a law or act of Parliament in the United Kingdom. *See Brady v. Wks. Med. Ctr.*, No. 19-CV-00655-SM, 2019 WL 6529870, at *2 (D.N.H. Nov. 12, 2019)(“A law in effect in the United Kingdom bears that title.”)(citing Human Rights Act 1998, ch. 42, <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/42/contents>), *report and recommendation approved*, No. 19-CV-655-SM, 2019 WL 6529459 (D.N.H. Dec. 4, 2019); *Simpson v. Dauphin Cty. Hous. Auth.*, No. 1:16-CV-01747, 2017 WL 2375702, at *2, n. 4 (M.D. Pa. Apr. 26, 2017) (“Simpson also references a ‘Human Rights Act of 1998,’ which as best we can tell refers to an Act of Parliament of the United Kingdom, not applicable in this jurisdiction.”), *report and recommendation adopted*, No. 1:16-CV-1747, 2017 WL 2362510 (M.D. Pa. May 31, 2017). The Human Rights Act of 1998 does not provide plaintiff with a viable cause of actions against the defendant for any events occurring in the Northern District of New York over which this Court would have jurisdiction. *See Brady*, 2019 WL 6529870, at *2.

The Third Cause of Action is confusing but appears to be a claim seeking unpaid wages. *See* dkt. no. 11 at 4 (stating at the start of Third Cause of Action: “The right to my paycheck.”). Plaintiff asserts that her aunt Myrna Suzette Walker “assisted by CIBC First Caribbean staff Allison Carolyn Rattray has been falsely selling me as a whore in lieu of my current income(s) from JC Penney, Aerotek, Walmart, Fidelis Care and more.” However, Myrna Suzette Walker, Allison Carolyn Rattray, JC Penney, Aerotek, Walmart, or Fidelis Care are not defendants in this action. Further, plaintiff does not assert when it was that she worked at JC Penney, Aerotek, Walmart, or Fidelis Care, or when or where it was that Myrna Suzette Walker and Allison Carolyn Rattray purportedly took actions preventing plaintiff from receiving her wages from these employers. The claim in this regard fails to assert a

viable cause of action under Title VII. In addition, in nearly incomprehensible fashion plaintiff ends the Third Cause of Action by asserting: “The rapes of me by co-workers is [sic] recorded and published. Walmart staff a [sic] man named Donnell she [sic] gave permission to live in my apartment as well as Fidelis Care Health Insurance staff- Rashid Rardon.” These allegations fail to provide a sufficient basis for the Court to discern any viable cause of action under Title VII or any other law or statute over which the Court would have jurisdiction.

Accordingly, for the reasons set forth above plaintiff’s amended complaint will be dismissed. Because the allegations in the amended complaint are factually frivolous, and because plaintiff filed an amended complaint that did not cure the pleading defects pointed out by Judge Hummel, dismissal will be with prejudice pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(i) as any leave to amend would be futile.

III. CONCLUSION

For the reasons discussed above, the Court **ACCEPTS AND ADOPTS** Judge Hummel’s recommendations in the April 13, 2021 Report-Recommendation & Order, dkt. no. 10. Thus, it is hereby

ORDERED that plaintiff’s complaint (dkt. No. 1) is **DISMISSED with prejudice**; and it is further

ORDERED that plaintiff’s “Emergency Motion for the Death Penalty” (dkt. no. 5) is **DENIED and DISMISSED**; and it is further

ORDERED that plaintiff’s letter motion to file exhibits under seal (dkt. no. 8) is **DENIED and DISMISSED as moot**.

Based on the Court’s review of the amended complaint, it is hereby

ORDERED that plaintiff’s amended complaint (dkt. No. 11) is **DISMISSED with prejudice**.

The Clerk of the Court may mark this file as closed.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

All Citations

Not Reported in Fed. Supp., 2021 WL 3204860

Footnotes

- 1 At paragraph 3(a) asking to identify the defendant, plaintiff writes: “Not Applicable”
- 2 Dkt. no. 11-4 is a letter from Maureen Kiehl, Director of the EEOC Buffalo Local Office to plaintiff in the matter of *Walker v. CIBC* confirming that plaintiff indicated that her “last date of harmed occurred on March 24, 2009, when [she] was terminated,” thus making her EEOC administrative claim against CIBC untimely. Dkt. No. 11-4 at 1.
- 3 In the Prayer for Relief, plaintiff requests the Court to grant the following relief:
 1. The plaintiff do not [sic] want to be a party to the religious killing business of Myrna Suzette Walker; her five children; and CIBC First Caribbean Jamaica staff, Allison Carolyn Rattray and her husband Judge Barrington Andrew Rattray, Supreme Court of Jamaica;
 2. The plaintiff do not [sic] want cocaine nor any thing to ingest from anyone, by force or otherwise.
 3. The plaintiff wants full restitution socially, physically, professionally.Dkt. 11, at 5 (emphasis in original).

2023 WL 8188396

Only the Westlaw citation is currently available.
United States District Court, N.D. New York.

Kevin DRAWHORNE, Plaintiff,

v.

M. ALOISE et al., Defendants.

6:23-cv-01278-TJM-TWD

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Signed November 27, 2023

Attorneys and Law Firms

KEVIN DRAWHORNE, 23-R-0208, Marcy Correctional Facility, P.O. Box 3600, Marcy, NY 13403.

ORDER AND REPORT-RECOMMENDATION

THÉRÈSE WILEY DANCKS, United States Magistrate Judge

I. INTRODUCTION

*1 The Clerk has sent to the Court for review a complaint submitted by *pro se* plaintiff Kevin Drawhorne (“Plaintiff”) alleging M. Aloise, Melinda Katz, Commissioner Davis, and The People of the State of New York violated his civil rights. (Dkt. No. 1.) Plaintiff, who is currently in the custody of New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (“DOCCS”) at Marcy Correctional Facility in Marcy, New York, has not paid the filing fee for this action and seeks leave to proceed *in forma pauperis* (“IFP”). (Dkt. No. 2.)

II. IFP APPLICATION

“28 U.S.C. § 1915 permits an indigent litigant to commence an action in a federal court without prepayment of the filing fee that would ordinarily be charged.” *Cash v. Bernstein*, No. 09-CV-1922, 2010 WL 5185047, at *1 (S.D.N.Y. Oct. 26, 2010). “Although an indigent, incarcerated individual need not prepay the filing fee at the time of filing, he must subsequently pay the fee, to the extent he is able to do so, through periodic withdrawals from his inmate accounts.” *Id.* (citing 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b) and *Harris v. City of New York*, 607 F.3d 18, 21 (2d Cir. 2010)).

Upon review, Plaintiff’s IFP application demonstrates economic need. (Dkt. No. 2.) Because Plaintiff has met the statutory requirements of 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a) and has filed the inmate authorization form required in this District, he is granted permission to proceed IFP. (Dkt. Nos. 2, 3.)

III. BACKGROUND

Plaintiff initiated this action against Melinda Katz, M. Aloise, Commissioner Davis, and The People of the State of New York on October 13, 2023. (Dkt. No. 1.) The Court takes judicial notice Melinda Katz is the District Attorney of Queens County¹ and M. Aloise is a judge in the New York Supreme Court 11th Judicial District in Queens County, New York.²

Plaintiff has filed a threadbare complaint devoid of details. Plaintiff claims on January 5, 2023, Judge Aloise “violated” his rights “throughout the court proceedings.” (Dkt. No. 1 at 4.) He further alleges he was deprived “from [h]aving good counsel and being full[y] able to cross-examine [his] defendant(s).” *Id.* Moreover, he “was never able to see [his] discovery nor attend [his] grand Jury.” *Id.* Plaintiff claims he was “fully coerced” into taking a plea and never given a chance to create “a good defense.” *Id.* According to Plaintiff, his attorney was “aware of all violations and still never objected to it.” *Id.* Finally, DA Katz “acted out of color by stating wrongful facts of the case.” *Id.* On February 23, 2023, Plaintiff’s motions for a hardship hearing and to defer surcharges were denied. *Id.*

Plaintiff’s first claim states on April 4, 2022, DA Katz violated his Fourteenth, Eighth, and Second Amendment rights by “not allowing” Plaintiff to testify at the Grand Jury, speak freely in court, and “not able to make a defense.” *Id.* at 5.

*2 Plaintiff’s second claim states Judge Aloise would not allow Plaintiff to obtain new counsel. *Id.* He then states he was coerced into making a plea, but it is unclear if he is alleging Judge Aloise, DA Katz, or both coerced him into doing so. *Id.*

Plaintiff’s third claim states The People of the State of New York violated Plaintiff’s rights by “not allowing [him] to be [] able to build a defense in his case” that he could “fight.” *Id.* Finally, Plaintiff requests \$15 million for violations of his constitutional rights, including “due process,” “unlawfully imprisonment,” “duress,” mental anguish, and pain and suffering. *Id.*

IV. DISCUSSION

A. Legal Standard

The Court shall dismiss a complaint in a civil action if the Court determines it is frivolous, malicious, fails to state a claim on which relief may be granted, or seeks monetary relief against a defendant who is immune from such relief. See 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(i)-(iii); 28 U.S.C. § 1915A(b)(1)-(2); see *Livingston v. Adirondack Beverage Co.*, 141 F.3d 434, 437 (2d Cir. 1998). The Court must also dismiss a complaint, or portion thereof, when the Court lacks subject matter jurisdiction. See Fed. R. Civ. P. 12(h)(3). While the law mandates dismissal on any of these grounds, the Court is obliged to construe *pro se* pleadings liberally, *Harris v. Mills*, 572 F.3d 66, 72 (2d Cir. 2009), and interpret them to raise the “strongest arguments that they suggest.” *Triestman v. Fed. Bureau of Prisons*, 470 F.3d 471, 474-75 (2d Cir. 2006) (internal quotation marks and citation omitted).

A claim is frivolous when it “lacks an arguable basis either in law or in fact.” *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319, 325 (1989), abrogated on other grounds *Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544 (2007); see also *Denton v. Hernandez*, 504 U.S. 25, 33 (1992) (holding “a finding of factual frivolousness is appropriate when the facts alleged rise to the level of the irrational or the wholly incredible”); *Livingston*, 141 F.3d at 437 (“[A]n action is ‘frivolous’ when either: (1) the factual contentions are clearly baseless ... or (2) the claim is based on an indisputably meritless legal theory.”).

To survive dismissal for failure to state a claim, a complaint must contain a short and plain statement of the claim showing that the pleader is entitled to relief. Fed. R. Civ. P. 8(a)(2). This short and plain statement of the claim must be “plausible on its face.” *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 570. “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.” *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009). The statement of the claim must do more than present “an unadorned, the-defendant-harmed-me accusation.” *Id.* It must “give the defendant fair notice of what the claim is and the grounds upon which it rests.” *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 555 (internal quotation marks and citations omitted); see also Fed. R. Civ. P. 8(a)(2).

In determining whether a complaint states a claim upon which relief may be granted, “the court must accept the material facts alleged in the complaint as true and construe all reasonable inferences in the plaintiff’s favor.” *Hernandez v. Coughlin*, 18

F.3d 133, 136 (2d Cir. 1994) (citations omitted). “[T]he tenet that a court must accept as true all of the allegations contained in a complaint is inapplicable to legal conclusions.” *Iqbal*, 556 U.S. at 678. “Threadbare recitals of the elements of a cause of action, supported by mere conclusory statements, do not suffice.” *Id.*

*3 Plaintiff brings this action pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983. (Dkt. No. 1.) “To state a valid claim under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, the plaintiff must allege that the challenged conduct (1) was attributable to a person acting under color of state law, and (2) deprived the plaintiff of a right, privilege, or immunity secured by the Constitution or laws of the United States.” *Whalen v. Cty. of Fulton*, 126 F.3d 400, 405 (2d Cir. 1997). “Section 1983 itself creates no substantive rights; it provides only a procedure for redress for the deprivation of rights established elsewhere.” *Sykes v. James*, 13 F.3d 515, 519 (2d Cir. 1993).

Moreover, a court should not dismiss a *pro se* complaint “without granting leave to amend at least once when a liberal reading of the complaint gives any indication that a valid claim might be stated.” *Gomez v. USAA Fed. Sav. Bank*, 171 F.3d 794, 795 (2d Cir. 1999) (citation and internal quotation marks omitted). However, an opportunity to amend is not required where “the problem with [the plaintiff’s] causes of action is substantive” such that “better pleading will not cure it.” *Cuoco v. Moritsugu*, 222 F.3d 99, 112 (2d Cir. 2000).

B. The People of the State of New York

To the extent Plaintiff seeks money damages against The People of the State of New York, which the Court construes as claims against the Queens County District Attorney’s Office, those claims are barred by the Eleventh Amendment. See *Best v. Brown*, No. 19-CV-3724, 2019 WL 3067118, at *2 (E.D.N.Y. July 12, 2019) (dismissing the plaintiff’s claim against the Office of the Queens County District Attorney as barred by the Eleventh Amendment); see also *D’Alessandro v. City of New York*, 713 F. App’x 1, 8 (2d Cir. 2017) (“[I]f a district attorney or an assistant district attorney acts as a prosecutor, she is an agent of the state, and therefore immune from suit in her official capacity.”); *Rich v. New York*, No. 21-CV-3835, 2022 WL 992885, at *5 n.4 (S.D.N.Y. Mar. 31, 2022) (“[A]ny claims Plaintiff may raise against the DA Defendants in their ‘official capacity’ would be precluded by immunity under the Eleventh Amendment.”); *Gentry v. New York*, No. 21-CV-0319 (GTS/ML), 2021 WL 3037709, at *6 (N.D.N.Y. June 14, 2021) (recommending dismissal of the plaintiff’s claims against the defendant

assistant district attorneys in their official capacities—which were effectively claims against the State of New York—as barred by the Eleventh Amendment) adopted by, 2021 WL 3032691 (N.D.N.Y. July 19, 2021). Therefore, the Court recommends Plaintiff's Section 1983 claims against The People of the State of New York be dismissed with prejudice pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e), 1915A.

C. Commissioner Davis

“The standard set forth in *Twombly* and affirmed in *Iqbal* requires more than mere conclusory statements; rather, it demands sufficient factual allegations against a defendant to reasonably lead to the discovery of illegal conduct.” *Johnson v. Gonzalez*, No. 9:14-CV-0745 LEK/CFH, 2015 WL 1179384, at *6 (N.D.N.Y. Mar. 13, 2015) (citing *Iqbal*, 556 U.S. at 678; *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 555-56). “It is well-settled that ‘where the complaint names a defendant in the caption but contains no allegations indicating how the defendant violated the law or injured the plaintiff, a motion to dismiss the complaint in regard to that defendant should be granted.’” *Dove v. Fordham Univ.*, 56 F. Supp. 2d 330, 335 (S.D.N.Y. 1999) (citation omitted).

The Court notes Plaintiff lists Commissioner Davis as a defendant in the caption of his complaint but fails to assert any allegations against him or her. *Id.* at 1, 3; see *Johnson*, 2015 WL 1179384, at *6; *Jaffer v. Chemical Bank*, No. 93-CV-8459, 1994 WL 392260, at *3 (S.D.N.Y. July 26, 1994) (holding “[w]hen a complaint's caption names a defendant but the complaint does not indicate that the named party injured the plaintiff or violated the law, the motion to dismiss must be granted”); *Serrano v. New York State Dep't of Envtl. Conservation*, No. 12-CV-1592, 2013 WL 6816787, at *15 (N.D.N.Y. Dec. 20, 2013) (dismissing the plaintiff's claims against two defendants who were listed as parties in the complaint and in the caption, but not elsewhere in the complaint).

*4 Therefore, the undersigned recommends dismissing the claims against Commissioner Davis without prejudice.

D. DA Katz

To the extent Plaintiff seeks to sue DA Katz, she is likely protected by prosecutorial immunity.³ Prosecutors are immune from civil suit for damages in their individual capacities for acts committed within the scope of their official duties where the challenged activities are not investigative in nature but, rather, are “intimately associated with the

judicial phase of the criminal process.” *Simon v. City of New York*, 727 F.3d 167, 171 (2d Cir. 2013) (quoting *Imbler v. Pachtman*, 424 U.S. 409, 430 (1976)) (internal quotation marks omitted); see *Imbler*, 424 U.S. at 431 (“[I]n initiating a prosecution and in presenting the State's case, the prosecutor is immune from a civil suit for damages under § 1983.”). In addition, prosecutors are immune from suit for acts that may be administrative obligations but are “directly connected with the conduct of a trial.” *Van de Kamp v. Goldstein*, 555 U.S. 335, 344 (2009).

In short, absolute prosecutorial immunity covers “acts undertaken by a prosecutor in preparing for the initiation of judicial proceedings or for trial, and which occur in the course of his role as an advocate for the State.” *Buckley v. Fitzsimmons*, 509 U.S. 259, 273 (1993). This includes “the decision to bring charges against a defendant, presenting evidence to a grand jury, and the evaluation of evidence prior to trial.” *Moye v. City of New York*, No. 11 Civ. 316, 2012 WL 2569085, at *5 (S.D.N.Y. July 3, 2012) (internal quotation marks and citations omitted). Immunity even extends to the falsification of evidence and the coercion of witnesses, the knowing use of perjured testimony, the deliberate withholding of exculpatory information, the making of false or defamatory statements in judicial proceedings, and conspiring to present false evidence at a criminal trial. See *Taylor v. Kavanagh*, 640 F.2d 450, 452 (2d Cir. 1981); *Imbler*, 424 U.S. at 431 n.34; *Burns v. Reed*, 500 U.S. 478, 490 (1991); *Dory v. Ryan*, 25 F.3d 81, 83 (2d Cir. 1994).

Moreover, “‘[w]hen prosecuting a criminal matter, a district attorney in New York State, acting in a quasi-judicial capacity, represents the State not the county.’” *Ying Jing Gan v. City of New York*, 996 F.2d 522, 536 (2d Cir. 1993) (quoting *Baez v. Hennessy*, 853 F.2d 73, 77 (2d Cir. 1988), cert. denied, 488 U.S. 1014 (1989)); see also *Rich*, 2022 WL 992885, at *5 n.4 (“[A]ny claims Plaintiff may raise against the [District Attorney] Defendants in their ‘official capacity’ would be precluded by immunity under the Eleventh Amendment.”); *Gentry*, 2021 WL 3037709, at *6 (recommending dismissal of the plaintiff's claims against the defendant assistant district attorneys in their official capacities—which were effectively claims against the State of New York—as barred by the Eleventh Amendment).

*5 Plaintiff's threadbare allegations in the complaint do not clarify the context of his claims. For instance, Plaintiff complains DA Katz violated his Fourteenth, Eighth, and Second Amendment rights by not allowing him to testify at

the Grand Jury, speak freely in court, or make a defense. (Dkt. No. 1 at 5.) He also appears to allege DA Katz coerced him into taking “a Bid.” *Id.* Nevertheless, Plaintiff appears to complain DA Katz violated his rights while performing her official duties as a prosecutor. *Simon*, 727 F.3d at 171. Because Plaintiff’s allegations against DA Katz relate to non-investigative actions she has taken in her official capacity as a prosecutor, she is entitled to prosecutorial immunity. *Simon*, 727 F.3d at 171; *see, e.g., Matthews v. Cty. of Cayuga*, No. 5:17-CV-1004 (MAD/TWD), 2018 WL 2926272, at *3 (N.D.N.Y. June 8, 2018) (dismissing claims against prosecutor on initial review because of prosecutorial immunity). Thus, Plaintiff’s Section 1983 claims against DA Katz fail as a matter of law.

Therefore, the Court recommends that Plaintiff’s Section 1983 claims against DA Katz be dismissed with prejudice pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e), 1915A.

E. Judge Aloise

To the extent Plaintiff seeks to sue Judge Aloise, judges are immune from suit for damages for any actions taken within the scope of their judicial responsibilities. *Mireles v. Waco*, 502 U.S. 9, 11 (1991). This is true however erroneous an act may have been, and however injurious its consequences were to the plaintiff. *Young v. Selsky*, 41 F.3d 47, 51 (2d Cir. 1994); *see also Stump v. Sparkman*, 435 U.S. 349, 357 (1978) (“A judge will not be deprived of immunity because the action he took was in error, was done maliciously, or was in excess of his authority; rather, he will be subject to liability only when he has acted in the clear absence of all jurisdiction.”). This immunity applies to state court judges who are sued in federal court pursuant to Section 1983. *Pizzolato v. Baer*, 551 F. Supp. 355, 356 (S.D.N.Y. 1982), *aff’d sub nom. Pizzolato v. City of New York*, 742 F.2d 1430 (2d Cir. 1983).

Generally, “acts arising out of, or related to, individual cases before the judge are considered judicial in nature.” *Bliven v. Hunt*, 579 F.3d 204, 210 (2d Cir. 2009). The only two circumstances in which judicial immunity does not apply is when he or she acts “outside” his or her judicial capacity and when the judge takes action that, although judicial in nature, is taken “in absence of jurisdiction.” *Mireles*, 502

U.S. at 11-12. Again, while not entirely clear, to the extent Plaintiff complains of any wrongdoing related to a criminal proceeding, Judge Aloise would be entitled to absolute judicial immunity.

Therefore, the Court recommends that Plaintiff’s Section 1983 claims against Judge Aloise be dismissed with prejudice pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e), 1915A.

V. CONCLUSION

For the reasons stated herein, it is hereby

ORDERED that Plaintiff’s IFP application⁴ (Dkt. No. 2) is GRANTED; and it is further

RECOMMENDED that Plaintiff’s claims against Commissioner Davis be **DISMISSED WITHOUT PREJUDICE**; and it is further

RECOMMENDED that Plaintiff’s claims against The People of the State of New York, DA Katz, and Judge Aloise be **DISMISSED WITH PREJUDICE**; and it is further

ORDERED that the Clerk provide Plaintiff with a copy of this Order and Report-Recommendation, along with copies of the unpublished decisions cited herein in accordance with *Lebron v. Sanders*, 557 F.3d 76 (2d Cir. 2009) (per curiam).

*6 Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1), the parties have fourteen days within which to file written objections to the foregoing report.⁵ Such objections shall be filed with the Clerk of the Court. **FAILURE TO OBJECT TO THIS REPORT WITHIN FOURTEEN DAYS WILL PRECLUDE APPELLATE REVIEW.** *Roldan v. Racette*, 984 F.2d 85 (2d Cir. 1993) (citing *Small v. Sec’y of Health and Human Servs.*, 892 F.2d 15 (2d Cir. 1989)); 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1) (Supp. 2013); Fed. R. Civ. P. 72, 6(a).

All Citations

Slip Copy, 2023 WL 8188396

Footnotes

- 1 DA Melinda Katz, <https://queensda.org/team/da-katz/> (last visited Nov. 27, 2023).
- 2 Michael Aloise, BALLOTPEDIA, https://ballotpedia.org/Michael_Aloise (last visited Nov. 27, 2023).
- 3 While the Court recognizes the issue of venue as it relates to claims against DA Katz and Judge Aloise arising out of Plaintiff's criminal proceedings in Queens, New York, a transfer of those claims would be futile. See *Robinson v. New York State Corr.*, No. 9:19-CV-1437 (DNH/TWD), 2020 WL 1703669, at *3 (N.D.N.Y. Apr. 8, 2020).
- 4 Plaintiff should note that although his IFP application has been granted, he will still be required to pay fees that he may incur in this action, including copying and/or witness fees.
- 5 If you are proceeding *pro se* and are served with this Order and Report-Recommendation by mail, three additional days will be added to the fourteen-day period, meaning that you have seventeen days from the date the Order and Report-Recommendation was mailed to you to serve and file objections. Fed. R. Civ. P. 6(d). If the last day of that prescribed period falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday, then the deadline is extended until the end of the next day that is not a Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday. Fed. R. Civ. 6(a)(1)(C).

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2019 WL 3067118

Only the Westlaw citation is currently available.
United States District Court, E.D. New York.

Hilary A. BEST and All Persons
Similarly Situated, Plaintiffs,

v.

Richard A. BROWN, His Estate and
Successors in Office; The Queens County
District Attorneys Office, Defendants.

19-CV-3724 (WFK) (LB)

|

Signed 07/11/2019

|

Filed 07/12/2019

Attorneys and Law Firms

Hilary A. Best, Forest Hills, NY, pro se.

MEMORANDUM & ORDER

WILLIAM F. KUNTZ, II, United States District Judge:

*1 On June 26, 2019, the *pro se* plaintiff, Hilary A. Best, purportedly on behalf of himself and “all others similarly situated,” filed this action pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983 against the Office of the Queens County District Attorney, and the recently-deceased Queens County District Attorney, Richard A. Brown. He alleges the deprivation of his constitutional rights and seeks damages. Plaintiff paid the filing fee to commence this action. For the reasons set forth below, the complaint is dismissed, but plaintiff is granted leave to amend within thirty days of the date of this Order.

STANDARD OF REVIEW

A court must construe a *pro se* litigant's pleadings liberally, *Erickson v. Pardus*, 551 U.S. 89, 94, (2007); *Harris v. Mills*, 572 F.3d 66, 72 (2d Cir. 2009), and a *pro se* complaint should not be dismissed without granting the plaintiff leave to amend “at least once when a liberal reading of the complaint gives any indication that a valid claim might be stated,” *Gomez v. USAA Fed. Sav. Bank*, 171 F.3d 794, 795 (2d Cir. 1999) (internal quotation marks and citations omitted). Nevertheless, “a *pro se* plaintiff must still comply with the

relevant rules of procedural and substantive law, including establishing that the court has subject matter jurisdiction over the action.” *Wilber v. U.S. Postal Serv.*, No. 10-CV-3346 (ARR), 2010 WL 3036754, at *1 (E.D.N.Y. Aug. 2, 2010) (internal quotation marks and citations omitted).

Even if a plaintiff has paid the filing fee, a district court may dismiss the case, *sua sponte*, if it determines that the action is frivolous. *Fitzgerald v. First East Seventh Street Tenants Corp.*, 221 F.3d 362, 363-64 (2d Cir. 2000); see *Mallard v. United States District Court*, 490 U.S. 296, 307-08 (1989) (noting that “[28 U.S.C. §] 1915(d), for example, authorizes courts to dismiss a ‘frivolous or malicious’ action, but there is little doubt they would have power to do so even in the absence of this statutory provision”). “A complaint will be dismissed as ‘frivolous’ when ‘it is clear that the defendants are immune from suit.’ ” *Montero v. Travis*, 171 F.3d 757, 760 (2d Cir. 1999) (quoting *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319, 325, 327 (1989)). Indeed, “district courts are especially likely to be exposed to frivolous actions and, thus, have [a] need for inherent authority to dismiss such actions quickly in order to preserve scarce judicial resources.” *Fitzgerald*, 221 F.3d at 364. A cause of action is properly deemed frivolous as a matter of law when, *inter alia*, it is “based on an indisputably meritless legal theory”—that is, when it “lacks an arguable basis in law ..., or [when] a dispositive defense clearly exists on the face of the complaint.” *Livingston v. Adirondack Beverage Co.*, 141 F.3d 434, 437 (2d Cir. 1998).

BACKGROUND

The complaint alleges:

Defendants have practiced a policy of depriving Plaintiffs of liberty without due process of law in violation of the 14th Amendment to the United States Constitution, by subjecting Plaintiffs to indictment upon felony complaint without a preliminary hearing or waiver thereof, in violation of CPL secs. 100.05, 180.10 through 180.80, and 190.55 (2)(a), and minimum due process of law requiring a hearing when a person faces a mass deprivation of liberty, as without bail pursuant to CPL 530.20.

*2 Under color of state law, the defendants have pursued and obtained indictments against Plaintiffs within five (5) business days of arrest in order to prevent release pursuant to CPL sec. 180.80,¹ when although indictment within five (5) business days of arrest upon a felony

complaint prevents a defendant's release upon his or her own recognizance pursuant to CPL sec. 180.80, nothing in the statute permits the omission of a preliminary hearing or waiver thereof.

Compl. at 3-4.

Plaintiff does not make any personal claims. He provides no information about whether, when or with what crime he was charged and/or convicted, or of what type of preliminary hearing he was deprived. He seeks to bring this claim on behalf of persons who were indicted by the Office of the Queens County District Attorney because, he alleges, the office has been violating the cited provisions since 1991.

DISCUSSION

A. Claims on Behalf of Others

Plaintiff is a non-attorney proceeding *pro se* purporting to represent other similarly situated persons. Plaintiff may not bring this complaint on behalf of others without a lawyer. 28 U.S.C. § 1654; see *Berrios v. New York City Hous. Auth.*, 564 F.3d 130, 132 (2d Cir. 2009) (“[A]n individual generally has the right to proceed *pro se* with respect to his own claims or claims against him personally, [but] the statute does not permit unlicensed laymen to represent anyone else other than themselves.”); *Iannaccone v. Law*, 142 F.3d 553, 558 (2d Cir. 1998) (holding that an unlicensed individual “may not appear on another person's behalf in the other's cause”). Thus, the complaint as to other plaintiffs is dismissed without prejudice. His class action certification request, to the degree he expresses one, is denied as moot.

B. Defendants are Immune from this Action

Plaintiff's claim for damages against the Office of the District Attorney, Queens County and Richard Brown, District Attorney Queens County (“Brown”) in his official capacity are barred by the Eleventh Amendment to the United States Constitution. “Stated as simply as possible, the Eleventh Amendment means that, as a ‘general rule, state governments may not be sued in federal court unless they have waived their Eleventh Amendment immunity, or unless Congress has abrogate[d] the states’ Eleventh Amendment immunity when acting pursuant to its authority under Section 5 of the Fourteenth Amendment.” *Gollomp v. Spitzer*, 568 F.3d 355, 366 (2d Cir. 2009) (internal quotation marks and citation omitted). “The immunity recognized by the Eleventh Amendment extends beyond the states themselves to state

agents and state instrumentalities that are, effectively, arms of a state.” *Id.* “Further, where a state official is sued for damages in his or her official capacity, such a suit is deemed to be a suit against the state and is barred by the Eleventh Amendment. *Will v. Michigan Dep't of State Police*, 491 U.S. 58, 71 (1989) (“[A] suit against a state official in his or her official capacity is not a suit against the official but rather is a suit against the official's office. As such, it is no different from a suit against the State itself.”) (citations omitted). Where a district attorney is sued for damages in his or her official capacity, immunity under the Eleventh Amendment may attach to bar the suit, as the suit is construed as being against the State of New York. See *Amaker v. N.Y. State Dep't of Corr. Servs.*, 435 F. App'x 52, 54 (2d Cir. 2011) (holding that a district attorney and an assistant district attorney “benefited from New York's Eleventh Amendment immunity against suit” because they were sued in their official capacities) (citing *Ying Jing Gan v. City of New York*, 996 F.2d 522, 529 (2d Cir. 1993) (holding that district attorney represents the state, not the county, and so is entitled to Eleventh Amendment immunity). Plaintiff's claim against Brown in his official capacity and the Office of the Queens County District Attorney are therefore barred by the Eleventh Amendment and is dismissed as frivolous. See *Ying Jing Gan v. City of New York*, 996 F.2d at 536 (stating that a district attorney in New York state is entitled to Eleventh Amendment immunity where plaintiff's “claims center[] ... on decisions whether or not, and on what charges to prosecute: and not where those claims focus on the administration of the district attorneys' office.”); *Fitzgerald*, 221 F.3d at 364 (frivolous claims may be dismissed sua sponte even in fee-paid actions); *Montero*, 171 F.3d at 760 (a complaint is frivolous if the defendant is immune from suit).

*3 To the extent plaintiff seeks to sue Brown for damages in his individual capacity,² he has failed to allege any facts in support of his conclusion that Brown personally violated his constitutional rights. If Best seeks damages for Brown's decision to prosecute him, Brown would be entitled to absolute prosecutorial immunity. It is well-settled that prosecutors performing prosecutorial activities that are “intimately associated with the judicial phase of the criminal process” are entitled to absolute immunity from an action for damages under § 1983. *Imbler v. Pachtman*, 424 U.S. 409, 430 (1976). A prosecutor thus has absolute immunity in connection with the decision whether to commence a prosecution. See, e.g., *Imbler v. Pachtman*, 424 U.S. at 431 (absolute immunity for “initiating a prosecution”); *Barr v. Abrams*, 810 F.2d 358, 362 (2d Cir. 1987) (filing a criminal information); *Ying Jing Gan v. City of New York*, 996 F.2d

at 530 (“a prosecutor has absolute immunity for his decision as to what offenses are and are not to be charged.”). If plaintiff seeks to assert a claim that Brown maintains or perpetuates an office-wide policy that deprived him of his constitutional rights, he has not plead any facts specific to *his* prosecution nor how the practice directly caused the alleged deprivation of *his* rights. In any event, even if plaintiff had alleged facts to support his contention that Brown maintained an unconstitutional policy as the “final policy authority” of the Queens County District Attorney’s Office that violated plaintiff’s constitutional rights, such a claim would amount to a claim against Brown as the official policymaker of the City, that is, a municipal liability claim against the City of New York, rather than a claim against Brown in his individual capacity. Thus, as currently stated, plaintiff’s complaint against Brown in his individual capacity is dismissed as frivolous. *Montero*, 171 F.3d at 760 (a complaint is frivolous if the defendant is immune from suit); *Livingston v. Adirondack Beverage Co.*, 141 F.3d at 437.

LEAVE TO AMEND

In light of plaintiff’s *pro se* status, *Cruz v. Gomez*, 202 F.3d 593 (2d Cir. 2000) (*pro se* plaintiff should be afforded opportunity to amend complaint prior to dismissal), plaintiff is afforded thirty days to amend his complaint. See Fed R. Civ. P. 15(a); *Gomez v. USAA Fed. Sav. Bank*, 171 F.3d at 795. In the amended complaint, plaintiff should name as proper defendants those individuals who have some personal involvement in the actions he alleges in the amended complaint and provide the dates and locations for each relevant event. To the best of his ability, plaintiff must describe each individual and the role she or he played in the alleged deprivation of his rights. If plaintiff cannot identify the defendant(s) by name, he may set forth the allegations against that person and designate them as Jane Doe or John Doe, providing any identifying information available to him. And he must state facts to support the allegation of a constitutional violation. Essentially, the body of plaintiff’s amended complaint must tell the Court: who violated his

federally protected rights; what facts show that his federally protected rights were violated; when such violation occurred; where such violation occurred; and why plaintiff is entitled to relief.

CONCLUSION

Accordingly, the complaint is dismissed as frivolous because the defendants are absolutely immune from suit. *Fitzgerald v. First East Seventh Street Tenants Corp.*, 221 F.3d at 363-64; *Montero v. Travis*, 171 F.3d at 760.

In light of plaintiff’s *pro se* status, however, plaintiff is granted thirty days to amend his complaint. Should plaintiff decide to file an amended complaint, it must be submitted within thirty days of this Order, be captioned “Amended Complaint,” and bear the same docket number as this Order. Plaintiff is advised that the amended complaint will completely replace the original complaint, so plaintiff must include in it any allegations he wishes to pursue against proper defendants. To aid plaintiff with this task, the Clerk of Court is respectfully requested to provide a “Complaint for Violation of Civil Rights (Non-Prisoner Complaint)” form to plaintiff.

Further, if plaintiff fails to comply with this Order within the time allowed, the action shall be dismissed, and judgment shall enter.

Although plaintiff paid the filing fee to commence this action, if plaintiff requests *in forma pauperis* status for any appeal of this order, the Court certifies pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(3) that any appeal would not be taken in good faith. *Coppedge v. United States*, 369 U.S. 438, 444–45 (1962).

***4 SO ORDERED.**

All Citations

Not Reported in Fed. Supp., 2019 WL 3067118

Footnotes

- 1 CPL § 180.80 provides in pertinent part that a defendant held in custody for “more than one hundred twenty hours or, in the event that a Saturday, Sunday or legal holiday occurs during such custody, one hundred

forty-four hours, without either a disposition of the felony complaint or commencement of a hearing thereon” must be released by the local criminal court. “The purpose of CPL § 180.80 is ‘to ensure that a defendant being held in custody on the basis of a felony complaint not be incarcerated for an excessive period of time prior to judicial determination that there is reasonable cause to believe that he committed a felony.’” *People v. Ijnace*, 174 Misc. 2d 850, 854–55, 667 N.Y.S.2d 229, 233 (Sup. Ct. 1997) (quoting *People ex rel. Suddith and Willard Cradle v. Sheriff of Ulster County*, 93 A.D.2d 954, 463 N.Y.S.2d 276 (3rd Dept. 1983)).

- 2 Plaintiff selects that he is bringing this complaint against Brown in his “individual capacity” on the form complaint. See Compl. at 2.

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2022 WL 992885

Only the Westlaw citation is currently available.
United States District Court, S.D. New York.

Benjamin Samuel RICH, formerly
known as Samuel Guillaume, Plaintiff,

v.

State of NEW YORK, New York City; New
York City Police Department; New York County;
New York County District Attorney's Office;
Detective Michael Miller, Vincent Corrado, John
Passementi, Cyrus Vance, Jr., Shipla Kalra, David
Nasar, and Does 1–100, Inclusive., Defendants.

21 Civ. 3835 (AT)

Signed 03/31/2022

Attorneys and Law Firms

Benjamin Samuel Rich, Staten Island, NY, Pro Se.

Gee Won Cha, [Julinda A. Dawkins](#), New York State Office
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Andrew B. Spears, New York City Law Department, New
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Vincent Corrado, John Passementi.

[Patricia Jean Bailey](#), New York County District Attorney's
Office, New York, NY, for Defendants [Cyrus Vance, Jr.](#),
David Nasar.

ORDER

[ANALISA TORRES](#), District Judge:

*1 This action arises from a 2016 arrest and prosecution
of Plaintiff *pro se*, Benjamin Samuel Rich, in New York
County. He brings claims against the State of New York (the
“State”); former New York County District Attorney (“DA”)
Cyrus R. Vance, Jr. and two Assistant District Attorneys
 (“ADAs”), Shilpa Kalra and David Nasar, (collectively, the
 “DA Defendants”); and the City of New York (the “City”),
 the New York City Police Department (the “NYPD”), and
 NYPD officers Michael Miller, Vincent Corrado, and John
 Passementi (collectively, the “City Defendants”), pursuant to,

inter alia, 42 U.S.C. §§ 1983, 1985, and 1986, the New York
State Constitution, and New York common law. *See generally*
 Compl., ECF No. 1. Before the Court are three motions to
 dismiss Plaintiff's complaint pursuant to [Rules 12\(b\)\(1\) and](#)
 [12\(b\)\(6\) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure](#), brought by
 the State, ECF No. 20, the DA Defendants, ECF No. 22, and
 the City Defendants, ECF No. 32.

For the reasons stated below, the State's motion to
 dismiss is GRANTED, and Plaintiff's claims against the
 State are DISMISSED. The DA Defendants' motion to
 dismiss is GRANTED—Plaintiff's claims against Vance
 are DISMISSED; and his claims against Kalra and Nasar
 are DISMISSED except for Counts 3 and 4, which are
 DISMISSED without prejudice to renewal in an amended
 complaint. The City Defendants' motion to dismiss is
 DENIED as to Count 4, and GRANTED in all other respects.
 Plaintiff's claims against Passamenti, the NYPD, and the City
 are DISMISSED; and his claims against Miller and Corrado
 are DISMISSED, except for Count 3, which is DISMISSED
 without prejudice to renewal in an amended complaint.

BACKGROUND¹

On January 6, 2016, Plaintiff was at the Highline Ballroom
 (“the Highline”), a nightclub in Manhattan, as an invited
 guest of Wasief Quahtan, a Highline employee. Compl. ¶ 24.
 Quahtan and the club owner began arguing over “Quahtan[’s]
 [having brought] Plaintiff to the party.” *Id.* ¶ 25. Security
 staff, and an individual named Avery Jackson, asked Plaintiff
 to leave. *Id.* ¶ 26. Plaintiff alleges that he was “forcibly
 escorted” from the club, and that Jackson became “belligerent
 and aggressive” towards him. *Id.* ¶ 27. Shortly thereafter, a
 shooting occurred outside the Highline. *Id.* ¶ 28.

Plaintiff believes that Jackson “ran down the street and
 jumped into a black sedan ... at the time the shots were fired.”
 Id. ¶ 37. He also states that there were “numerous witnesses”
 to the shooting, including a “female 911 caller,” who lived
 “next door” to the Highline. *Id.* ¶ 36. In that 911 call, the
 witness said that she had seen a “man jump into a black sedan
 speeding down the street” after shots were fired. *Id.* Based
 on this call, Plaintiff believes “it was more likely that it was
 [] Jackson who fired the shots before jumping into the black
 sedan to chase Plaintiff down.” *Id.* ¶ 37.

*2 The shooting was investigated by Detective Michael
 Miller, who interviewed Jackson. *Id.* ¶¶ 29–30. Jackson told

Miller that he saw Plaintiff go to a car, “pull out a gun, and shoot in the direction of the Highline,” and that Jackson “ran back into the club” when shots were fired. *Id.* ¶¶ 30, 37. But, Plaintiff alleges that many of Jackson’s representations to Miller contradicted his initial statements to the NYPD officers who first responded to the shooting, as well as other eyewitness accounts. *See, e.g.*, ¶¶ 30–32. For instance, Plaintiff alleges that Jackson told the responding officers that Plaintiff was “escorted from the club because he was intoxicated,” and that Plaintiff then “went to his car, [a Rolls Royce] removed a firearm ... and fired several shots.” *Id.* ¶¶ 31, 46. But, Jackson told Miller that Plaintiff was “forcibly ejected from the club” after an altercation with its manager, that Plaintiff was “belligerent,” and threatened that he had a gun. *Id.* ¶ 32. Plaintiff also contends that Jackson’s statements were demonstrably false, because surveillance videos showed that Jackson “was the aggressor towards Plaintiff,” and that Plaintiff was “calm, peaceful, and cooperative” when escorted from the club. *Id.* ¶¶ 32, 41.

Plaintiff alleges that Miller failed to conduct a thorough and complete investigation of the shooting, because he did not interview several witnesses, including the 911 caller. *Id.* ¶¶ 36–37, 39. Plaintiff also suggests that Miller obtained—but disregarded—surveillance video from the inside and the outside of the club that would have corroborated Plaintiff’s version of events. *See id.* ¶¶ 40–43. Plaintiff also complains that Officer Vincent Corrado, Miller’s supervisor, “approved all [of the] reports written” in the investigation and “should have notice[d] or known of all the inconsistencies and contradictory statements” in Miller’s reports. *Id.* ¶ 95. And, Plaintiff alleges that Officer John Passemonti “authorized DNA tests,” which revealed that the DNA evidence recovered at the scene “did not match Plaintiff.” *Id.* ¶ 96.

On January 9, 2016, Miller obtained a search warrant for Plaintiff’s car, based on what Plaintiff contends were “false, misleading and/or embellished information” in the underlying affidavits. *Id.* ¶ 46. The next day, Jackson picked Plaintiff’s mugshot out of a photo lineup. *Id.* ¶ 92. Plaintiff appears to argue that this lineup was unduly suggestive, because his “mugshot had a lighter background than the other photographs.” *Id.* ¶ 92. The same day, Miller obtained a warrant for Plaintiff’s arrest for attempted murder, assault, and weapons possession, and in February obtained additional search warrants for Plaintiff’s cell phone and laptop, allegedly based, again, on false and misleading statements provided by Miller and Jackson. *Id.* ¶¶ 45, 47. According to Plaintiff, no “physical evidence [] tie[d] him to any part of the shooting,”

id. ¶ 81, and the police did not recover a gun or find gunshot residue in Plaintiff’s car, *id.* ¶ 91.

On January 22, 2016, a grand jury indicted Plaintiff for second-degree attempted murder, first-degree assault, and two counts of criminal possession of a weapon. *See id.* ¶¶ 45, 51. On January 27, 2016, Plaintiff was arrested. *Id.* ¶ 51. He was incarcerated until February 18, 2016, when he was released on bail. *Id.* ¶ 52.

In November 2016, Plaintiff was taken back into custody on suspicion of witness tampering, after Jackson allegedly made a “false[]” report to the DA’s Office that Plaintiff had tried to contact him. *Id.* ¶¶ 53, 103. Plaintiff remained in jail until his trial, which began in June 2017. *Id.* ¶¶ 54, 64; *see also* Trial Tr. at 1, ECF No. 22-3.²

On March 26, 2016, ADAs Shilpa Kalra and David Nasar provided surveillance videos from the Highline to Plaintiff’s counsel. Compl. ¶ 64. Plaintiff alleges, however, that the relevant video showed only “one (1) camera angle [out] of 14 camera angles.” *Id.* He alleges that prosecutors did not provide videos from the thirteen additional camera angles until a week after trial commenced, even though these videos were collected from the Highline eighteen months earlier. Compl. ¶ 64. The trial court accordingly granted counsel’s request to review the additional videos before conducting Jackson’s cross-examination. Trial Tr. at 3. On direct examination, Jackson testified that he did not participate in escorting Plaintiff out of the club. *Id.* at 47–48.

*3 On June 12, 2017, prior to Jackson’s cross-examination, Plaintiff’s counsel reported to the trial court that Jackson could be identified in the additional videos based on his clothing. *Id.* at 135. Nasar acknowledged that if Jackson was indeed visible in the videos, he was “doing a bunch of things contrary to what he testified about.” *Id.*; *see also id.* at 136. The trial court then determined that Jackson should be questioned, under oath, outside the jury’s presence, about his clothing on the night in question, and whether he could identify himself on the videos, among other matters. *See id.* at 146–50, 152–54. Jackson was brought in, and warned about perjury. *See id.* at 154–56. Jackson identified himself on the videos wearing a jacket and a light-colored shirt. *See id.* at 156–59. The court then adjourned the proceedings. *See id.* at 159. When the court resumed, Jackson, through counsel, invoked his Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination, *id.* at 176, and the court declared a mistrial, *id.* at 186–88.

Plaintiff's counsel then moved to dismiss the indictment against Plaintiff on two grounds: first, that it was based on false testimony, and second, because of prosecutorial misconduct. Compl. ¶ 100. On October 17, 2017, Kalra consented to dismissal of the indictment on the first ground, but opposed the assertion of prosecutorial misconduct. Dismissal Tr. at 12–13, 15–16. The court dismissed the indictment, but the presiding judge stated he did not “see any prosecutorial misconduct.” *Id.* at 16.

On March 12, 2021, over three years after the indictment was dismissed, Plaintiff commenced this action. Compl. Defendants move separately to dismiss the claims against them. ECF Nos. 20, 22, 32. The Court considers each motion in turn.

DISCUSSION

I. Legal Standard

A. Rule 12(b)(1)

An action should be dismissed pursuant to [Rule 12\(b\)\(1\)](#) where it is apparent that the court lacks subject matter jurisdiction—that is, the statutory or constitutional power—to adjudicate it. *See Fed. R. Civ. P. 12(b)(1); Thomas v. Metro. Corr. Ctr.*, No. 09 Civ. 1769, 2010 WL 2507041, at *1 (S.D.N.Y. June 21, 2010). “A plaintiff asserting subject matter jurisdiction has the burden of proving by a preponderance of the evidence that it exists.” *Makarova v. United States*, 201 F.3d 110, 113 (2d Cir. 2000). A district court must consider a challenge to subject matter jurisdiction before addressing other grounds for dismissal. *Rhulen Agency, Inc. v. Ala. Ins. Guar. Ass'n*, 896 F.2d 674, 678 (2d Cir. 1990).

On a [Rule 12\(b\)\(1\)](#) motion, the Court must accept all material factual allegations as true. *J.S. ex rel. N.S. v. Attica Cent. Schs.*, 386 F.3d 107, 110 (2d Cir. 2004). It may not, however, “draw inferences ... favorable to [the] plaintiff[]” on such a motion. *Id.* And, the Court may consider evidence outside the pleadings to resolve disputed factual issues relating to jurisdiction. *See id.*

B. Rule 12(b)(6)

To survive a [Rule 12\(b\)\(6\)](#) motion to dismiss, “a complaint must contain sufficient factual matter ... to ‘state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face.’” *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009) (quoting *Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 570 (2007)). A plaintiff is not required to provide

“detailed factual allegations” in the complaint, but must assert “more than labels and conclusions.” *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 555. The court must accept the allegations in the complaint as true and draw all reasonable inferences in favor of the plaintiff. *ATSI Commc'ns, Inc.*, 493 F.3d at 98. On a [Rule 12\(b\)\(6\)](#) motion, the court may consider only the complaint, documents attached to the complaint, matters of which a court can take judicial notice, or documents that the plaintiff knew about and relied upon. *See Chambers v. Time Warner, Inc.*, 282 F.3d 147, 153 (2d Cir. 2002).

Additionally, because Plaintiff proceeds *pro se*, the Court is obligated to construe his submissions “liberally and interpret[] [them] to raise the strongest arguments they suggest.” *Triestman v. Fed. Bur. of Prisons*, 470 F.3d 471, 474 (2d Cir. 2006) (citation omitted). And, on a motion to dismiss, the Court may appropriately consider a *pro se* plaintiff's opposition papers to “supplement or clarify” the allegations in their complaint. *Sommerset v. City of N.Y.*, No. 09 Civ. 5916, 2011 WL 2565301, at *3 (S.D.N.Y. June 28, 2011) (citation omitted).

II. Duplicative and Improper Claims

*4 Count 7 of the complaint asserts a claim under 18 U.S.C. § 245 for the deprivation of rights under the color of law. Compl. ¶¶ 148–51. But, no private right of action exists under this federal criminal statute, and accordingly, Plaintiff cannot raise a cognizable claim under it. *See Corrado v. State of N.Y. Univ. Stony Brook Police*, No. 15 Civ. 7443, 2016 WL 4179946, at *3 (E.D.N.Y. Aug. 5, 2016). Count 7 is, accordingly, DISMISSED with prejudice.

Further, the Court finds that Count 9 of the complaint—fraudulent misrepresentation under § 1983, Compl. ¶¶ 157–63—is duplicative of Count 4—deprivation of a fair trial under § 1983, *id.* ¶¶ 133–37—because both seek redress for violations of Plaintiff's liberty interests arising from the alleged “fabrication of evidence by a government officer.” *See Zahrey v. Coffey*, 221 F.3d 342, 349–50 (2d Cir. 2000). Count 9 is, accordingly, DISMISSED with prejudice.

Finally, three of Plaintiff's claims—Counts 4, 5, and 6—include both federal constitutional claims and analogous state constitutional claims. Compl. ¶¶ 133–47. The New York State Constitution “provides a private right of action where remedies are otherwise unavailable at common law or under § 1983.” *Allen v. Antal*, 665 F. App'x 9, 13 (2d Cir. 2016). But, where alternative remedies are available under the federal civil rights statutes, including § 1983, courts must

dismiss the plaintiff's state constitutional claims. *Id.* Because § 1983 provides a remedy for all of Plaintiff's alleged federal constitutional violations, any analogous state constitutional claims are duplicative. Accordingly, the state constitutional claims pleaded in Counts 4, 5, and 6 are DISMISSED with prejudice.

III. The State's Motion

The State moves to dismiss the complaint under Rule 12(b)(1), on the ground that the Eleventh Amendment bars Plaintiff's claims against it by virtue of sovereign immunity. State Mem. at 3, ECF No. 21. The Court agrees.

The Eleventh Amendment bars federal courts from exercising jurisdiction over claims against states. U.S. CONST. AMEND. XI. This extends to a state sued by its own citizens, see *Kimel v. Fla. Bd. of Regents*, 528 U.S. 62, 72–73 (2000), and state agencies, see *Welch v. Texas Dep't of Highways & Pub. Transp.*, 483 U.S. 468, 480 (1987). There are only limited exceptions to this rule, none of which are applicable here.

First, a state may waive its Eleventh Amendment defense. See *Coll. Sav. Bank v. Fla. Prepaid Postsec. Educ. Expense Bd.*, 527 U.S. 666, 670 (1999). Here, the State has not explicitly waived its immunity, or consented to be sued. See State Mem. at 3. And, by filing a motion to dismiss, rather than an answer to the complaint, the State cannot be said to have taken actions inconsistent with an assertion of immunity. Cf. *Lapides v. Bd. of Regents of Univ. Sys. of Ga.*, 535 U.S. 613, 619 (2002) (finding waiver of immunity where state removed action to federal court, then asserted immunity).

Second, Congress may abrogate the states' immunity from suit through statute. *Kimel*, 528 U.S. at 80. But, Congress has not done so for claims brought under § 1983, *Dube v. State Univ. of N.Y.*, 900 F.2d 587, 594 (2d Cir. 1990), § 1985, see *Robinson v. Allstate Ins. Co.*, 508 F. App'x 7, 9 (2d Cir. 2013), or § 1986, *Medina v. Cuomo*, No. 15 Civ. 1283, 2015 WL 13744627, at *6–7 (N.D.N.Y. Nov. 9, 2015). In the “absence of [the State's] consent,” accordingly, such claims are “proscribed by the Eleventh Amendment.” *Pennhurst St. Sch. & Hosp. v. Halderman*, 465 U.S. 89, 100 (1984); see also *Trotman v. Palisades Interstate Park Comm'n*, 557 F.2d 35, 40 (2d Cir. 1977).

*5 Finally, the Eleventh Amendment does not bar a “suit against a state official when that suit seeks prospective injunctive relief.” *Seminole Tribe of Fla. v. Florida*, 517

U.S. 44, 73 (1996); see also *Ex parte Young*, 209 U.S. 123 (1908). But here, Plaintiff seeks only money damages, and retrospective declaratory and equitable relief. Compl. § IX. And, Eleventh Amendment immunity shields states from claims for money damages, *Liner v. Hochul*, No. 21 Civ. 11116, 2022 WL 826342, at *1 (S.D.N.Y. Mar. 17, 2022), and “declaratory relief dealing solely with past violations,” *Medina*, 2015 WL 13744627, at *7. Although Plaintiff demands “affirmative relief necessary to eradicate the effects of Defendants' unlawful practices,” see Compl. § IX(B), he does not allege any present violations of his rights, see *id.* See *Medina*, 2015 WL 13744627, at *7 (noting that “declaratory relief where there is no present violation, is also barred under the Eleventh Amendment”). Accordingly, this exception does not preclude the State's immunity defense in this matter.

Where a defendant is found to have sovereign immunity from suit, the Court is deprived of subject-matter jurisdiction under Rule 12(b)(1). *McGinty v. New York*, 251 F.3d 84, 89, 101 (2d Cir. 2001). Accordingly, because the State is immune from liability on all of Plaintiff's claims under the Eleventh Amendment, its motion to dismiss is GRANTED. And, because amendment would be futile, Plaintiff's claims against the State are DISMISSED with prejudice to renewal.³

IV. The DA Defendants' Motion

Plaintiff raises claims against the DA Defendants “in their individual capacities”⁴ arising *inter alia* under § 1983, § 1985, and § 1986,⁵ based on three main factual assertions. See generally *Compl.* First, Plaintiff alleges that Kalra and Nasar wrongfully chose to prosecute him, despite the lack of physical evidence tying him to the shooting. Compl. ¶ 81. Second, Plaintiff asserts that Kalra and Nasar intentionally withheld exculpatory surveillance videos until the middle of his trial, see *id.* ¶¶ 75–76, 78. Third, Plaintiff alleges that the “[p]rosecuting [a]ttorneys” “coached” Jackson to give false testimony to the grand jury that indicted him. *Id.* ¶¶ 50–51.

A. Absolute Immunity

*6 The DA Defendants argue that Plaintiff's claims are barred by absolute and qualified prosecutorial immunity. DA Defs. Mem. at 10–12, ECF No. 22-1. To the extent Plaintiff's claims are predicated on his allegations that Kalra and Nasar wrongfully chose to prosecute him and withheld allegedly exculpatory evidence, the Court agrees.

1. Federal Claims

Although § 1983 has no immunities on its face, the Supreme Court has held that, when Congress initially enacted the statute, it did not intend to abrogate existing immunities established at common law. See *Imbler v. Pachtman*, 424 U.S. 409, 418 (1976). Thus, both absolute and qualified immunity are applicable defenses to § 1983 claims. See *Bernard v. Cty. of Suffolk*, 356 F.3d 495, 502 (2d Cir. 2004). Prosecutors are entitled to “absolute immunity” from liability when they function as advocates for the state in circumstances “intimately associated with the judicial phase of the criminal process.” *Imbler*, 424 U.S. at 430. But, prosecutors are entitled only to “qualified immunity” when they perform “investigative functions” normally undertaken by a police officer. *Buckley v. Fitzsimmons*, 509 U.S. 259, 273 (1993). Under the doctrine of qualified immunity, an official is immune from liability “only when in light of clearly established law and the information the official possesses, it was objectively reasonable for him to think that his actions were lawful.” *Hill v. City of N.Y.*, 45 F.3d 653, 663 (2d Cir. 1995).

Courts employ a “functional approach” to determine the availability of absolute immunity, looking to “the nature of the function performed, not the identity of the actor who performed it.” *Buckley*, 509 U.S. at 269 (citations omitted). And, although the party claiming absolute immunity bears the burden of establishing its applicability, see *Doe v. Phillips*, 81 F.3d 1204, 1209 (2d Cir. 1996), if the court finds that the conduct at issue is covered by absolute immunity, then the actor is shielded from liability for damages no matter “how [] erroneous the act ... and how [] injurious ... its consequences.” *Cleavinger v. Saxner*, 474 U.S. 193, 199–200 (1985) (citation omitted); see also *Anilao v. Spota*, No. 19 Civ. 3949, 2022 WL 697663, at *4 (2d Cir. Mar. 9, 2022).

Plaintiff first alleges that Kalra and Nasar improperly chose to prosecute him, despite a lack of physical evidence tying him to the crime. Compl. ¶ 81. But, prosecutors are immune from suit for decisions regarding “whether and when to prosecute,” *Imbler*, 424 U.S. at 430–31 n.32–33, even where they may prosecute an innocent individual, *Schmueli*, 424 F.3d at 237–39. Kalra and Nasar are, therefore, entitled to absolute immunity to the extent Plaintiff’s claims are based on their decision to prosecute him.⁶

Second, Plaintiff alleges that Kalra and Nasar intentionally withheld exculpatory surveillance videos until the middle of trial, Compl. ¶¶ 75–76, 78. But again, prosecutors are entitled to absolute immunity for all decisions taken “in their prosecutorial capacity, including decisions regarding which evidence should be disclosed to a criminal defendant.” *Newson v. City of N.Y.*, No. 16 Civ. 6773, 2019 WL 3997466, at *3 (E.D.N.Y. Aug. 23, 2019). This is true even where information was deliberately withheld, *Ying Li v. City of New York*, 246 F. Supp. 3d 578, 640 (E.D.N.Y. 2017), or where such withholding violated the defendant’s constitutional rights, see *Warney v. Monroe Cnty.*, 587 F.3d 113, 125 (2d Cir. 2009). Accordingly, Kalra and Nasar have absolute immunity to the extent any of Plaintiff’s claims are predicated on a violation under this factual allegation.

*7 Finally, Plaintiff alleges that the “Prosecuting Attorneys” coached Jackson to give false testimony to the grand jury, which then formed the basis for his indictment. Compl. ¶¶ 50–51. Prosecutors generally only have qualified immunity for actions taken before there is probable cause to arrest a defendant, because they are performing an investigative function, rather than acting as advocates. See *Hill*, 45 F.3d at 661; *Buckley*, 509 U.S. at 273. And, although “knowingly presenting evidence” to a grand jury is considered the “core of a prosecutor’s role as an advocate,” *Bernard*, 356 F.3d at 503, the Second Circuit has distinguished between a prosecutor’s knowing presentation of false evidence to the grand jury—which is still entitled to absolute immunity—from a prosecutor’s deliberate fabrication of evidence, *Hill*, 45 F.3d at 662–63 (finding that where prosecutor deliberately manufactured evidence to establish probable cause for plaintiff’s arrest, his conduct was investigatory, regardless of whether, when the evidence was manufactured, the prosecutor intended to present it to the grand jury). In *Hill*, the Second Circuit also established that “when it may not be gleaned from the complaint whether the conduct objected to was performed by the prosecutor in an advocacy or an investigatory role, the availability of qualified immunity from claims based on such conduct cannot be decided as a matter of law on a motion to dismiss.” *Id.* at 663.

As in *Hill*, Plaintiff alleges that the prosecutors deliberately participated in the fabrication of false evidence by coaching a material witness to give perjured testimony to the grand jury, so that the jury would return an indictment. Compl. ¶¶ 50–51. Allegations that the prosecution falsified evidence are distinct from allegations that the prosecution merely presented evidence they knew to be false. Compare *Hill*,

45 F.3d at 662–63, with *Urrego v. United States*, No. 00 Civ. 1203, 2005 WL 1263291, at *2 (E.D.N.Y. May 27, 2005) (prosecutors receive absolute immunity for claims predicated on “false presentation of evidence to a grand jury”). And, considering the Court's obligation to liberally construe Plaintiff's pleadings and afford every reasonable inference in his favor at this stage, the Court concludes the DA Defendants have not established that they were acting as “advocates,” rather than “investigators,” when they engaged in the challenged conduct. *Hill*, 45 F.3d at 660 (officials asserting absolute immunity bear the burden of establishing it for the action in question). And, accepting the facts in the complaint as true, the DA Defendants would not be entitled to even qualified immunity, because it is objectively unreasonable for them to have knowingly coached a witness to give false testimony before a grand jury. See *Cipolla v. Cty. of Rensselaer*, 129 F. Supp. 2d 436, 456 (N.D.N.Y. 2001) (not “objectively reasonable” to believe presenting or soliciting perjured testimony did not violate plaintiff's clearly established rights). Accordingly, to the extent that Counts 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8 are predicated on the claim that the DA Defendants coached Jackson to give false testimony, they are not entitled to either absolute or qualified immunity.

2. State Claims

Plaintiff raises state-law claims against the DA Defendants in Counts 10 and 14 of the complaint. Compl. ¶¶ 164–67, 182–85. As with federal law, under New York law, a district attorney prosecuting crime is performing a quasi-judicial function, and, as such, is entitled to absolute immunity. *Arteaga v. State*, 72 N.Y.2d 212, 217 n.1 (N.Y. 1988). But, unlike federal law, prosecutors are absolutely immune for official acts in both the prosecution and investigation of criminal charges. See *Moore v. Dormin*, 173 Misc. 2d 836, 843, (N.Y. Sup. Ct. 1997), *aff'd as modified*, 252 A.D.2d 421 (N.Y. App. Div. 1998). A prosecutor does not receive absolute immunity, however, “when knowingly acting in violation of law.” *Id.* As with Plaintiff's federal claims, to the extent his state law claims against the DA Defendants are predicated on his allegations that they improperly targeted him for prosecution or deliberately withheld exculpatory evidence, the DA Defendants are entitled to absolute immunity. But, construing Plaintiff's third allegation liberally, he essentially claims that the prosecutors knowingly acted in violation of the law by suborning perjury. The Court cannot conclude, therefore, that the DA Defendants are entitled to absolute

immunity as a matter of state law to the extent Counts 10 and 14 rest on this allegation.⁷

B. Time Bar

*8 The DA Defendants argue that Plaintiff's claims are untimely. DA Defs. Mem. at 6–8. With the exception of Counts 3 (§ 1983 malicious prosecution) and 4 (§ 1983 deprivation of a fair trial), the Court agrees.

1. Federal Claims

Claims arising under §§ 1983 and 1985, when brought in this district, are governed by New York's three-year statute of limitations for personal injury actions, N.Y. C.P.L.R. § 214; *Pearl v. City of Long Beach*, 296 F.3d 76, 79 (2d Cir. 2002) (citation omitted); *Hernandez-Avila v. Averill*, 725 F.2d 25, 27 n.3 (2d Cir. 1984). But, claims under § 1986 have a one-year statute of limitations, see 42 U.S.C. § 1986. Federal courts are also obligated to apply New York's tolling rules. *Bd. of Regents of Univ. of the State of N.Y. v. Tomanio*, 446 U.S. 478, 483 (1980).

On March 20, 2020, then-Governor Andrew Cuomo issued Executive Order 202.8, which tolled the statute of limitations in New York in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. 9 N.Y.C.R.R. § 8.202.8. Subsequent orders extended the tolling period until November 3, 2020. Exec. Order 202.67 (Oct. 4, 2020). Contrary to the DA Defendants' assertion, see DA Defs. Mem. at 7–8, other courts in this district have uniformly concluded that Executive Order 202.8 applies to federal cases applying New York's statute of limitations, including for § 1983 claims. See, e.g., *Lewis v. Westchester Cnty.*, No. 20 Civ. 9017, 2021 WL 3932626, at *2 n.3 (S.D.N.Y. Sept. 2, 2021).⁸ The Court concludes, therefore, that Executive Order 202.8 tolls the statute of limitations for Plaintiff's §§ 1983 and 1985 claims, which apply New York's three-year limitations period—but not Plaintiff's § 1986 claims, because the applicable statute of limitations for that claim is found in the federal statute itself.

Section 1983 claims based on malicious prosecution or deprivation of a fair trial accrue when the underlying criminal action against the plaintiff is “favorably” terminated, rather than at the time of arrest. *Sharp v. Cnty. of Putnam*, No. 18 Civ. 780, 2019 WL 2250412, at *4 (S.D.N. Y. May 24, 2019); *Shabazz v. Kailer*, 201 F. Supp. 3d 386, 394 (S.D.N.Y. 2016). The dismissal of an indictment constitutes

the termination of a proceeding. *Sharp*, 2019 WL 2250412, at *4–5. Applying these principles, Plaintiff's § 1983 claims for malicious prosecution (Count 3) and denial of a fair trial (Count 4) accrued on October 17, 2017, the date the trial court dismissed the indictment against him. Dismissal Tr. at 5. And, although the statute of limitations would have expired on October 17, 2020, New York's COVID-19 tolling rule extended the limitations period until June 2, 2021.⁹ Because Plaintiff commenced this suit on March 12, 2021, Counts 3 and 4 are timely.

*9 By contrast, a § 1983 abuse-of-process claim accrues when the criminal process is “set in motion—typically at arrest—against the plaintiff.” *Hadid v. City of N.Y.*, No. 15 Civ. 19, 2015 WL 7734098, at *5 (E.D.N.Y. Nov. 30, 2015), *aff'd* 730 F. App'x 68 (2d Cir. 2018). Because Plaintiff was arrested on January 27, 2016, the relevant statute of limitations for Count 8, § 1983 abuse of process, expired on January 27, 2019, and COVID-19 tolling provisions are, therefore, inapplicable. Accordingly, this claim is DISMISSED with prejudice as untimely.

Section 1985(3) conspiracy claims accrue “at the time of the events that caused the injury.” *Panetta v. Cassel*, 20 Civ. 2255, 2020 WL 2521533, at *5 (S.D.N.Y. May 18, 2020). The existence of a conspiracy “does not postpone the accrual of causes of action arising out of the conspirators’ separate wrongs. It is the wrongful act, not the conspiracy, which is actionable, whether the act is labelled a tort or a violation of [federal civil rights statutes].” *Singleton v. City of N.Y.*, 632 F.2d 185, 192 (2d Cir. 1980) (citation omitted). As discussed, the single allegation that escapes absolute immunity—and therefore is the only remaining basis for Plaintiff's claims against the DA Defendants—is that those defendants suborned perjury in the grand jury proceedings by coaching Jackson to give false testimony, resulting in Plaintiff's indictment and arrest. Plaintiff's § 1985(3) claim—Count 5 of the complaint—accrued no later than January 27, 2016, the date of his arrest—which again, applying a three-year statute of limitations untouched by COVID-19 tolling provisions, renders it untimely. Count 5 is, accordingly, DISMISSED with prejudice.

Similarly, Count 6, Plaintiff's § 1986 conspiracy claim, accrued when Plaintiff knew, or had reason to know of the harm or injury. *Young v. Lord & Taylor, LLC*, 937 F. Supp. 2d 346, 354 (E.D.N.Y. 2013). Plaintiff knew of the injury by his arrest date. Applying § 1986's one-year statute of limitations, any § 1986 claim Plaintiff brought after January 27, 2017,

is untimely.¹⁰ Accordingly, Count 6 is DISMISSED with prejudice.

2. State Claims

Counts 10 and 14 of the complaint—both state common-law claims—are also time-barred. “Under New York law, a plaintiff asserting tort claims against the City or its employees,” as well as against municipal officials like district attorneys, “must file a notice of claim within [90] days after the incident giving rise to the claim and commence the action within a year and [90] days from the date of the incident.” *Brown v. City of N.Y.*, No. 18 Civ. 3287, 2020 WL 1819880, at *7 (S.D.N.Y. Apr. 9, 2020) (citing N.Y. Gen. Mun. Law §§ 50-e(1)(a), 50-i(1)); *see also Gonzalez v. City of N.Y.*, No. 94 Civ. 7377, 1996 WL 227824, *2 (S.D.N.Y. May 3, 1996). Plaintiff asserts that he filed the requisite notice of claim with the City on January 16, 2018—720 days after his arrest, and 91 days after the dismissal of the indictment. Compl. ¶ 16. Plaintiff did not commence this action until March 12, 2021. *See* Compl. Therefore, Plaintiff neither timely filed a notice of claim within 90 days, nor did he commence this lawsuit within a year and 90 days after the date the indictment was dismissed—the last date that could possibly serve as the trigger for the statute of limitations. Failure to comply with the mandatory notice of claim requirements is a basis for dismissal of a plaintiff's claims. *Warner v. Vill. of Goshen Police Dep't*, 256 F. Supp. 2d 171, 175 (S.D.N.Y. 2003). The Court, accordingly, concludes that Counts 10 and 14 are also time-barred, and therefore, these claims are DISMISSED with prejudice.

C. Personal Involvement

*10 Liability under § 1983 must be premised on a defendant's direct, personal involvement in the alleged violations. *See Tangreti v. Bachmann*, 983 F.3d 609, 618 (2d Cir. 2020). A defendant cannot be held vicariously liable under § 1983 for employing or supervising an employee that violated the plaintiff's rights—rather, a plaintiff must plead “that each Government-official defendant, through the official's own individual actions, has violated the Constitution.” *Iqbal*, 556 U.S. at 676.

As to Vance, Plaintiff only alleges that he served as the DA of New York County. Compl. ¶ 11. Vance may not be held liable for merely employing or supervising Kalra and Nasar. *See Iqbal*, 556 U.S. at 676. And, Plaintiff neither pleads that Vance was personally involved in investigating the shooting

or prosecuting him, nor is there any evidence in the record to support such a finding. Accordingly, Plaintiff's claims against Vance are DISMISSED with prejudice, because given the lack of evidence of Vance's personal involvement, the Court finds that granting leave to amend would be futile. *Hill v. Curcione*, 657 F.3d 116, 123–24 (2d Cir. 2011).

Plaintiff similarly fails to specify Kalra and Nasar's personal involvement in his claimed constitutional violations, stating only that the “Prosecuting Attorneys” coached Jackson to provide testimony. Compl. ¶ 50. But, given Plaintiff's position as a *pro se* litigant, the Court recognizes that there may be additional information made available to Plaintiff through discovery that would enable Plaintiff to assert claims directly against Kalra and Nasar, such as if, for example, either of them prepared Jackson to testify. By **April 15, 2022**, accordingly, the DA Defendants shall, through counsel, inform Plaintiff and the Court whether Kalra or Nasar prepared Jackson to testify before the grand jury with respect to any potential criminal charges against Plaintiff, and/or conducted an examination of Jackson before the grand jury. No later than **May 16, 2022**, Plaintiff shall file an amended complaint, alleging with specificity Kalra and Nasar's direct, personal involvement in either “coaching” Jackson to testify falsely before the grand jury, or deliberately eliciting false testimony from Jackson during the grand jury proceedings. In addition, because, as detailed *infra* at 25–26, the Court finds that Plaintiff's malicious prosecution claim is deficient because he failed to allege that the underlying criminal proceedings terminated in his favor, an argument raised by the City Defendants but not the DA Defendants, any amended malicious prosecution claim that Plaintiff wishes to assert against Kalra and Nasar should also address this issue. Failure to do so shall result in dismissal with prejudice of Plaintiff's remaining claims against Kalra and Nasar.

V. City's Motion to Dismiss

Plaintiff brings claims against the City Defendants, on the grounds that (1) Miller failed to conduct a thorough and complete investigation of the shooting, by not interviewing several witnesses, including the 911 caller, Compl. ¶¶ 36–37, 39; (2) in his investigation, Miller obtained—but disregarded—surveillance video from both the inside and outside of Highline Ballroom, *id.* ¶¶ 40–43; (3) that Miller “used his own added facts and embellished statements” in his investigative reports to target Plaintiff as the sole suspect in the shooting, *id.* ¶ 44, *see also* ¶ 39; (4) that Corrado, as Miller's supervisor, approved his investigative reports but failed to notice the inconsistencies and contradictions therein, *id.* ¶ 95; and (5)

that Passamenti “authorized DNA tests,” which revealed that the DNA evidence recovered at the scene “did not match Plaintiff,” *id.* ¶ 96. The Court addresses each remaining¹¹ cause of action.

A. Time Bar

1. Section 1983 Claims

*11 Plaintiff brings claims under § 1983 for unlawful search and seizure (Count 1); false arrest (Count 2); malicious prosecution (Count 3); deprivation of a fair trial (Count 4); and abuse of process (Count 8). As noted, § 1983 claims are subject to a three-year statute of limitations in this district. *See supra* at 15. And, for the reasons discussed with respect to the DA Defendants, the Court concludes that Counts 3 and 4 were timely pleaded. *See supra* at 16–17.

A § 1983 unlawful search and seizure claim, however, accrues on the date the allegedly unlawful search occurred. *McClanahan v. Kelly*, No. 12 Civ. 5326, 2014 WL 1317612, at *4 (S.D.N.Y. Mar. 31, 2014). Plaintiff alleges that his property was searched on January 9, February 12, and February 15, 2016. Compl. ¶¶ 46–47. The applicable statute of limitations, therefore, expired no later than February 15, 2019, nearly two years before Plaintiff brought suit. Plaintiff's claims are, therefore, untimely, and Count 1 is DISMISSED with prejudice as time-barred.

Section 1983 false arrest claims and abuse-of-process claims accrue from the date of Plaintiff's arrest. *See Rivera v. City of N.Y.*, No. 16 Civ. 9709, 2019 WL 252019, at *4 (S.D.N.Y. Jan. 17, 2019) (false arrest); *Anderson v. Cnty. of Putnam*, No. 14 Civ. 7162, 2016 WL 297737, at *3 (S.D.N.Y. Jan. 22, 2016) (abuse-of-process). Plaintiff was arrested on January 27, 2016, and therefore, any such claims should have been brought no later than January 27, 2019. Counts 2 and 8 are, accordingly, DISMISSED with prejudice as untimely.

2. Sections 1985(3) and 1986 Claims

Liberal construing the complaint, in Count 5, Plaintiff sets forth a conspiracy cause of action under § 1985(3), alleging that the City Defendants engaged in a conspiracy to have Plaintiff wrongfully convicted, *see* Compl. ¶ 97. This claim appears predicated on the NYPD investigation into the January 6, 2016 shooting, and Miller's alleged embellishment

of information, and focus on Plaintiff as the sole suspect. *Id.* ¶¶ 36–37, 39, 46, 90. Plaintiff also raises a failure-to-intervene claim under § 1986 (Count 6), seemingly arising from Corrado's alleged failure to notice the inconsistencies and contradictory statements allegedly included in Miller's police reports. *Id.* ¶ 95.

Section 1985(3) claims accrue “at the time of the events that caused the injury,” and are subject to a three-year statute of limitations, *Panetta*, 2020 WL 2521533, at *5. Section 1986 claims based on a failure to intervene accrue when the defendant fails to intervene, *Thomas v. City of Troy*, 293 F. Supp. 3d 282, 303 (N.D.N.Y. 2018), and must be brought within one year, *see* 42 U.S.C. § 1986. Plaintiff's claims each began accruing no later than January 27, 2016, the date of Plaintiff's arrest, because Plaintiff does not suggest that any investigation took place after that date. The applicable limitations period extends no later than January 27, 2019, for Plaintiff's § 1985(3) claim, and January 27, 2017 for Plaintiff's § 1986 claim, two and four years, respectively, before the complaint was filed. Counts 5 and 6 are, therefore, DISMISSED with prejudice as time-barred.

3. State Claims

To the extent Plaintiff's state common-law claims, asserting various types of negligence, arise from the NYPD investigation into the shooting on January 6, 2016; the searches of Plaintiff's property on January 9, February 12, and February 15, 2016; and Plaintiff's arrest on January 27, 2016, Plaintiff was required to file a notice of claim within 90 days of those events, *see* N.Y. Gen. Mun. L. § 50-e. As noted, Plaintiff did not file a notice of claim with the City until January 16, 2018—one year and eleven months after the latest of those dates. Compl. ¶ 16. Accordingly, each of Plaintiff's negligence claims (Counts 10–14) are DISMISSED with prejudice.¹²

B. Claim Against the City¹³

*12 The Court reads Plaintiff's complaint as claiming, under *Monell v. Department of Social Services*, 436 U.S. 658, that the City is liable for the allegedly unlawful conduct of the named NYPD officers. *See* Compl. ¶ 179. The City Defendants argue that Plaintiff does not include sufficient factual allegations to support a municipal liability claim. City Defs. Mem. at 20–22, ECF No. 34. The Court agrees.

To bring a municipal liability claim under § 1983, the plaintiff must “prove the existence of a municipal policy or custom,” then demonstrate a causal connection between the policy and the alleged constitutional deprivation. *Vippolis v. Vill. of Haverstraw*, 768 F.2d 40, 44 (2d Cir. 1985). Plaintiff pleads neither, offering only conclusory allegations that the City Defendants “engaged in a pattern and practice to commit the aforementioned unlawful acts,” Compl. ¶ 179, and that a policy is “inferred” because the City Defendants “took no steps to reprimand or discharge the officers involved,” ECF No. 39 at 27. These allegations cannot, without more, state a claim for municipal liability. *E.g.*, *Fleming v. City of New York*, No. 18 Civ. 4866, 2020 WL 5522871, at *6 (S.D.N.Y. July 23, 2020). Because Plaintiff offers no facts which suggest that the deficiencies in his *Monell* claim may be cured by amendment, any such claim is DISMISSED with prejudice. *Strong v. City of Syracuse*, No. 16 Civ. 1054, 2020 WL 137250, at *3–4 (N.D.N.Y. Jan. 13, 2020) (dismissing *Monell* claim, with prejudice, given “[p]laintiff's conclusory allegations are insufficient to plausibly infer a custom or policy to support municipal liability”).

C. Passamenti's Personal Involvement

Plaintiff's remaining claims are Counts 3 (malicious prosecution) and 4 (denial of a fair trial). As to Defendant Passamenti, Plaintiff alleges that Passamenti authorized DNA tests, which revealed that the DNA evidence recovered at the scene “did not match Plaintiff.” Compl. ¶ 96. Plaintiff does not allege that Passamenti was involved in falsification of evidence, that he attempted to hide the results of the relevant DNA tests, or that he was otherwise responsible for, or even aware of, the alleged “embellishment” of statements in the NYPD's investigative reports. Plaintiff has not, therefore, sufficiently alleged Passamenti's direct, personal involvement in any constitutional violations under § 1983. *Tangreti*, 983 F.3d at 618. And, because the record does not establish that Plaintiff could cure this pleading defect by amendment, Plaintiff's claims against Passamenti are DISMISSED with prejudice.

D. Malicious Prosecution

A claim for malicious prosecution under § 1983—Count 3 of the complaint—requires the plaintiff to show that the criminal proceedings against him were terminated “in his favor,” typically by an acquittal or another form of dismissal of the charges on the merits. *Janetka v. Dabe*, 892 F.2d 187, 189–90 (1989). The City Defendants argue that Plaintiff has not made such a showing. City Defs. Mem. at 10, 14–17. The

Court agrees. Plaintiff asserts—citing no authority in support—that the dismissal of the indictment was a “termination in his favor” because dismissals that “include constitutional privilege assertions are considered favorable terminations.” ECF No. 39 at 7, 10 (quotation marks omitted). It is not clear what Plaintiff means by this. And, from the Court’s review of the state court transcript, it appears that, in dismissing the indictment, neither the prosecution, nor the court, made any statements indicating a belief in Plaintiff’s innocence. See *Lanning v. City of Glens Falls*, 908 F.3d 19, 28 (2d Cir. 2018) (looking to the “reasons ... stated on the record for dismissing the charges” in determining whether the termination of the criminal case was in plaintiff’s favor). Indeed, Kalra expressly declined to concede that Plaintiff was innocent, instead reaffirming her belief that Plaintiff “was the shooter.” Dismissal Tr. at 15. The presiding judge similarly stated on the record that dismissal of the indictment was warranted even though he did not “see any prosecutorial misconduct.” *Id.* at 16. The dismissal of the indictment, therefore, left open the question of Plaintiff’s guilt or innocence, and Plaintiff cannot, accordingly, assert on that basis alone, that the proceedings were terminated in his favor.

*13 The Court notes, however, that because four years have passed since the dismissal of the indictment, Plaintiff may be able to plead additional facts from that time that support this relevant element of his claim. There is no information before the Court as to whether, for example, Plaintiff was ever informed by the prosecutors that he had been cleared of wrongdoing, whether Jackson or anyone else was later prosecuted for the shooting, or whether the state court made any further statements regarding the merits of the charges against Plaintiff. Count 3 is, accordingly, DISMISSED without prejudice, to provide Plaintiff with an opportunity to plead additional facts to support this claim.

E. Denial of Fair Trial

To state a claim under § 1983 for denial of a fair trial based on the fabrication of evidence by a police officer—Count 4 of the complaint—a plaintiff must allege that “an (1) investigating official (2) fabricates information (3) that is likely to influence a jury’s verdict, (4) forwards that information to prosecutors, and (5) the plaintiff suffers a deprivation of life, liberty, or property as a result.” *Garnett v. Undercover Officer C0039*, 838 F.3d 265, 277 (2d Cir. 2016) (citation omitted). The plaintiff need not show a favorable termination indicative of innocence to state such a claim. *Smalls v. Collins*, 10 F. 4th 117, 142–43 (2d Cir. 2021). The City Defendants argue that Plaintiff has failed to show a deprivation of his

liberty interests because there was probable cause for his prosecution, in the form of corroborative ballistics evidence. City Defs. Mem. at 16 (citing Dismissal Tr. at 15); City Defs. Reply at 6–7, ECF No. 46.

Probable cause is not a complete defense to a fair trial claim. *Torres v. City of N.Y.*, No. 16 Civ. 6719, 2017 WL 4325822, at *5 (E.D.N.Y. Sept. 27, 2017) (noting that where “independent probable cause exists for the prosecution,” a plaintiff must “show that the misconduct caused some deprivation above and beyond the fact of the prosecution itself.” (citation omitted)). Plaintiff plausibly alleges that Miller fabricated and “embellished” Jackson’s statements in his investigative report; that Miller provided these reports to prosecutors to secure Plaintiff’s indictment and arrest; and that Corrado, as Miller’s supervisor, reviewed and approved these reports without identifying any “embellishments” or obvious factual contradictions. See Compl. ¶¶ 44–49, 95. On a motion to dismiss, the Court cannot take as true the City Defendants’ factual assertion that, regardless of any alleged fabrications in Miller’s reports, the prosecution had independent ballistics evidence to satisfy the probable cause standard. Compare City Defs. Reply at 6–7, with ECF No. 39 at 9–12. It cannot, therefore, find as a matter of law, that the City Defendants had probable cause for Plaintiff’s indictment and prosecution. See *Bullard v. City of N.Y.*, 240 F. Supp. 2d 292, 299 (S.D.N.Y. 2003). The Court concludes, therefore, that Plaintiff has sufficiently alleged a § 1983 denial of fair trial claim against Miller and Corrado. The City Defendants’ motion to dismiss Count 4 of the complaint is, accordingly, DENIED.

CONCLUSION

For the reasons stated above, the State’s motion to dismiss, ECF No. 20, is GRANTED, and Plaintiff’s claims against the State are DISMISSED. The DA Defendants’ motion to dismiss, ECF No. 22, is GRANTED—Plaintiff’s claims against Vance are DISMISSED; and his claims against Kalra and Nasar are DISMISSED except for Counts 3 and 4, which are DISMISSED without prejudice to renewal in an amended complaint. By **April 15, 2022**, the DA Defendants shall make the disclosures directed in this order. The City Defendants’ motion to dismiss is DENIED as to Count 4, and GRANTED in all other respects. Plaintiff’s claims against Passamenti, the NYPD, and the City are DISMISSED; and his claims against Miller and Corrado are DISMISSED, except for Count 3, which is DISMISSED without prejudice to renewal in an amended complaint.

*14 By **May 16, 2022**, Plaintiff shall file an amended complaint as to Counts 3 and 4, with the additional factual allegations detailed in this order. The Clerk of Court is directed to terminate the motions pending at ECF Nos. 20, 22, and 32, and mail a copy of this order to Plaintiff *pro se*. The Court shall separately provide Plaintiff with a copy of all unpublished cases cited herein.

SO ORDERED.

All Citations

Not Reported in Fed. Supp., 2022 WL 992885

Footnotes

- 1 Unless otherwise stated, the following facts are taken from the complaint and assumed, for purposes of this motion, to be true. *ATSI Commc'ns, Inc. v. Shaar Fund, Ltd.*, 493 F.3d 87, 98 (2d Cir. 2007).
- 2 The relevant state court trial transcripts were submitted by the DA Defendants in their motion to dismiss. See Trial Tr.; Dismissal Tr., ECF No. 22-4. The Court may take judicial notice of these transcripts as a matter of public record. See *Shmueli v. City of N.Y.*, 424 F.3d 231, 233 (2d Cir. 2005).
- 3 Because the Court concludes that it lacks jurisdiction over Plaintiff's claims against the State under [Rule 12\(b\)\(1\)](#), it need not reach the State's alternative ground for dismissal, that Plaintiff's [§ 1983](#) and [§ 1985](#) claims must be dismissed because the State is not a suable "person" within the meaning of those statutes. State Mem. at 3–4.
- 4 Plaintiff makes this clarification for the first time in his opposition papers. ECF No. 28 at 14. The Court notes that because, as discussed, the Eleventh Amendment bars suits against states, see *supra* at 8–10, when a defendant is sued in his official capacity, the court treats the suit as one against the "entity of which an officer is an agent." *Kentucky v. Graham*, 473 U.S. 159, 165–66 (1985) (quoting *Monell v. N.Y.C. Dep't of Soc. Services*, 436 U.S. 658, 690 n.55 (1978)). And, where a "district attorney or an assistant district attorney acts as a prosecutor, she is an agent of the State, and therefore immune from suit in her official capacity." *D'Alessandro v. City of N.Y.*, 713 F. App'x 1, 8 (2d Cir. 2017). Accordingly, any claims Plaintiff may raise against the DA Defendants in their "official capacity" would be precluded by immunity under the Eleventh Amendment. See *id.*
- 5 Although Plaintiff asserts that he pleads each of his claims against "all Defendants," even a liberal read of the complaint makes clear that certain of Plaintiff's claims cannot implicate the DA Defendants' conduct, including counts 1 (unreasonable search and seizure); 2 (false arrest/imprisonment); 11 (personal injury); 12 (property damage) and 13 (negligent hiring, training, supervision, and discipline of officers). Compl. ¶¶ 117–27, 168–81. As the Court has already dismissed Counts 7 and 9, see *supra* at 7–8, it only considers Counts 3 (malicious prosecution); 4 (deprivation of fair trial); 5 (conspiracy); 6 (failure to intervene); 8 (abuse of process); 10 (negligent misrepresentation); and 14 (negligent infliction of emotional distress) against the DA Defendants.
- 6 Because the Court finds that the DA Defendants are entitled to absolute immunity on any claims arising from the withholding of exculpatory evidence, the Court does not reach their alternative argument that Plaintiff fails to state a claim for an alleged *Brady* violation, see DA Defs. Mem. at 12–15.

- 7 As noted, the parallel state-law constitutional claims in Counts 4, 5, and 6 are dismissed with prejudice. See *supra* at 8.
- 8 The DA Defendants' reliance on *Johnson v. Fargione* is unavailing. In that case, the court found that the plaintiff's claims, which had expired weeks before the issuance of Executive Order 202.8, could not "be said to have been tolled" by that Executive Order, as the time for filing had already passed and the plaintiff had offered no excuse for the delay. 20 Civ. 764, 2021 WL 1406683, at *3 (N.D.N.Y. Feb. 17, 2021), *report and recommendation adopted* 2021 WL 1404554 (Apr. 14, 2021). Although *Johnson* is instructive with respect to how claims that may have expired *before* the issuance of Executive Order 202.8 (*i.e.*, before March 20, 2020) should be treated, it does not address the applicability of the Executive Order to federal claims that, like Plaintiff's, had not yet expired by that date.
- 9 Executive Order 202.8 tolled applicable limitations periods from March 20, 2020 to November 3, 2020. The order amounted to a "pause" in the limitations period—that is, during the duration of the toll, the clock to file [did] not run," but "[o]nce the toll end[ed,] the clock resume[d] from where it was when the toll began, and the plaintiff ha[d] the rest of his limitations period to file his complaint," *Johnston v. City of Syracuse, No. 20 Civ. 1497, 2021 WL 3930703, at *6* (N.D.N.Y. Sept. 2, 2021). Because, as of March 20, 2020, when the clock was "paused," Plaintiff had 211 days remaining before the expiration of the limitations period on October 17, 2020, the Court calculates 211 days after November 3, 2020, as the end of the relevant limitations period when tolled—which is June 2, 2021.
- 10 Even assuming, *arguendo*, that Plaintiff would not have had reason to know of the harm or injury that was the basis of his Section 1986 claim until the date the indictment was dismissed (October 17, 2017), the claim would still be time-barred, because this would only extend the limitations period to October 17, 2018—nearly three years before the commencement of this action.
- 11 As noted, the Court dismissed Count 7 for relying on a statute that does not provide a private right of action, see *supra* at 7; Count 9 for being duplicative of Count 4, see *id.* at 8, and all the state constitutional claims Plaintiff asserts analogously to his federal constitutional claims, see *id.*
- 12 As discussed *supra* at 18–19, even if the Court construes Plaintiff's notice of claim as timely based on the dismissal of Plaintiff's criminal case on October 17, 2017, Plaintiff still failed to commence this action within one year and 90 days, as required by statute. This provides an alternative ground for dismissal.
- 13 Plaintiff also names the NYPD as a defendant. See Compl. But, the NYPD is a non-suable agency of the City, and thus, to the extent any of Plaintiff's claims are brought against it, they fail as a matter of law. See *Jenkins v. City of N.Y., 478 F.3d 76, 93 n.19* (2d Cir. 2007). Any such claims are, accordingly, DISMISSED with prejudice.

2021 WL 3037709

Only the Westlaw citation is currently available.
United States District Court, N.D. New York.

Rondue GENTRY, Plaintiff,

v.

State of NEW YORK; Kyle Filli; David Hurley; Heath
McCrinkle; Steven Sharp; and David Soares, Defendants.

1:21-CV-0319 (GTS/ML)

1

Signed 06/14/2021

Attorneys and Law Firms

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York 14716.

ORDER and REPORT-RECOMMENDATION

Miroslav Lovric, U.S. Magistrate Judge

I. INTRODUCTION

*1 The Clerk has sent this *pro se* complaint (Dkt. No. 1) together with an amended application to proceed *in forma pauperis* (Dkt. No. 5) filed by Rondue Gentry (“Plaintiff”) to the Court for review. For the reasons discussed below, I grant Plaintiff’s amended *in forma pauperis* application (Dkt. No. 5) and recommend that the Complaint be accepted for filing in part, dismissed in part without leave to amend, and dismissed in part with leave to amend.

II. BACKGROUND

On March 22, 2021, Plaintiff commenced this action by filing a verified Complaint and a motion to proceed *in forma pauperis*. (Dkt. Nos. 1, 2.) On March 23, 2021, the Court denied Plaintiff’s *in forma pauperis* application as incomplete and administratively closed the case. (Dkt. No. 4.) On April 9, 2021, Plaintiff filed an amended *in forma pauperis* application. (Dkt. No. 5.) As a result, the case was reopened and restored to the Court’s active docket. (Dkt. No. 6.)

Construed as liberally¹ as possible, the Complaint generally alleges that Plaintiff’s civil rights were violated by the State of New York, New York State Police Officers Kyle Filli, David Hurley, and Heath McCrinkle, and Assistant District Attorney

Steven Sharp and Albany County District Attorney David Soares (collectively “Defendants”). (*See generally* Dkt. No. 1.)

More specifically, Plaintiff alleges that on September 2, 2016, he was arrested on felony charges but released on bail on September 9, 2016. (*Id.* at 3.) While out on bail, Plaintiff alleges that on April 9, 2017, Defendant Filli stopped him while he was driving near a toll plaza. (*Id.* at 3 & Attach. 2 at 2 [Pl.’s Exs.])² Plaintiff alleges that, during the stop, “Defendant [] Filli [] falsely accused Plaintiff of having a lit marijuana blunt in his ashtray” and that when instructed to exit his vehicle, Plaintiff put items down the side of his seat and eventually drove away from the officer. (Dkt. No. 1 at 3.) After he allegedly fled the scene, Plaintiff alleges that Defendant Filli falsely accused Plaintiff of making four “u-turns” on the interstate and, at one point, traveling at 127 miles per hour, and made “several [other] vehicle and traffic law violations.” (*Id.*) Defendant Filli eventually lost sight of Plaintiff’s vehicle. (Dkt. No. 1, Attach. 2 at 2.)

On or about April 11, 2017, Plaintiff alleges that he was contacted by his attorney,³ who informed Plaintiff that he had received a call from Defendant Sharp, the Albany County District Attorney, regarding the incident with Defendant Filli on April 9, 2017. Plaintiff alleges that his attorney informed him that if he did not turn himself in, a warrant would be issued for his arrest. (Dkt. No. 1 at 4.) On the advice of his attorney, Plaintiff alleges that he appeared at the Albany City Courthouse on April 18, 2017, “to address the matter in good faith and resolve any and all confusion[.]” (*Id.*) Plaintiff alleges that when he arrived at the courthouse with his attorney, he was arrested by Defendant Hurley for charges “lo[d]ged against him by Defendant Kyle Filli ... which were all false allegations.” (*Id.*)

*2 Plaintiff next alleges that he was then taken to the State Trooper Barracks where Defendant McCrinkle “falsified a legal document alleging to have read Plaintiff his Miranda right warnings when this is not true.” (*Id.*) The same day he was arrested, on April 18, 2017, Plaintiff alleges that he was transported to Guilderland County Courthouse and arraigned on charges from both the Town of Guilderland and the City of Albany. (*Id.*)

Following his arraignment, Plaintiff alleges that he was transported to the Albany County Courthouse and “arraigned on a bail revocation hearing for a prior case.” (*Id.* at 5.) Plaintiff alleges that his bail was then revoked, and he was

transported to the Albany County Correctional Facility where he remained confined for eleven months. (*Id.*)

On April 20, 2017, Plaintiff alleges that Defendant Soares “maliciously prosecuted” him under case number 17040697 in the Town of Guilderland and case number 17-244811 in the City of Albany while “knowing the allegations [against Plaintiff] were false.” (*Id.*) Plaintiff next alleges that, on March 16, 2018, “approximately eleven (11) months after being arraigned in Guilderland County Court ... Plaintiff received a certificate of disposition dismissing the entire [p]roceeding in favor of the accused.” (*Id.*) The Complaint includes a “Certificate of Disposition” from Albany City Court for case number 17-244811, certifying that a “Judgment of Dismissal” was entered as to certain charges against Plaintiff. (Dkt. No. 1, Attach. 2 at 12.) The Complaint also includes a copy of a letter from the Deputy Court Clerk for the Town of Guilderland referencing “Case 17040697” and stating that “this case was transferred to Albany City Court as Guilderland Town Court did not have jurisdiction over this case.” (*Id.* at 14.)

Liberal construed, the Complaint appears to allege the following claims: (1) the State of New York failed to “properly train” its state police officers, leading to his false arrest, malicious prosecution, violation of due process rights, and cruel and unusual punishment; (2) Defendants Filli and Hurley, in their individual and official capacities, fabricated evidence and falsely arrested Plaintiff in violation of the Fourth Amendment and Plaintiff’s right to due process; (3) Defendant McCrindle, in his individual and official capacity, fabricated evidence and failed to read Plaintiff his *Miranda* warnings, in violation of Plaintiff’s right to due process; (4) Defendant Sharp, in his individual and official capacity, had no “valid or proper warrant” to detain Plaintiff; and that (5) Defendants Sharp and Soares, in their individual and official capacities, “maliciously prosecuted” Plaintiff in violation of the Fourth Amendment and Plaintiff’s right to due process. (Dkt. No. 1 at 4-8.)

As relief, Plaintiff seeks money damages from all Defendants, including \$20,000,000 from the State of New York; \$5,000,000 from Defendant Filli; \$5,000,000 from Defendant Hurley; \$1,000,000 from Defendant McCrindle; \$3,000,000 from Defendant Sharp; and \$10,000,000 from Defendant Soares. (*Id.* at 7-8.)

For a more complete statement of Plaintiff’s claims, refer to the Complaint. (Dkt. No. 1.)

III. PLAINTIFF'S AMENDED APPLICATION TO PROCEED *IN FORMA PAUPERIS*

“28 U.S.C. § 1915 permits an indigent litigant to commence an action in a federal court without prepayment of the filing fee that would ordinarily be charged.” *Cash v. Bernstein*, 09-CV-1922, 2010 WL 5185047, at *1 (S.D.N.Y. Oct. 26, 2010). “Although an indigent, incarcerated individual need not prepay the filing fee at the time of filing, he must subsequently pay the fee, to the extent he is able to do so, through periodic withdrawals from his inmate accounts.” *Cash*, 2010 WL 5185047, at *1 (citing 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b); *Harris v. City of New York*, 607 F.3d 18, 21 (2d Cir. 2010)).⁴

*3 Upon review, the Court finds that Plaintiff has submitted a completed *in forma pauperis* application (Dkt. No. 5) which demonstrates economic need. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(2). Plaintiff has also filed an inmate authorization form. (Dkt. No. 3.) Accordingly, Plaintiff’s amended application to proceed with this action *in forma pauperis* is granted.

IV. LEGAL STANDARD FOR INITIAL REVIEW OF COMPLAINT

Having found that Plaintiff meets the financial criteria for commencing this action *in forma pauperis*, and because Plaintiff seeks relief from an officer or employee of a governmental entity, the Court must consider the sufficiency of the allegations set forth in the Complaint in light of 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e) and 28 U.S.C. § 1915A(a). Section 1915(e) of Title 28 of the United States Code directs that, when a plaintiff seeks to proceed *in forma pauperis*, “the court shall dismiss the case at any time if the court determines that— ... (B) the action ... (i) is 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).⁵

Similarly, under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A, a court must review any “complaint in a civil action in which a prisoner seeks redress from a government entity or officer or employee of a government entity” and must “identify cognizable claims or dismiss the complaint, or any portion of the complaint, if the complaint ... is frivolous, malicious, or fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted; or ... seeks monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief.” 28 U.S.C. § 1915A(b); *see also Carr v. Dvorin*, 171 F.3d 115, 116 (2d Cir. 1999) (per curiam) (noting that Section

1915A applies to all actions brought by prisoners against governmental officials even when plaintiff paid the filing fee).

Additionally, when reviewing a complaint, a court may also look to the [Federal Rules of Civil Procedure](#). Rule 8 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure provides that a pleading which sets forth a claim for relief shall contain, *inter alia*, “a short and plain statement of the claim showing that the pleader is entitled to relief.” Fed. R. Civ. P. 8(a)(2). The purpose of Rule 8 “is to give fair notice of the claim being asserted so as to permit the adverse party the opportunity to file a responsive answer, prepare an adequate defense and determine whether the doctrine of *res judicata* is applicable.” [Powell v. Marine Midland Bank](#), 162 F.R.D. 15, 16 (N.D.N.Y. 1995) (McAvoy, C.J.) (quoting [Brown v. Califano](#), 75 F.R.D. 497, 498 (D.D.C. 1977)).

A court should not dismiss a complaint if the plaintiff has stated “enough facts to state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face.” [Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly](#), 550 U.S. 544, 570 (2007). “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.” [Ashcroft v. Iqbal](#), 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009). While the court should construe the factual allegations in the light most favorable to the plaintiff, “the tenet that a court must accept as true all of the allegations contained in a complaint is inapplicable to legal conclusions.” [Ashcroft](#), 556 U.S. at 678. “Threadbare recitals of the elements of a cause of action, supported by mere conclusory statements, do not suffice.” *Id.* (citing [Twombly](#), 550 U.S. at 555). Rule 8 “demands more than an unadorned the-defendant-unlawfully-harmed-me accusation.” *Id.* Thus, a pleading that contains only allegations which “are so vague as to fail to give the defendants adequate notice of the claims against them” is subject to dismissal. [Sheehy v. Brown](#), 335 F. App'x 102, 104 (2d Cir. 2009).

V. ANALYSIS

*4 In addressing the sufficiency of a plaintiff's complaint, the court must construe his pleadings liberally. [Sealed Plaintiff v. Sealed Defendant](#), 537 F.3d 185, 191 (2d Cir. 2008). Having reviewed the Complaint with this principle in mind, I recommend that the Complaint be accepted for filing in part and dismissed in part.

A. Heck Delayed Accrual Claims

“A claim for damages [that would necessarily imply the invalidity of a plaintiff's state court] conviction or sentence that has *not* been so invalidated is not cognizable under § 1983.” [Heck v. Humphrey](#), 512 U.S. 477, 486-87 (1994). In [Covington v. City of New York](#), the Second Circuit held that “if success on a § 1983 claim would necessarily impugn the validity of a conviction in a pending criminal prosecution, such a claim *does not accrue* so long as the potential for a judgment in the pending criminal prosecution continues to exist.” [Covington v. City of New York](#), 171 F.3d 117, 124 (2d Cir. 1999); *see also* [McDonough v. Smith](#), 139 S. Ct. 2149, 2156-57 (2019) (holding that a plaintiff could not bring a “fabricated-evidence claim under § 1983 prior to favorable termination of his prosecution”); [Perry v. City of Albany](#), 20-CV-165, 2020 WL 3405636, at *4 (N.D.N.Y. May 6, 2020) (Stewart, M.J.) (“[c]laims of false arrest, false imprisonment, malicious prosecution, and fabrication of evidence are generally viewed as barred by the rule in *Heck*.”), *report and recommendation adopted by*, 2020 WL 3403080 (N.D.N.Y. June 19, 2020) (Suddaby, C.J.); [McFadden v. Jaeon](#), 12-CV-1255, 2012 WL 4107466, at *2 (N.D.N.Y. Aug. 23, 2012) (Randolph, M.J.) (barring claims for false arrest and “faulty *Miranda* warnings” pursuant to *Heck*), *report and recommendation adopted by*, 2012 WL 4107465 (N.D.N.Y. Sept. 18, 2012) (Mordue, J.); [Harris v. Buffardi](#), 08-CV-1322, 2011 WL 3794235, at *10 (N.D.N.Y. Aug. 24, 2011) (Sharpe, J.) (claims for “violation of his due process rights, fabrication of evidence, obstruction of justice, bad faith inadequate investigation, and §§ 1983 and 1985 conspiracy—all of which are patent attacks on the validity of [plaintiff's] conviction—[were] barred.”).

Plaintiff specifically alleges that the case against him in the City of Albany, case number 17-244811, was “terminated in his favor” on March 16, 2018 when he received a “Judgement of Dismissal.” (Dkt. No. 1 at 5, Attach. 2 at 12.) However, Plaintiff does not similarly allege that the case against him in the Town of Guilderland, case number 17040697, was also dismissed or otherwise terminated in his favor. Instead, Plaintiff vaguely alleges that the “entire proceeding” was dismissed and that the charges against him were “terminated in his favor.” (Dkt. No. 1 at 5, 7.) While the Complaint includes a copy of a letter from the Deputy Court Clerk for the Town of Guilderland referencing “Case 17040697” that states that “[t]he case was transferred to Albany City Court as Guilderland Town Court did not have jurisdiction[,]” Plaintiff does not specifically allege how the charges from that case were resolved. (Dkt. No. 1, Attach. 2 at 14.)

Because Plaintiff has failed to allege sufficient facts showing that the case filed against him in the Town of Guilderland terminated in his favor, the Court has a basis to dismiss all of Plaintiff's claims relating to that case as premature pursuant to *Heck*. However, because I also recommend that nearly all of Plaintiff's claims should be dismissed for the additional, independent reasons that follow, I only recommend that the fabrication of evidence claims relating to the charges against Plaintiff in the Town of Guilderland against Defendants Filli, Hurley, and McCrindle, in their individual capacities, be dismissed as premature pursuant to *Heck*.⁶

B. Claims Against the State of New York

*5 The Eleventh Amendment provides that “[t]he Judicial power of the United States shall not be construed to extend to any suit in law or equity, commenced or prosecuted against one of the United States by Citizens of another State, or by Citizens or Subjects of any Foreign State.” U.S. CONST. amend. XI. Regardless of the nature of the relief sought, in the absence of the State's consent or waiver of immunity, a suit against the State or one of its agencies or departments is proscribed by the Eleventh Amendment. *Pennhurst State Sch. & Hosp. v. Halderman*, 465 U.S. 89, 100 (1984). “New York State has not consented to suit in federal court.” *Abrahams v. Appellate Div. of Supreme Court*, 473 F. Supp. 2d 550, 556 (S.D.N.Y. 2007) (citing *Trotman v. Palisades Interstate Park Comm'n*, 557 F.2d 35, 38-40 (2d Cir. 1977)). Section 1983 claims do not abrogate the Eleventh Amendment immunity of the states. See *Quern v. Jordan*, 440 U.S. 332, 340-41 (1979). Therefore, I recommend dismissal of all claims brought by Plaintiff against the State of New York pursuant to the Eleventh Amendment.⁷

C. Claims Against Defendants Sharp and Soares

1. Individual Capacity

“It is by now well established that a state prosecuting attorney who acted within the scope of his duties in initiating and pursuing a criminal prosecution is immune from a civil suit for damages under § 1983.” *Shmueli v. City of New York*, 424 F.3d 231, 236 (2d Cir. 2005) (citation and internal quotation marks omitted) (collecting cases). “Because the immunity attaches to the official prosecutorial function ... and because the initiation and pursuit of a criminal prosecution are quintessential prosecutorial functions ... the prosecutor has absolute immunity for the initiation and conduct of a

prosecution unless he proceeds in the clear absence of all jurisdiction.” *Shmueli*, 424 F.3d at 237 (citations and internal quotation marks omitted).

These principles also protect a prosecutor against malicious prosecution claims brought under state law. *Id.* at 238; see also *Buckley v. Fitzsimmons*, 509 U.S. 259, 274 n.5 (1993) (indicating that the court's conclusion that absolute immunity protects a prosecutor against § 1983 claims in the nature of malicious prosecution was based in part on the “common-law tradition of immunity for a prosecutor's decision to bring an indictment, whether he has probable cause or not”); *Imbler v. Pachtman*, 424 U.S. 409, 424 (1976) (same principles require conferral of absolute immunity for damages claims under § 1983 and state law).

*6 However, “[a] prosecutor is not absolutely immune solely because she engaged in the conduct in question during her line of work.” *D'Alessandro v. City of New York*, 713 F. App'x 1, 5 (2d Cir. 2017) (citing *Buckley v. Fitzsimmons*, 509 U.S. 259, 273 (1993)). A prosecutor is entitled to absolute immunity “when she acts as an ‘advocate.’ ” *Id.* (citing *Warney v. Monroe Cnty.*, 587 F.3d 113, 121 (2d Cir. 2009)). To be sure, “[a] prosecutor wears many hats” including “administrat[or],” “investigator,” and “advocate[.]” *Id.* (quoting *Hill v. City of New York*, 45 F.3d 653, 656 (2d Cir. 1995)). The “functional” test of whether a prosecutor was acting as an advocate is an objective one, and a court only asks whether “the conduct in question could ‘reasonably’ fall under the rubric of the prosecutor's function as an advocate.” *Id.* at 5 n.6. (emphasis in original) (citations omitted). “If it does, then absolutely immunity attaches even if the prosecutor engaged in those actions with vindictive or malicious intent.” *Id.*

“Under our case law, a prosecutor unquestionably acts as an advocate—and therefore receives absolute immunity—when she initiates and pursues a criminal prosecution.” *Id.* (citing *Shmueli*, 424 F.3d at 236). Indeed, “a prosecutor still acts within the scope of her duties even if she ... knowingly uses false testimony, ... engages in malicious prosecution, or attempts to intimidate an individual into accepting a guilty plea.” *Id.* (citing *Shmueli*, 424 F.3d at 237-38; *Peay v. Ajello*, 470 F.3d 65, 67-68 (2d Cir. 2006)); see also *Parker v. Soares*, 19-CV-113, 2019 WL 2232591, at *6 (N.D.N.Y. May 23, 2019) (Hummel, M.J.) (holding that prosecutorial immunity barred certain false arrest claims against Assistant District Attorney David Soares), *report and recommendation adopted by*, 2019 WL 2491918 (N.D.N.Y. June 14, 2019) (Sharpe, J.).

Here, I find that the allegations against Defendants Sharp and Soares arise out of acts intimately associated with the judicial phase of the criminal process, in their role as advocates, including the initiation of criminal proceedings against Plaintiff in the City of Albany and Town of Guilderland. As a result, I recommend that any claims against Defendants Sharp and Soares, in their individual capacity, be dismissed.

2. Official Capacity

As previously stated, “[t]he Eleventh Amendment generally bars suits against a state in federal court.” *Pikulin v. City Univ. of N.Y.*, 176 F.3d 598, 600 (2d Cir. 1999) (per curiam) (citation omitted). When a defendant is sued in his official capacity, we treat the suit as one against the “entity of which an officer is an agent.” *Kentucky v. Graham*, 473 U.S. 159, 165–66, (1985). If a district attorney or an assistant district attorney acts as a prosecutor, she is an agent of the state, and therefore immune from suit in her official capacity. *D'Alessandro*, 713 F. App'x 1, 8 (2d Cir. 2017) (citing *Ying Jing Gan v. City of New York*, 996 F.2d 522, 536 (2d Cir. 1993)).

Here, the claims against Defendants Sharp and Soares, in their official capacities, are effectively claims against the State of New York. For that reason, these claims must be dismissed.

D. Claims Against Defendants Filli, Hurley, and McCrindle

1. Individual Capacity

Liberally construed, the Complaint alleges claims against Defendants Filli and Hurley for fabrication of evidence and false arrest, in violation of the Fourth Amendment and Plaintiff's right to due process. The Complaint also alleges claims against Defendant McCrindle for fabricating evidence and failing to read Plaintiff his *Miranda* warnings in violation of Plaintiff's right to due process. (See generally Dkt. No. 1 at 3-4, 6-8.)⁸

*7 For the following reasons, I recommend dismissal of all claims against Defendants Filli, Hurley, and McCrindle in their official capacities. I also recommend dismissal of the false arrest claims against Defendants Filli and Hurley, in their individual capacities, and dismissal of the *Miranda* claim against Defendant McCrindle, in his individual capacity. However, I recommend that the fabrication of evidence claims

against Defendants Filli, Hurley, and McCrindle, in their individual capacities, as relates to the case against Plaintiff in the City of Albany, be accepted for filing.

i. False Arrest Claims Against Defendants Filli and Hurley

“A § 1983 claim for false arrest, which derives from an individual's right under the Fourth Amendment to be free from unreasonable seizures, including arrest without probable cause, see, e.g., *Lennon v. Miller*, 66 F.3d 416, 423 (2d Cir. 1995), is substantially the same as a claim for false arrest under New York law.” *Kates v. Greece Police Dep't*, 16-CV-6554, 2017 WL 11548970, at *3 (W.D.N.Y. Feb. 21, 2017) (citing *Weyant v. Okst*, 101 F.3d 845, 852 (2d Cir. 1996)). Generally, the statute of limitations for a § 1983 action accruing in New York is three years. *Shomo v. City of New York*, 579 F.3d 176, 181 (2d Cir. 2009). Although the statute of limitations is an affirmative defense, where it is clear from the face of the complaint that a claim is barred by the applicable statute of limitations, the claim is subject to dismissal for failure to state a claim on 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B) review. See *Pino v. Ryan*, 49 F.3d 51, 53-54 (2d Cir. 1995) (holding that a complaint can be dismissed on initial review based on a defense that appears on the face of the complaint); *Syfert v. City of Rome*, 17-CV-0578, 2018 WL 3121611, at *3-5 (N.D.N.Y. Feb. 12, 2018) (Dancks, M.J.) (dismissing all claims as barred by the statute of limitations on initial review pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)).

With regard to Plaintiff's allegations that Defendants Filli and Hurley “falsely arrested” him, the Court must determine when the claims accrued. The Second Circuit in *Singleton* found that a false arrest claim accrued on the date of arrest because that “was the time at which plaintiff knew of his injury arising from the alleged ... false arrest.” *Singleton v. City of New York*, 632 F.2d 185, 191 (2d Cir. 1980). Applying *Wallace v. Kato*, 549 U.S. 384 (2007), the Second Circuit more recently held that a false arrest claim accrues when the “false imprisonment ends,” or more specifically, “when ‘the victim becomes held pursuant to legal process,’ ” e.g., when he is arraigned on charges. *Lynch v. Suffolk Cty. Police Dep't, Inc.*, 348 F. App'x 672, 675 (2d Cir. 2009) (quoting *Wallace*, 549 U.S. at 388-89); see also *Thomas v. Heid*, 17-CV-1213, 2017 WL 9673716, at *3 (N.D.N.Y. Dec. 6, 2017) (recognizing that a false arrest claim accrues under § 1983 is when “the alleged false imprisonment ends: when the arrestee is bound over by a magistrate or arraigned on charges.”) (Stewart, M.J.), report

and recommendation adopted, 2018 WL 1773130 (N.D.N.Y. Apr. 12, 2018) (D'Agostino, J.). Other cases have simply held that a false arrest claim under § 1983 accrues on the date of arrest itself. See *Kislowksi v. Kelley*, 19-CV-218, 2020 WL 495059, at *3 (N.D.N.Y. Jan. 30, 2020) (Stewart, M.J.) (“a false arrest claim accrues at the time of the arrest.”).

The distinction between the date of arrest and the date of arraignment here is of no moment because Plaintiff alleges that he was arrested and arraigned on the same day, April 18, 2017. (Dkt. No. 1 at 4.) Even if the charges stemming from the April 9, 2017, incident were ultimately dismissed on March 16, 2018, as Plaintiff alleges,⁹ his false arrest claims against Defendants Filli and Hurley first accrued on April 18, 2017, the date when he was both arrested and arraigned on those charges. As a result, the statute of limitations on his false arrest claims under § 1983 expired on or about April 18, 2020. The Complaint was signed on March 6, 2021 and filed with the Court on March 22, 2021, well after the three-year period had expired.¹⁰ I therefore recommend that Plaintiff's Fourth Amendment false arrest claims against Defendants Filli and Hurley be dismissed as untimely.

ii. *Miranda* Claim Against Defendant McCrindle

*8 As a general matter, “no cause of action exists under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 for *Miranda* violations.” *Hernandez v. Llukaci*, 16-CV-1030, 2019 WL 1427429, at *7 (N.D.N.Y. Mar. 29, 2019) (Hurd, J.) (citing *Chavez v. Martinez*, 538 U.S. 760, 767 (2003)). The failure to inform a plaintiff of his rights under *Miranda*, “does not, without more, result in § 1983 liability.” *Deshawn E. v. Safir*, 156 F.3d 340, 346 (2d Cir. 1998). Instead, the remedy for a violation of the right against self-incrimination is ‘the exclusion from evidence of any ensuing self-incriminating statements’ and ‘not a § 1983 action.’ ” *Id.* (quoting *Neighbour v. Covert*, 68 F.3d 1508, 1510 (2d Cir. 1995)). However, “[a] *Miranda* violation that amounts to actual coercion based on outrageous government misconduct is a deprivation of a constitutional right that can be the basis for a § 1983 suit, even when a confession is not used against the declaration in any fashion.” *Id.* at 348 (internal citations omitted).

The Complaint does not allege any facts that would plausibly suggest that Defendant McCrindle coerced Plaintiff into giving any inculpatory statements that were later used against him. Additionally, much like Plaintiff's claims alleging false arrest, Plaintiff's *Miranda* claim against Defendant

McCrindle is untimely because it was not made within three years from the date that it accrued. See *Rahn v. Erie County Sheriff's Dept.*, 96-CV-0756E, 1999 WL 1067560, at *2 (W.D.N.Y. Nov. 19, 1999) (finding that a *Miranda* claim accrued “about the time of [plaintiff's] arrest” and was subject to the three year statute of limitations bar to § 1983 claims). For these reasons, I recommend Plaintiff's *Miranda* claim against Defendant McCrindle be dismissed.

iii. Fabrication of Evidence Claims Against Defendants Filli, Hurley, and McCrindle

“When a police officer creates false information likely to influence a jury's decision and forwards that information to prosecutors, he violates the accused’ constitutional right to a fair trial, and the harm occasioned by such an unconscionable action is redressable in an action for damages under 42 U.S.C. § 1983.” *Ricciuti v. N.Y.C. Transit Auth.*, 124 F.3d 123, 130 (2d Cir. 1997) (citations omitted). Unlike Plaintiff's claims for false arrest and for a *Miranda* violation, “[t]he statute of limitations for a fabricated-evidence claim ... does not begin to run until the criminal proceedings against the defendant (*i.e.*, the § 1983 plaintiff) have terminated in his favor.” *McDonough v. Smith*, 139 S. Ct. 2149, 2154–55 (2019).

Mindful of the Second Circuit's instruction that a *pro se* plaintiff's pleadings must be liberally construed and without expressing an opinion as to whether the Complaint can withstand a properly filed motion to dismiss or for summary judgment, I recommend that a response be required to Plaintiff's fabrication of evidence claims relating to the case against Plaintiff in the City of Albany, against Defendants Filli, Hurley, and McCrindle, in their individual capacities.

iv. Due Process Claims Against Filli, Hurley, and McCrindle

The Complaint makes several generalized references to being deprived of “due process” and his “life, liberty, and happiness” in connection with the claims against Defendants McCrindle, Filli, and Hurley. (Dkt. No. 1 at 6-7.) But where a plaintiff makes due process and false arrest claims stemming from the same set of facts, the Second Circuit has held that the two claims “merge,” such that a plaintiff's due process claim is subsumed by the “false arrest” claim. *Fernandez-Bravo v. Town of Manchester*, 711 F. App'x 5, 8 (2d Cir. 2017); *Maliha v. Faluotico*, 286 F. App'x 742, 744 (2d Cir.

2008); *see also* *Lozado v. Weilminster*, 92 F. Supp. 3d 76, 102 (E.D.N.Y. 2015) (holding that a plaintiff's procedural due process claim merges with his false arrest claim, the constitutional source of which is the Fourth Amendment); *but see* *Sepulveda v. City of New York*, 15-CV-5187, 2017 WL 3891808, at *5 (E.D.N.Y. Feb. 14, 2017) (recognizing that a false arrest claim will not merge with a due process claim where the due process claim challenges the conditions of detention, as opposed to the wrongfulness of the detention itself), *report and recommendation adopted*, 15-CV-5187, 2017 WL 3887872 (E.D.N.Y. Sept. 5, 2017).

*9 It is clear from the face of the Complaint that Plaintiff's vague and conclusory references to being denied due process stem directly from the allegations relating to his false arrest.¹¹ I therefore find that any due process claims Plaintiff alleges against Defendants Filli, Hurley, and McCrindle merge into his false arrest claims, and consistent with my prior analysis of those claims in Section V.D.1.i., I recommend that they are dismissed as untimely.

2. Official Capacity

“ [C]laims against a government employee in his official capacity are treated as a claim against the municipality, and, thus, cannot stand under the Eleventh Amendment.” *Jackson v. Gunsalus*, 16-CV-0647, 2016 WL 4004612, at *2 (N.D.N.Y. June 24, 2016) (Dancks, M.J.) (quoting *Hines v. City of Albany*, 542 F. Supp. 2d 218, 227 (N.D.N.Y. 2008) (McCurn, J.)), *report and recommendation adopted by*, 2016 WL 3983635 (July 25, 2016) (Sharpe, J.); *see* *Hafer v. Melo*, 502 U.S. 21, 25 (1991) (citing *Graham*, 473 U.S. at 166-67) (“Suits against state officials in their official capacity therefore should be treated as suits against the State.”).

Here, to the extent that Plaintiff asserts claims against Defendants Filli, Hurley, and McCrindle in their official capacities, I recommend that those claims be dismissed because they are, in reality, claims against the State of New York, which is immune from suit.

VI. OPPORTUNITY TO AMEND

Generally, a court should not dismiss claims contained in a complaint filed by a *pro se* litigant without granting leave to amend at least once “when a liberal reading of the complaint gives any indication that a valid claim might be stated.” *Branum v. Clark*, 927 F.2d 698, 704-05 (2d Cir. 1991);

see also Fed. R. Civ. P. 15(a)(2) (“The court should freely give leave when justice so requires.”). An opportunity to amend is not required, however, where “the problem with [the plaintiff's] causes of action is substantive” such that “better pleading will not cure it.” *Cuoco v. Moritsugu*, 222 F.3d 99, 112 (2d Cir. 2000); *see also* *Cortec Indus. Inc. v. Sum Holding L.P.*, 949 F.2d 42, 48 (2d Cir. 1991) (“Of course, where a plaintiff is unable to allege any fact sufficient to support its claim, a complaint should be dismissed with prejudice.”). Stated differently, “[w]here it appears that granting leave to amend is unlikely to be productive, ... it is not an abuse of discretion to deny leave to amend.” *Ruffolo v. Oppenheimer & Co.*, 987 F.2d 129, 131 (2d Cir. 1993); *accord*, *Brown v. Peters*, 95-CV-1641, 1997 WL 599355, at *1 (N.D.N.Y. Sept. 22, 1997) (Pooler, J.).¹²

*10 I recommend that Plaintiff's claims against Defendant State of New York be dismissed with prejudice and without leave to amend. *Sonnick v. Budlong*, 20-CV-0410, 2020 WL 2999109, at *10 (N.D.N.Y. June 4, 2020) (Lovric, M.J.) (recommending dismissal without leave to amend, claims against New York State Police), *report and recommendation adopted by*, 2020 WL 4345004 (N.D.N.Y. July 29, 2020) (McAvoy, J.). Similarly, I recommend that Plaintiff's claims against Defendants Filli, Hurley, and McCrindle, in their official capacities, be dismissed with prejudice and without leave to amend because they are immune from suit. *See Jackson v. Gunsalus*, 16-CV-0647, 2016 WL 4004612, at *2 (N.D.N.Y. June 24, 2016) (Dancks, M.J.) (dismissing with prejudice and without leave to amend claims against police officers, in their official capacities, as barred by the Eleventh Amendment), *report and recommendation adopted*, 2016 WL 3983635 (July 25, 2016) (Sharpe, J.). I also recommend that Plaintiff's claims against Defendants Soares and Sharp, in their official and individual capacities, be dismissed with prejudice and without leave to amend because they are also immune from suit. *See Lawrence v. Sherman*, 20-CV-0694, 2020 WL 5904789, at *3 (N.D.N.Y. Oct. 6, 2020) (D'Agostino, J.) (dismissing with prejudice claims against a defendant prosecutor based on the doctrine of prosecutorial immunity).

I also recommend dismissal with leave to amend the fabrication of evidence claims, that relate to the case against Plaintiff in the Town of Guilderland, against Defendants Filli, Hurley, and McCrindle, in their individual capacities.¹³ *Perry v. City of Albany*, 20-CV-165, 2020 WL 3405636, at *4 (N.D.N.Y. May 6, 2020) (Stewart, M.J.) (recommending dismissal with leave to amend claims that appeared to be

barred based on *Heck*), report and recommendation adopted, 20-CV-0165, 2020 WL 3403080 (N.D.N.Y. June 19, 2020) (Suddaby, C.J.).

As to Plaintiff's claims for false arrest against Defendants Filli and Hurley, in their individual capacities, and for a *Miranda* violation against Defendant McCrindle, in his individual capacity, although I have found that these claims are barred by the applicable statute of limitations for the reasons stated in Sections V.D.1.i. and V.D.1.ii., a district court typically should not dismiss claims as time-barred without providing a *pro se* plaintiff with "notice and an opportunity to be heard" as to whether there might be a meritorious tolling argument or other reason why the complaint might be considered. *Abbas v. Dixon*, 480 F.3d 636, 640 (2d Cir. 2007). For that reason, I recommend that Plaintiff's false arrest and *Miranda* claims be dismissed with leave to amend, even though it appears very unlikely to the undersigned that Plaintiff can state plausible claims.

If Plaintiff chooses to file an amended complaint, he should note that the law in this circuit clearly provides that " 'complaints relying on the civil rights statutes are insufficient unless they contain some specific allegations of fact indicating a deprivation of rights, instead of a litany of general conclusions that shock but have no meaning.' " *Hunt v. Budd*, 895 F. Supp. 35, 38 (N.D.N.Y. 1995) (McAvoy, J.) (quoting *Barr v. Abrams*, 810 F.2d 358, 363 (2d Cir. 1987)); accord *Pourzancvakil v. Humphry*, 94-CV-1594, 1995 WL 316935, at *7 (N.D.N.Y. May 23, 1995) (Pooler, J.). In any amended complaint, Plaintiff must clearly set forth facts that give rise to the claims, including the dates, times, and places of the alleged underlying acts, and each individual who committed each alleged wrongful act. The revised pleading must also allege facts demonstrating the specific involvement of any of the named defendants in the constitutional deprivations alleged in sufficient detail to establish that they were tangibly connected to those deprivations. *Bass v. Jackson*, 790 F.2d 260, 263 (2d Cir. 1986). Finally, Plaintiff is informed that any such amended complaint will replace the existing Complaint and must be a wholly integrated and complete pleading that does not rely upon or incorporate by reference any pleading or document previously filed with the Court. See *Shields v. Citytrust Bancorp, Inc.*, 25 F.3d 1124, 1128 (2d Cir. 1994) ("It is well established that an amended complaint ordinarily supersedes the original and renders it of no legal effect.").

*11 ACCORDINGLY, it is

ORDERED that Plaintiff's amended *in forma pauperis* application (Dkt. No. 5) is **GRANTED**; and it is further

ORDERED that the Clerk of the Court (1) provide the Superintendent of the facility that Plaintiff has designated as his current location with a copy of Plaintiff's inmate authorization form (Dkt. No. 3) and notify that official that Plaintiff has filed this action and is required to pay the Northern District of New York the entire statutory filing fee of \$350.00 in installments, over time, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915; and (2) provide a copy of Plaintiff's inmate authorization form (Dkt. No. 3) to the Financial Deputy of the Clerk's Office; and it is further respectfully

RECOMMENDED that the Court **ACCEPT FOR FILING** Plaintiff's fabrication of evidence claims against Defendants Filli, Hurley, and McCrindle, in their individual capacities, as those claims relate to the case against Plaintiff in the City of Albany; and it is further respectfully

RECOMMENDED that the Court **DISMISS WITHOUT PREJUDICE AND WITH LEAVE TO REPLEAD** Plaintiff's fabrication of evidence claims against Defendants Filli, Hurley, and McCrindle, in their individual capacities, as those claims relate to the case against Plaintiff in the Town of Guilderland, as premature pursuant to *Heck v. Humphrey*, 512 U.S. 477 (1994); and it is further respectfully

RECOMMENDED that the Court **DISMISS WITH PREJUDICE AND WITHOUT LEAVE TO REPLEAD** Plaintiff's claims against the State of New York, Defendants Filli, Hurley, and McCrindle, in their official capacities, and Defendants Sharp and Soares, in their official and individual capacities; and it is further respectfully

RECOMMENDED that the Court **DISMISS WITHOUT PREJUDICE AND WITH LEAVE TO REPLEAD** Plaintiff's false arrest claims against Defendants Filli and Hurley, in their individual capacities, and Plaintiff's claim for a *Miranda* violation against Defendant McCrindle, in his individual capacity; and it is further

ORDERED that the Clerk of the Court shall file a copy of this Order and Report-Recommendation on Plaintiff, along with copies of the unpublished decisions cited herein in accordance with the Second Circuit's decision in *Lebron v. Sanders*, 557 F.3d 76 (2d Cir. 2009) (per curiam).

NOTICE: Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1), the parties have fourteen days within which to file written objections to the foregoing report.¹⁴ Such objections shall be filed with the Clerk of the Court. **FAILURE TO OBJECT TO THIS REPORT WITHIN FOURTEEN DAYS WILL PRECLUDE APPELLATE REVIEW.** 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1) (Supp. 2013); Fed. R. Civ. P. 6(a), 6(d), 72; *Roldan v.*

Racette, 984 F.2d 85 (2d Cir. 1993) (citing *Small v. Sec'y of Health and Human Servs.*, 892 F.2d 15 (2d Cir. 1989)).

All Citations

Not Reported in Fed. Supp., 2021 WL 3037709

Footnotes

- 1 The court must interpret *pro se* complaints to raise the strongest arguments they suggest. *Soto v. Walker*, 44 F.3d 169, 173 (2d Cir. 1995) (quoting *Burgos v. Hopkins*, 14 F.3d 787, 790 (2d Cir. 1994)).
- 2 “A copy of a written instrument that is an exhibit to a pleading is a part of the pleading for all purposes.” Fed. R. Civ. P. 10(c); *Cortec Indus., Inc. v. Sum Holding L.P.*, 949 F.2d 42, 47 (2d Cir. 1991) (“the complaint is deemed to include any written instrument attached to it as an exhibit or any statements or documents incorporated in it by reference.”).
- 3 Plaintiff’s references to “his attorney” in the Complaint appear to relate to his representation in certain criminal matters. Plaintiff has indicated to the Court that he is proceeding *pro se* in this matter. (Dkt. No. 1 at 1.)
- 4 Section § 1915(g) prohibits a prisoner from proceeding *in forma pauperis* where, absent a showing of “imminent danger of serious physical injury,” a prisoner has filed three or more actions that were subsequently dismissed as frivolous, malicious, or failing to state a claim upon which relief may be granted. See 28 U.S.C. § 1915(g). The Court has reviewed Plaintiff’s litigation history on the Federal Judiciary’s Public Access to Court Electronic Records (“PACER”) Service. See <http://pacer.uspci.uscourts.gov>. It does not appear from that review that Plaintiff had accumulated three strikes for purposes of 28 U.S.C. § 1915(g) as of the date this action was commenced.
- 5 To determine whether an action is frivolous, a court must look to see whether the complaint “lacks an arguable basis in either law or in fact.” *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319, 325 (1989).
- 6 The Complaint does not separate claims against the Defendants based on the two underlying criminal cases against Plaintiff in the City of Albany and Town of Guilderland. However, as discussed in Section V.D.1.iii. of this Report-Recommendation, Plaintiff’s fabrication of evidence claims against Defendants Filli, Hurley, and McCrindle, in their individual capacities, that relate to the criminal charges against Plaintiff in the City of Albany, should be accepted for filing.
- 7 Plaintiff also alleges that he “filed a claim in the New York State Court of Claims [against the State of New York] dealing with the same facts involved in this action[.]” but that the case was dismissed on July 25, 2019 “due to failure of establishing proper service.” (Dkt. No. 1 at 2.) A court’s dismissal for failure to establish proper service is not a final judgment such that *res judicata* would apply. *Martin v. New York State Dep’t of Mental Hygiene*, 588 F.2d 371, 373 n.3 (2d Cir. 1978) (“a dismissal for failure of service of process, of course, has no *res judicata* effect.”); *Troeger v. Ellenville Cent. Sch. Dist.*, 15-CV-1294, 2016 WL 5107119, at *7 (N.D.N.Y. Sept. 20, 2016) (D’Agostino, J.) (“The dismissal based upon failure to join a necessary party and improper service are not final decisions on the merits for *res judicata* purposes.”). Based on the Court’s review of the New York Court of Claims public docket, Plaintiff’s case against the State of New York, Claim No. 132064, was indeed dismissed on June 3, 2019 for failure to properly serve the State of New York in accordance with

the service requirements set forth in the [New York Court of Claims Act § 11](#) and [22 N.Y.C.R.R. § 206.5\(a\)](#). *Gentry v. State of New York*, Claim No. 132064 (N.Y. Ct. Cl. June 3, 2019).

- 8 The Complaint makes other, sporadic legal conclusions. For example, Plaintiff alleges that, “as a result of the actions of all defendants [he has] suffered mental anguish, extreme emotion distress and cruel and unusual punishment.” (Dkt. No. 1 at 7.) Plaintiff later clarifies that he seeks to hold the State of New York liable for his “cruel and unusual punishment.” (*Id.*) However, as explained in Section V.A. above, the State of New York is immune from suit. To the extent that Plaintiff alleges that Defendants Filli, Hurley, and McCrindle, in their individual capacities, may have caused his “cruel and unusual punishment” or otherwise inflicted emotional distress upon him, his bare legal conclusions are insufficient to withstand the Court’s review under [28 U.S.C. § 1915\(e\)](#) and [28 U.S.C. § 1915A](#).
- 9 Significantly, it is no longer the law of this circuit that a “false arrest” claim under § 1983 accrues only once a plaintiff received a favorable judgment stemming from the allegedly false arrest. *See Jones v. City of New York*, 13-CV-929, [2016 WL 1322443](#), at *3 (S.D.N.Y. Mar. 31, 2016) (explaining that the prior rule from *Covington v. City of New York*, 171 F.3d 117 (2d Cir. 1999) that a false arrest claim may not accrue until a favorable verdict was reached was overruled by the Supreme Court’s *Wallace* decision).
- 10 Under the prison mailbox rule, a prisoner’s complaint is deemed filed when it is handed to prison officials—presumptively on the date that the complaint was signed. *Hardy v. Conway*, [162 Fed. App’x 61, 62](#) (2d Cir. 2006) (collecting cases).
- 11 Plaintiff also makes the conclusory allegation that he was “deprived of bail.” (Dkt. No. 1 at 7.) However, it is clear from the face of the Complaint that Plaintiff was afforded bail, as he alleges that when the April 9, 2017 incident took place, he was out on bail from prior charges. (*Id.* at 3.) Only after he was arrested and arraigned on charges stemming from that April 9, 2017 incident does he allege that his bail on the prior charges was revoked, “after [a] bail revocation hearing.” (*Id.* at 5.)
- 12 *See also Carris v. First Student, Inc.*, [132 F. Supp. 3d 321, 340-41 n.1](#) (N.D.N.Y. 2015) (Suddaby, C.J.) (explaining that the standard set forth in *Gomez v. USAA Fed. Sav. Bank*, [171 F.3d 794, 796](#) (2d Cir. 1999)—that the Court should grant leave to amend “unless the court can rule out any possibility, however unlikely it might be, that an amended complaint would be successful in stating a claim”—is likely not an accurate recitation of the governing law after *Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly*, [550 U.S. 544](#) (2007)), *rev’d on other grounds*, [682 F. App’x 30](#).
- 13 As discussed in Section V.D.1.iii. above, I recommend that the fabrication of evidence claims against Defendants Filli, Hurley, and McCrindle, in their individual capacities, that relate to the case against Plaintiff in the City of Albany be accepted for filing because Plaintiff specifically alleged that the City of Albany case was terminated in Plaintiff’s favor. (Dkt. No. 1 at 5.)
- 14 If you are proceeding *pro se* and served with this report, recommendation, and order by mail, three additional days will be added to the fourteen-day period, meaning that you have seventeen days from the date that the report, recommendation, and order was mailed to you to serve and file objections. [Fed. R. Civ. P. 6\(d\)](#). If the last day of that prescribed period falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday, then the deadline is extended until the end of the next day that is not a Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday. [Fed. R. Civ. P. 6\(a\)\(1\)\(C\)](#).

2021 WL 3032691

Only the Westlaw citation is currently available.
United States District Court, N.D. New York.

Rondue GENTRY, Plaintiff,

v.

State of NEW YORK; Kyle Filli; David Hurley; Heath
McCrinkle; Steven Sharp; and David Soares, Defendants.

1:21-CV-0319 (GTS/ML)

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Signed 07/19/2021

Attorneys and Law Firms

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DECISION and ORDER

GLENN T. SUDDABY, Chief United States District Judge

*1 Currently before the Court, in this *pro se* civil rights action filed by Rondue Gentry (“Plaintiff”) against the State of New York, New York State Police Officers Kyle Filli, David Hurley and Heath McCrinkle, Assistant District Attorney Steven Sharp, and Albany County District Attorney David Soares (“Defendants”), is United States Magistrate Judge Miroslav Lovric's Report-Recommendation recommending that certain of Plaintiff's claims be dismissed with prejudice (and without prior leave to amend), certain of those claims be dismissed without prejudice (and with limited leave to amend in this action), and the remainder of those claims survive the Court's *sua sponte* review of his Complaint. (Dkt. No. 7.) Plaintiff has not filed an Objection to the Report-Recommendation, and the deadline by which to do so has expired. (*See generally* Docket Sheet.)

After carefully reviewing the relevant papers herein, including Magistrate Judge Lovric's thorough Report-Recommendation, the Court can find no clear error in the Report-Recommendation.¹ Magistrate Judge Lovric employed the proper standards, accurately recited the facts, and reasonably applied the law to those facts. As a result,

the Report-Recommendation is accepted and adopted in its entirety for the reasons set forth therein.

ACCORDINGLY, it is

ORDERED that Magistrate Judge Lovric's Report-Recommendation (Dkt. No.7) is **ACCEPTED** and **ADOPTED** in its entirety; and it is further

ORDERED that the following claims are **DISMISSED with prejudice** and **without prior leave to amend**: (1) Plaintiff's claims against the State of New York; (2) Plaintiff's claims against Defendants Filli, Hurley, and McCrinkle in their official capacities; and (3) Plaintiff's claims against Defendants Sharp and Soares in their official and individual capacities; and it is further

ORDERED that the following claims are **DISMISSED without prejudice** to repleading during the pendency of this action and **with leave to amend** within **THIRTY (30) DAYS** of the date of this Decision and Order: (1) Plaintiff's fabrication-of-evidence claims against Defendants Filli, Hurley and McCrinkle in their individual capacities to the extent that those claims relate to the case against Plaintiff in the Town of Guilderland; (2) Plaintiff's false arrest claims against Defendants Filli and Hurley in their individual capacities; (3) Plaintiff's claim for a *Miranda* violation against Defendant McCrinkle in his individual capacity; and it is further

*2 **ORDERED** that **SURVIVING** this Decision and Order are Plaintiff's fabrication-of-evidence claims against Defendants Filli, Hurley and McCrinkle in their individual capacities to the extent that those claims relate to the case against Plaintiff in the City of Albany; and it is further

ORDERED that the Clerk of Court is directed to issue Summonses and forward, along with copies of the Complaint, to the U.S. Marshal for service upon Defendants Filli, Hurley and McCrinkle, and those Defendants are directed to respond in accordance with the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure.

All Citations

Not Reported in Fed. Supp., 2021 WL 3032691

Footnotes

- 1 When no objection is made to a report-recommendation, the Court subjects that report-recommendation to only a clear-error review. [Fed. R. Civ. P. 72\(b\)](#), Advisory Committee Notes: 1983 Addition. When performing such a clear-error review, “the court need only satisfy itself that there is no clear error on the face of the record in order to accept the recommendation.” *Id.*; see also *Batista v. Walker*, 94-CV-2826, [1995 WL 453299](#), at *1 (S.D.N.Y. July 31, 1995) (Sotomayor, J.) (“I am permitted to adopt those sections of [a magistrate judge's] report to which no specific objection is made, so long as those sections are not facially erroneous.”) (internal quotation marks omitted).

88 F.4th 418

United States Court of Appeals, Second Circuit.

E. Jean CARROLL, Plaintiff-
Counter-Defendant-Appellee,

v.

Donald J. TRUMP, in his personal capacity,
Defendant-Counter-Claimant-Appellant.

Nos. 23-1045-cv (L) & 23-1146-cv (Con)

|
August Term 2023

|
Argued: October 23, 2023

|
Decided: December 13, 2023

Synopsis

Background: Plaintiff filed state court action alleging that former United States President defamed her by claiming that she had fabricated her account of him sexually assaulting her years before he was elected President. Following removal, the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York, [Lewis A. Kaplan, J.](#), denied former President's motion for summary judgment or for leave to amend his answer, [2023 WL 4393067](#), and granted in part plaintiff's motion to strike defendant's affirmative defenses, [2023 WL 5017230](#). Former President appealed.

Holdings: The Court of Appeals, [Cabranes](#), Circuit Judge, held that:

[1] it had appellate jurisdiction under collateral order doctrine to review district court's denial of President's claim of absolute immunity;

[2] as a matter of first impression, presidential immunity is waivable;

[3] President waived his presidential immunity defense;

[4] district court did not abuse its discretion when it denied President's request for leave to amend his answer to add defense of presidential immunity;

[5] plaintiff's filing of amended complaint did not revive President's presidential immunity defense;

[6] considerations of judicial economy and efficiency favored district court's retention of jurisdiction over action while appeal was pending; and

[7] it lacked appellate jurisdiction over district court's order denying President's summary judgment motion.

Affirmed in part, dismissed in part, and remanded.

Procedural Posture(s): Motion for Summary Judgment; Motion to Amend Pleading (Other than Complaint or Petition); Motion to Strike Affirmative Defenses; Interlocutory Appeal.

West Headnotes (29)

[1] **Federal Civil Procedure** 🔑 Affirmative Defense or Avoidance

Federal Courts 🔑 Waiver, estoppel, and consent

Ordinarily, defendants are deemed to have waived or forfeited defenses that they did not raise at outset of litigation, but defenses based on subject-matter jurisdiction—courts' statutory or constitutional power to adjudicate case—are nonwaivable, and defendants can raise such defenses at any stage in litigation.

[2] **Estoppel** 🔑 Waiver Distinguished

Estoppel 🔑 Nature and elements of waiver

Term “waiver” is best reserved for litigant's intentional relinquishment of known right; where litigant's action or inaction is deemed to incur consequence of loss of right, or defense, term “forfeiture” is more appropriate.

2 Cases that cite this headnote

[3] **Constitutional Law** 🔑 Executive privilege and immunity

United States 🔑 Judicial intervention; immunity

Presidential immunity is defense that stems from President's unique office, rooted in constitutional

tradition of separation of powers and supported by Nation's history, and entitles President to absolute immunity from damages liability for acts within outer perimeter of his official responsibilities.

Court of Appeals had appellate jurisdiction under collateral order doctrine to review district court's determination that former United States President was not entitled to absolute immunity in defamation action.

[More cases on this issue](#)

[4] **District and Prosecuting**

Attorneys 🔑 Liabilities for official acts, negligence, or misconduct

Prosecutorial immunity is form of absolute immunity that shields prosecutor acting in role of advocate in connection with judicial proceeding for all acts intimately associated with judicial phase of criminal process.

[1 Case that cites this headnote](#)

[5] **Judges** 🔑 Liabilities for official acts

Judges are entitled to absolute judicial immunity for acts committed within their judicial discretion.

[6] **Federal Courts** 🔑 Immunity

Did abuse of discretion standard of review apply to interlocutory appeal?**Yes**
Court of Appeals reviews district court's determination that defendant waived his presidential immunity defense for abuse of discretion.

[More cases on this issue](#)

[7] **Federal Courts** 🔑 Summary judgment

Federal Courts 🔑 Immunity

Did de novo standard of review apply to interlocutory appeal?**Yes**
Court of Appeals reviews district court's denial of summary judgment and its determination that presidential immunity can be waived de novo.

[More cases on this issue](#)

[8] **Federal Courts** 🔑 Immunity

Did court have appellate jurisdiction under collateral order doctrine?**Yes**

[9] **United States** 🔑 Judicial intervention; immunity

Presidential immunity is not jurisdictional defense, and thus is subject to waiver.

[10] **Civil Rights** 🔑 Good faith and reasonableness; knowledge and clarity of law; motive and intent, in general

Qualified immunity shields officials from civil damages liability insofar as their conduct does not violate clearly established statutory or constitutional rights of which reasonable person would have known.

[11] **Public Employment** 🔑 Absolute immunity

Absolute immunity confers public official with complete protection from civil suit.

[12] **Courts** 🔑 Previous Decisions as Controlling or as Precedents

If decision simply states that court is dismissing for lack of jurisdiction when some threshold fact has not been established, it is understood as drive-by jurisdictional ruling that receives no precedential effect.

[13] **Federal Civil Procedure** 🔑 Immunity

United States President waived his presidential immunity defense in defamation action against him by failing to invoke defense in his answer to plaintiff's original complaint against him.

[14] **Federal Courts** 🔑 Pleading

Court of Appeals reviews district court's denial of leave to amend for abuse of discretion, unless denial was based on interpretation of law, such as futility, in which case Court of Appeals reviews legal conclusion de novo.

1 Case that cites this headnote

[15] **Federal Civil Procedure** ⚙️ Time for amendment

Federal Civil Procedure ⚙️ New defense

District court did not err, much less abuse its discretion, when it denied United States President's request for leave to amend his answer in defamation action to add defense of presidential immunity on grounds of undue delay and prejudice; three years passed between President's answer and his request for leave to amend his answer, discovery had closed, and plaintiff would have engaged in discovery on whether President's actions fell within his official duties if he had raised presidential immunity before discovery closed, but declined to do so to avoid prolonging litigation and creating complex executive privilege fights.

More cases on this issue

[16] **Federal Courts** ⚙️ Abuse of discretion in general

“Abuse of discretion” is non-pejorative term of art that implies no misconduct on district court's part; term simply describes circumstance in which district court bases its ruling on erroneous view of law or on clearly erroneous assessment of evidence, or renders decision that cannot be located within range of permissible decisions.

[17] **Federal Civil Procedure** ⚙️ Injustice or prejudice

In gauging whether proposed amendment to pleading would prejudice party, court considers, among other factors, whether amendment would require opponent to expend significant additional resources to conduct discovery and prepare for trial or significantly delay resolution of dispute.

2 Cases that cite this headnote

[18] **Federal Civil Procedure** ⚙️ Time for amendment in general

Federal Civil Procedure ⚙️ Injustice or prejudice

Although mere delay, absent showing of bad faith or undue prejudice, does not provide basis for district court to deny right to amend pleading, the longer the period of unexplained delay, the less will be required of nonmoving party in terms of showing of prejudice.

1 Case that cites this headnote

[19] **Federal Civil Procedure** ⚙️ Time for amendment in general

Federal Civil Procedure ⚙️ Injustice or prejudice

Requests to amend pleading that come at late stage of litigation, after discovery has closed and motion for summary judgment has been filed, are more likely to be prejudicial.

[20] **Federal Courts** ⚙️ Pleading

Court of Appeals reviews district court decision striking affirmative defense de novo.

[21] **Federal Civil Procedure** ⚙️ Effect of amendment

Although amended complaint ordinarily supersedes original, and renders it of no legal effect, amended complaint does not automatically revive all defenses and objections that defendant has waived in response to original complaint.

1 Case that cites this headnote

[22] **Alternative Dispute Resolution** ⚙️ Waiver or Estoppel

Federal Civil Procedure ⚙️ Effect of amendment

Federal Courts 🔑 Waiver, estoppel, and consent

Federal Courts 🔑 Waiver, estoppel, and consent

Process 🔑 Waiver of defects and objections

Defenses that involve core issue of party's willingness to submit dispute to judicial resolution, such as lack of personal jurisdiction, improper venue, insufficiency of process, insufficiency of service, or existence of arbitration agreement, are not automatically revived by submission of amended complaint if initially waived; to revive such claims, party must show that amended complaint contains charges that, in fairness, should nullify its earlier waiver and allow it to reassess its strategy.

[23] **Federal Civil Procedure** 🔑 Effect of amendment

Federal Civil Procedure 🔑 Affirmative Defense or Avoidance

Plaintiff's filing of amended complaint in defamation action against United States President did not revive President's previously-waived presidential immunity defense, and thus district court did not err in striking presidential immunity as affirmative defense from his answer to amended complaint, where President did not identify any changes to complaint that, in fairness, nullified his earlier waiver and allowed him to reassess his strategy.

[More cases on this issue](#)

[24] **Federal Courts** 🔑 Effect of Transfer of Cause or Proceedings Therefor

Filing of notice of appeal ordinarily divests district court of jurisdiction over issues decided in order being appealed, but its application is guided by concerns of efficiency and is not automatic.

[25] **Federal Courts** 🔑 Effect of Transfer of Cause or Proceedings Therefor

District courts may retain jurisdiction over issues decided in order being appealed if appeal is frivolous.

[2 Cases that cite this headnote](#)

[26] **Federal Courts** 🔑 Interlocutory or defective appeal

Considerations of judicial economy and efficiency favored district court's retention of jurisdiction over defamation action against United States President during pendency of his interlocutory appeal of district court's orders denying him leave to amend his answer to assert presidential immunity and striking his amended answer, even if President's appeal was not frivolous; to hold otherwise would require district court on remand to possibly undertake rather pointless exercise of re-adopting orders it had issued since date President filed notice of appeal.

[1 Case that cites this headnote](#)

[More cases on this issue](#)

[27] **Federal Courts** 🔑 Summary Judgment

Orders denying summary judgment are, in general, not immediately appealable.

[28] **Federal Courts** 🔑 Interlocutory, Collateral, and Supplementary Proceedings and Questions; Pendent Appellate Jurisdiction

Collateral-order doctrine appeals do not render other aspects of case immediately reviewable unless they are inextricably intertwined or necessary to ensure meaningful review of collateral orders.

[29] **Federal Courts** 🔑 As to immunity

Did court have appellate jurisdiction over order?**No**

District court's denial of United States President's motion for summary judgment in defamation action against him on ground that his statements about plaintiff were not defamatory per se under state law was not inextricably intertwined with or

necessary to ensure meaningful review of district court's denial of presidential immunity, and thus Court of Appeals lacked appellate jurisdiction over district court's order denying President's summary judgment motion on interlocutory review of order denying immunity.

[More cases on this issue](#)

*421 On Appeal from the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York ([Lewis A. Kaplan](#), *Judge*).

Attorneys and Law Firms

[Joshua Matz](#) (Kate Harris, [Roberta A. Kaplan](#), Trevor W. Morrison, on the brief), Kaplan Hecker & Fink LLP, New York, NY, for Plaintiff-Counter-Defendant-Appellee E. Jean Carroll.

Michael T. Madaio (Alina Habba, on the brief), Habba Madaio & Associates LLP, Bedminster, NJ, for Defendant-Counter-Claimant-Appellant Donald J. Trump.

Before: [Cabranes](#), [Chin](#), and [Kahn](#), Circuit Judges.

Opinion

[José A. Cabranes](#), Circuit Judge:

*422 [1] [2] Ordinarily, defendants are deemed to have waived or forfeited defenses that they did not raise at the outset of the litigation.¹ But defenses based on subject-matter jurisdiction—“the courts’ statutory or constitutional power to adjudicate the case”²—are nonwaivable. Defendants can raise such defenses “at any stage in the litigation.”³

[3] [4] [5] Presidential immunity is a defense that stems from “the President’s unique office, rooted in the constitutional tradition of the separation of powers and supported by our history,” and entitles the President to “absolute ... immunity from damages liability for acts within the outer perimeter of his official responsibilities.”⁴ For example, the Supreme Court held in *Nixon v. Fitzgerald* that presidential immunity protected former President Richard Nixon from a lawsuit by an ex-Air Force employee who alleged that Nixon fired him in retaliation for testifying before Congress about cost overruns.⁵ Conversely, the Court held in *Clinton v. Jones* that presidential immunity did not shield

President Clinton from civil liability for actions allegedly taken when he was Governor of Arkansas because they were not official presidential acts.⁶

*423 This case presents a vexing question of first impression: whether presidential immunity is waivable. We answer in the affirmative and further hold that Donald J. Trump (“Defendant”) waived the defense of presidential immunity by failing to raise it as an affirmative defense in his answer to E. Jean Carroll’s (“Plaintiff’s”) complaint, which alleged that Defendant defamed her by claiming that she had fabricated her account of Defendant sexually assaulting her in the mid-1990s.

Accordingly, we **AFFIRM** the July 5, 2023 order of the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York ([Lewis A. Kaplan](#), *Judge*) denying Defendant’s motion for summary judgment insofar as it rejected Defendant’s presidential immunity defense and denied his request for leave to amend his answer to add presidential immunity as a defense. We likewise **AFFIRM** the District Court’s August 7, 2023 order insofar as it struck Defendant’s presidential immunity defense from his answer to Plaintiff’s amended complaint. We **DISMISS** for lack of appellate jurisdiction the appeal of the District Court’s July 5, 2023 order insofar as it determined that Defendant’s statements about Plaintiff were defamatory per se. Finally, we **REMAND** the case to the District Court for further proceedings consistent with this opinion.

I. BACKGROUND

The relevant facts in this appeal are undisputed. We summarize them below.

A. Factual Background

On June 21, 2019, Plaintiff publicly accused Defendant of sexually assaulting her in the mid-1990s.⁷ Defendant, who was President of the United States at the time of the accusations, denied Plaintiff’s claims in a series of public statements. In the first, released that same day, he claimed that “it never happened,” he “never met” Plaintiff, and that “[s]he is trying to sell a new book—that should indicate her motivation.”⁸ The next day, he stated that “[t]his is a woman

who has also accused other men of things ... It is a totally false accusation.”⁹

On November 4, 2019, Plaintiff responded by suing Defendant for defamation in New York State Supreme Court. Defendant filed his answer on January 23, 2020. On September 8, 2020, the United States removed the case to the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York pursuant to the Westfall Act.¹⁰

***424 B. Procedural Background**

On December 22, 2022, Defendant moved for summary judgment.¹¹ In his reply brief, filed on January 19, 2023, he raised for the first time the argument that presidential immunity barred liability. On July 5, 2023, the District Court denied Defendant's motion for summary judgment after determining that Defendant waived presidential immunity and denied Defendant's request for leave to amend his answer to add presidential immunity as a defense (“July 5 Order”).¹² The Court denied Defendant's request for leave to amend on two independent grounds: first, that the request was futile, and second, that Defendant unduly delayed in raising the defense and granting the request would prejudice Plaintiff.¹³ The Court also rejected Defendant's argument that his statements were not defamatory per se.¹⁴ Defendant appealed the July 5 Order on July 19, 2023.

Meanwhile, on May 22, 2023, Plaintiff filed an amended complaint that added, *inter alia*, more statements by Defendant alleging that Plaintiff's accusations were false and politically motivated. Defendant filed his answer to Plaintiff's amended complaint on June 27, 2023. The amended answer for the first time raised presidential immunity as an affirmative defense. On August 7, 2023, the District Court struck Defendant's presidential immunity defense from his amended answer on the ground that it had been waived and, even if not, “would have been insufficient as a defense” (“August 7 Order”).¹⁵ On August 10, 2023, Defendant appealed the August 7 Order.

Defendant sought a stay from the District Court, arguing that his appeal of the District Court's July 5 Order, which rejected Defendant's presidential immunity defense, divested the District Court of jurisdiction. On August 18, 2023, the District Court denied Defendant's stay motion upon

determining his appeal to be frivolous.¹⁶ Defendant then sought an emergency *425 stay from our Court, which a motions panel denied on September 13, 2023. The same day, the motions panel ordered the consolidation of Defendant's appeals of the July 5 Order and the August 7 Order and set an expedited briefing schedule.

II. DISCUSSION

This case concerns appeals from two related orders by the District Court. The July 5 Order denied Defendant's motion for summary judgment on the ground that Defendant waived his presidential immunity defense and further denied Defendant's request for leave to amend his answer to add presidential immunity as an affirmative defense. The August 7 Order struck Defendant's affirmative defense of presidential immunity from his answer to Plaintiff's amended complaint on the ground that Defendant had already waived this defense.

We hold that presidential immunity is waivable and that Defendant waived this defense.¹⁷ Thus, the District Court did not err in its order denying Defendant's motion for summary judgment, nor did it err, much less “abuse its discretion,” in denying his belated request for leave to amend his answer to add presidential immunity as a defense.¹⁸ We also hold that the District Court did not err in striking Defendant's presidential immunity defense from his answer to Plaintiff's amended complaint.¹⁹ Nor did the District Court err in retaining jurisdiction after Defendant filed his notice of appeal on July 19, 2023.²⁰ Finally, we hold that we lack appellate jurisdiction to consider whether Defendant's statements were defamatory per se.²¹

A. Whether Defendant Waived Presidential Immunity²²

[6] [7] [8] Is presidential immunity waivable? And if so, did Defendant waive it? The answer to both questions is yes.

1. Whether Presidential Immunity Is Waivable

[9] [10] [11] Defendant argues that presidential immunity is a jurisdictional defense and is thus nonwaivable.²³ We disagree. The Supreme Court recognized in *Nevada v. Hicks* that “[t]here is no authority whatever for the proposition

that absolute- and qualified-immunity defenses pertain to the court's jurisdiction.”²⁴ And we have repeatedly *426 distinguished absolute immunity defenses from defenses based on subject-matter jurisdiction.²⁵

[12] Rather than acknowledge *Hicks* or our precedents, Defendant points to scattered references to “jurisdiction” in Supreme Court cases involving presidential immunity.²⁶ But as we have recently been reminded by the Supreme Court, “[t]he mere fact that [the Supreme] Court previously described something without elaboration as jurisdictional ... does not end the inquiry.”²⁷ We must ask if the prior decision addressed whether the provision or defense is “‘technically jurisdictional’—whether it truly operates as a limit on a court's subject-matter jurisdiction—and whether anything in the decision ‘turn[ed] on that characterization.’”²⁸ Accordingly, “[i]f a decision simply states that ‘the court is dismissing ‘for lack of jurisdiction’ when some threshold fact has not been established,’ it is understood as a ‘drive-by jurisdictional ruling’ that receives no precedential effect.”²⁹

None of the cases on which Defendant relies indicate that presidential immunity is jurisdictional—indeed, quite the opposite. Defendant relies primarily on the following passage in *Nixon*:

[A] court, before exercising jurisdiction, must balance the constitutional weight of the interest to be served against the dangers of intrusion on the authority and functions of the Executive Branch. When judicial action is needed to serve broad public interests ... the exercise of jurisdiction has been held warranted. In the case of this merely private suit for damages based on a President's official acts, we hold it is not.³⁰

But *Nixon* hurts, not helps, Defendant's case. The passage quoted above follows a threshold analysis of whether the Supreme Court had subject-matter jurisdiction over the dispute.³¹ Pursuant to the usual practice in the federal courts,³² only once assured *427 of its subject-

matter jurisdiction did the Supreme Court proceed to the “merits”—*i.e.*, to whether the President was entitled to immunity.³³

Nor do the passing references to “jurisdiction” in *Mississippi v. Johnson* or in *Clinton v. Jones* support Defendant's position. In *Johnson*, the question was whether a state could obtain an injunction to prevent the President from carrying out an Act of Congress, not whether a President is liable for damages in a private civil suit.³⁴ And like *Nixon*, *Clinton* first held that the Supreme Court had subject-matter jurisdiction before proceeding to the immunity question.³⁵ Neither *Nixon* nor *Clinton* addressed whether presidential immunity is “technically jurisdictional,” nor did “anything in the decision[s] turn[] on that characterization.”³⁶ Thus, *Clinton*'s reference to “jurisdiction”—the Court's determination that “[t]he Federal District Court has jurisdiction to decide this case”³⁷—is, like *Nixon*'s, best characterized as a “drive-by jurisdictional ruling” that “should be accorded no precedential effect” because it ultimately does not bear on the question of whether presidential immunity is jurisdictional.³⁸

All in all, Defendant provides no case that turns on whether presidential immunity is jurisdictional, much less one holding that it *is* jurisdictional, and *Nixon*—described by Defendant's counsel at oral argument as the “main case” and “the only binding precedent” on presidential immunity—points in the opposite direction.³⁹

Next, Defendant contends that “the separation-of-powers doctrine” renders presidential immunity nonwaivable because “an impermissible inter-branch conflict will always arise when a court seeks to impute civil liability on a President for the performance of his official acts.”⁴⁰ But separation-of-powers considerations militate in favor of, not against, recognizing presidential immunity as waivable. A President's autonomy should be protected; thus, a President *should* be able to litigate if he chooses to do so. Indeed, at least one President has declined to invoke presidential immunity, opting instead to settle two civil suits out of court.⁴¹ Recognizing presidential *428 immunity as a jurisdictional defense would, the District Court observed, “risk encroachment by the judiciary into the president's domain by eliminating the president's ability to choose” whether to litigate.⁴²

Moreover, avoiding undue judicial intrusion on the executive branch undergirds the doctrines of both prosecutorial immunity and presidential immunity. That said, Defendant does not dispute that prosecutorial immunity is waivable. Rather, he argues that the President's unique constitutional role distinguishes presidential immunity from other forms of absolute immunity such as prosecutorial immunity and judicial immunity.⁴³ But as Defendant acknowledges,⁴⁴ the Supreme Court has made clear that absolute immunity for prosecutors and judges, on the one hand, and presidential immunity on the other, are closely related. “As is the case with prosecutors and judges,” the Court stated in *Nixon*, “a President must concern himself with matters likely to ‘arouse the most intense feelings.’”⁴⁵ And the Court has recently reinforced the “careful analogy” it drew in *Nixon*, reasoning that “a President, like [judges and prosecutors], must ... not be made ‘unduly cautious in the discharge of [his official] duties’ by the prospect of civil liability for official acts.”⁴⁶

Nor do the Court's references in *Nixon* and *Harlow v. Fitzgerald*—*Nixon*'s companion case—to the President's unique status in comparison with other Government officials support Defendant's position.⁴⁷ Those passages contrasted the President to other *executive* officials—such as presidential aides and Cabinet officers—to conclude that, unlike the qualified immunity of these lower-level executive officials, presidential immunity is absolute.⁴⁸ And although the Supreme Court in *Nixon* recalled the “special solicitude due to claims alleging a threatened breach of essential Presidential prerogatives under the separation of powers,” the passage in question concerned not whether presidential immunity was waivable, but whether the district court's order rejecting Nixon's immunity defense was a “serious and unsettled” *429 question that could be raised on interlocutory appeal.⁴⁹

Finally, Defendant argues that [Article III of the Constitution](#), which vests judicial power in the federal courts, makes presidential immunity nonwaivable. He reasons as follows. First, violations of Article III—for example, the improper exercise of federal judicial power by a non-[Article III](#) entity—are not waivable. Next, separation-of-powers considerations inform both [Article III](#) and presidential immunity. Thus, presidential immunity is not waivable. But apart from *Nixon* (discussed above), none of the cases Defendant draws to our attention concern immunity at all, much less presidential immunity.⁵⁰ More to the point, it is not accurate to assert that

separation-of-powers defenses or arguments are *ipso facto* nonwaivable.⁵¹

To summarize: notwithstanding scattered references to “jurisdiction” in some presidential immunity cases, the Supreme Court has indicated that immunity defenses are not jurisdictional, and that presidential immunity is to be treated like other forms of immunity that Defendant does not dispute are waivable. Moreover, *Nixon*—the leading presidential immunity case—treats presidential immunity as nonjurisdictional. Finally, recognizing presidential immunity as waivable reinforces, not undermines, the separation of powers and the President's decisionmaking authority by affording the President an opportunity to litigate if he so chooses. Accordingly, we hold that presidential immunity is waivable.

2. Whether Defendant Waived Presidential Immunity

[13] Having determined that presidential immunity is waivable, we reach the question: Did Defendant waive his presidential immunity defense? We hold that he did.

Defendant filed his answer to Plaintiff's original complaint in New York state court in January 2020. But the answer did not invoke presidential immunity. The District Court thus determined that Defendant had waived this defense, a holding Defendant does not challenge in this appeal.⁵² Indeed, *430 Defendant's counsel conceded at oral argument that assuming the defense of presidential immunity is waivable, Defendant had waived that defense.⁵³

Accordingly, the District Court did not err in denying Defendant's motion for summary judgment on the ground that he had waived his presidential immunity defense. We turn next to whether the District Court correctly rejected his attempt to revive it—first in his request for leave to amend his answer, then in his answer to Plaintiff's amended complaint.

B. Defendant's Request for Leave to Amend

[14] [15] [16] “We review a district court's denial of leave to amend for abuse of discretion, unless the denial was based on an interpretation of law, such as futility, in which case we review the legal conclusion *de novo*.”⁵⁴ The District Court did not err, much less “abuse its discretion,”⁵⁵ when it denied

Defendant's request for leave to amend his answer to add the defense of presidential immunity on grounds of undue delay and prejudice.⁵⁶

First, Defendant unduly delayed in raising presidential immunity as a defense.⁵⁷ Three years passed between Defendant's answer and his request for leave to amend his answer. A three-year delay is more than enough, under our precedents, to qualify as "undue."⁵⁸ And Defendant's excuse for not timely raising the defense—that the question of whether the Westfall Act immunized Defendant was pending before the District Court, this Court, and the *431 District of Columbia Court of Appeals between September 2020 and June 2023—is unpersuasive.⁵⁹ Defendant does not explain how the Westfall Act dispute precluded him from raising a defense of presidential immunity. Indeed, Defendant first raised presidential immunity in January 2023—that is, during the pendency of the Westfall Act dispute.

[17] [18] [19] We next conclude that Defendant's delay unduly prejudiced Plaintiff. "Prejudice," like "abuse of discretion," is a legal term of art.⁶⁰ In gauging whether a proposed amendment would prejudice a party, "we consider, among other factors, whether an amendment would require the opponent to expend significant additional resources to conduct discovery and prepare for trial or significantly delay the resolution of the dispute."⁶¹ Although "mere delay, absent a showing of bad faith or undue prejudice, does not provide a basis for a district court to deny the right to amend," "the longer the period of an unexplained delay, the less will be required of the nonmoving party in terms of a showing of prejudice."⁶² Finally, requests to amend that come at a late stage of the litigation, after discovery has closed and a motion for summary judgment has been filed, are more likely to be prejudicial.⁶³

Had Defendant raised presidential immunity before discovery closed, Plaintiff claims, she would have engaged in discovery on whether Defendant's actions fell within his official duties.⁶⁴ First, Plaintiff would have asked Defendant for more detail on the process through which he issued and prepared the June 2019 statements, including how the process compared to his pre- and post-presidential processes.⁶⁵ Second, Plaintiff would have sought third-party discovery from White House personnel allegedly involved in preparing and issuing the statements.⁶⁶ Third, Plaintiff would have sought expert testimony from former White House officials

and requested internal White House documents from the National Archives regarding former presidents' processes for issuing statements denying wrongdoing.⁶⁷ Plaintiff's counsel represents that they avoided doing so because "the risk of prolonging the litigation and creating complex executive privilege fights did not seem worth it to us, as measured against the absence of an absolute immunity defense, which Mr. Trump had not raised."⁶⁸

Against all this, Defendant contends that the discovery Plaintiff would have pursued regarding presidential immunity (whether the statements fell within the President's official duties) was already explored *432 by Plaintiff in the discovery she pursued regarding the Westfall Act (whether the statements fell within the President's scope of employment).⁶⁹ But as counsel for Defendant concedes, the two tests are different.⁷⁰ The Westfall Act's scope-of-employment test is subjective, while presidential immunity's official-duties test is objective.⁷¹ And Defendant has no response to Plaintiff's contention that Defendant's failure to timely raise presidential immunity informed her decision not to engage in discovery on whether Defendant's actions fell within his official duties.

In sum, three years passed before Defendant raised the defense of presidential immunity, significant additional resources to conduct discovery would be required were Defendant to amend his answer, and the request arose at a late stage of litigation—after discovery closed and Defendant moved for summary judgment. Under these circumstances, we hold that the District Court did not "abuse its discretion" in denying Defendant's request for leave to amend his answer on grounds of undue delay and prejudice.

C. Defendant's Answer to Plaintiff's Amended Complaint

After the District Court denied Defendant's request for leave to amend his answer, Plaintiff filed an amended complaint. In response, Defendant filed an answer to the amended complaint asserting presidential immunity. The District Court struck Defendant's presidential immunity defense from his amended answer, reasoning that "[t]here is nothing new in the amended complaint that would make Mr. Trump's presidential immunity defense any more viable or persuasive now than it would have been before."⁷²

[20] [21] [22] We review a district court decision striking an affirmative defense *de novo*.⁷³ Although “an amended complaint ordinarily supersedes the original, and renders it of no legal effect,” an amended complaint “does not automatically revive all of the defenses and objections that a defendant has waived in response to the original complaint.”⁷⁴ Defenses that “involve[] the core issue of a party’s willingness to submit a dispute to judicial resolution,” such as lack of personal jurisdiction, improper venue, insufficiency of process, insufficiency of service, or the existence of an arbitration agreement, are “not automatically revived by the submission of an amended complaint” if initially waived.⁷⁵ To revive such claims, a party “must show that the amended complaint contains charges that, in fairness, should nullify its earlier waiver and allow it to reassess its strategy.”⁷⁶

[23] Presidential immunity involves the party’s willingness to submit the dispute to *433 judicial resolution and is distinguishable from revivable, merits-based defenses.⁷⁷ Indeed, the only reason we have jurisdiction over this appeal is that the denial of presidential immunity is a collateral order, a requirement of which is that the issue on appeal be “completely separate from the merits of the action.”⁷⁸ What’s more, Defendant does not identify any changes to the complaint “that, in fairness, should nullify [his] earlier waiver and allow [him] to reassess [his] strategy.”⁷⁹ Accordingly, in the unusual circumstances presented here, we hold that the District Court did not err in striking presidential immunity as an affirmative defense from Defendant’s answer to Plaintiff’s amended complaint.

D. Whether the District Court Retained Jurisdiction After Defendant Appealed

[24] [25] “The filing of a notice of appeal ordinarily divests the district court of jurisdiction over issues decided in the order being appealed.”⁸⁰ We have previously noted that “[t]he divestiture of jurisdiction rule is, however, not a per se rule. It is a judicially crafted rule rooted in the interest of judicial economy, designed to avoid confusion or waste of time resulting from having the same issues before two courts at the same time. Hence, its application is guided by concerns of efficiency and is not automatic.”⁸¹ For example, district courts may retain jurisdiction notwithstanding appeal if the appeal is frivolous.⁸²

[26] The District Court determined that it retained jurisdiction because Defendant’s appeal was frivolous. We need not decide whether Defendant’s appeal is frivolous, for we conclude that under the singular circumstances presented here, considerations of judicial economy and efficiency favor the District Court’s retention of jurisdiction. To hold otherwise would require the District Court on remand to possibly undertake the rather pointless exercise of re-adopting the orders it has issued since July 19, 2023, the date Defendant appealed the July 7 Order.⁸³ “[O]ur application of the divestiture *434 rule must be faithful to the principle of judicial economy from which it springs,”⁸⁴ and “it should not be employed to defeat its purposes or to induce endless paper shuffling.”⁸⁵ This Court has declined to apply the divestiture rule under similar circumstances in the past, and we reach the same result here.⁸⁶

E. Whether We May Consider Whether Defendant’s Statements Were Defamatory Per Se

[27] [28] Apart from appeals taken under the collateral order doctrine,⁸⁷ orders denying summary judgment are, in general, not immediately appealable.⁸⁸ And collateral-order doctrine appeals—such as Defendant’s appeals of the July 5 Order and the August 7 Order—do not render other aspects of the case immediately reviewable unless they are “inextricably intertwined” or “necessary to ensure meaningful review” of the collateral orders.⁸⁹

Defendant argues that none of his statements about Plaintiff were defamatory per se under New York law because they did not tend to cause injury to her trade, business, or profession, and that the District Court applied the wrong legal standard to his statements.⁹⁰

[29] Far from being inextricably intertwined with or necessary to ensure meaningful review of the District Court’s denial of presidential immunity, whether Defendant’s statements fell within the outer perimeter of his official presidential duties has nothing to do with whether the statements qualify as defamatory per se. Because we have no appellate jurisdiction over the District Court’s determination that Defendant’s statements were defamatory per se, we do not consider Defendant’s argument that the District Court erred in this respect.

III. CONCLUSION

To summarize, we hold that:

- (1) Presidential immunity is a waivable defense.
- (2) Defendant waived the defense of presidential immunity by failing to raise it as an affirmative defense in his answer.
- (3) The District Court did not err in denying Defendant's motion for summary judgment insofar as it rejected Defendant's presidential immunity defense on the ground that he had waived this defense.
- (4) Defendant unduly delayed in raising presidential immunity as a defense, *435 and permitting Defendant to amend his answer to add the defense would unduly prejudice Plaintiff. Thus, the District Court did not err, much less "abuse its discretion," in denying Defendant's request for leave to amend his answer to add presidential immunity as a defense.
- (5) Presidential immunity is not a defense that is automatically revived by the submission of an amended complaint if initially waived. Thus, the District Court did not err in striking Defendant's presidential immunity defense from his answer to Plaintiff's amended complaint.
- (6) Under the singular circumstances presented here, considerations of judicial economy and efficiency

favor the District Court's retention of jurisdiction after Defendant's notice of appeal was filed on July 19, 2023. Thus, the District Court did not err in retaining jurisdiction after July 19, 2023.

- (7) Whether Defendant's statements about Plaintiff were defamatory per se is neither inextricably intertwined with nor necessary to ensure meaningful review of the District Court's denial of presidential immunity. Thus, we lack appellate jurisdiction to consider whether Defendant's statements about Plaintiff were defamatory per se.

Accordingly, we **AFFIRM** the July 5, 2023 order of the District Court denying Defendant's motion for summary judgment insofar as it rejected Defendant's presidential immunity defense and denied his request for leave to amend his answer to add presidential immunity as a defense. We likewise **AFFIRM** the District Court's August 7, 2023 order insofar as it struck Defendant's presidential immunity defense from his answer to Plaintiff's amended complaint. We **DISMISS** for lack of appellate jurisdiction the appeal of the District Court's July 5, 2023 order insofar as it determined that Defendant's statements about Plaintiff were defamatory per se. Finally, we **REMAND** the case to the District Court for further proceedings consistent with this opinion.

All Citations

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Footnotes

1 See *Kaplan v. Bank Saderat PLC*, 77 F.4th 110, 117 (2d Cir. 2023). "While the terms 'waiver' and 'forfeiture' are often used interchangeably because they have similar effects, they have slightly different meanings." *Id.* at 117 n.10. "The term 'waiver' is best reserved for a litigant's intentional relinquishment of a known right. Where a litigant's action or inaction is deemed to incur the consequence of loss of a right, or, as here, a defense, the term 'forfeiture' is more appropriate." *Doe v. Trump Corp.*, 6 F.4th 400, 409 n.6 (2d Cir. 2021) (quotation marks and comma omitted). E. Jean Carroll ("Plaintiff"), Donald J. Trump ("Defendant"), and the District Court refer to Defendant's failure to raise presidential immunity as "waiver." For purposes of this consolidated appeal, whether Defendant forfeited rather than waived presidential immunity matters not. Thus, "[w]e use the term ['waiver'] in this opinion for ease of discussion," but we express no view on whether Defendant intended to relinquish his presidential immunity defense, "which is a question of fact reserved for the district court." *Kaplan*, 77 F.4th at 117 n.10; see, e.g., *LCS Grp., LLC v. Shire Dev. LLC*, No. 20-2319, 2022 WL 1217961,

at *5 n.2 (2d Cir. Apr. 26, 2022) (summary order) (“Although it may be more accurate to refer to [Appellant] as having forfeited, rather than waived, many of the arguments it raises here, for convenience we refer to both their action and inaction here in terms of ‘waiver.’”).

- 2 *Lightfoot v. Cendant Mortg. Corp.*, 580 U.S. 82, 92, 137 S.Ct. 553, 196 L.Ed.2d 493 (2017) (quotation marks omitted).
- 3 *Arbaugh v. Y&H Corp.*, 546 U.S. 500, 506, 126 S.Ct. 1235, 163 L.Ed.2d 1097 (2006); see also Fed. R. Civ. P. 12(h)(3) (“If the court determines at any time that it lacks subject-matter jurisdiction, the court must dismiss the action.”).
- 4 *Nixon v. Fitzgerald*, 457 U.S. 731, 749, 756, 102 S.Ct. 2690, 73 L.Ed.2d 349 (1982) (quotation marks omitted). Other Government officials are likewise protected by absolute immunity under certain circumstances. For example, prosecutorial immunity is a form of absolute immunity that shields “[a] prosecutor acting in the role of an advocate in connection with a judicial proceeding ... for all acts ‘intimately associated with the judicial phase of the criminal process.’” *Simon v. City of New York*, 727 F.3d 167, 171 (2d Cir. 2013) (quoting *Imbler v. Pachtman*, 424 U.S. 409, 430, 96 S.Ct. 984, 47 L.Ed.2d 128 (1976)). And judges are entitled to absolute judicial immunity “for acts ‘committed within their judicial discretion.’” *Peoples v. Leon*, 63 F.4th 132, 138 (2d Cir. 2023) (quoting *Cleavinger v. Saxner*, 474 U.S. 193, 199, 106 S.Ct. 496, 88 L.Ed.2d 507 (1985)).
- 5 See *Nixon*, 457 U.S. at 733-40, 756-58, 102 S.Ct. 2690.
- 6 *Clinton v. Jones*, 520 U.S. 681, 694-95, 117 S.Ct. 1636, 137 L.Ed.2d 945 (1997).
- 7 See E. Jean Carroll, *Hideous Men: Donald Trump Assaulted Me in a Bergdorf Goodman Dressing Room 23 Years Ago. But He's Not Alone on the List of Awful Men in My Life*, THE CUT (June 21, 2019), <https://www.thecut.com/2019/06/donald-trumpassault-e-jean-carroll-other-hideous-men.html> [<https://perma.cc/HX9T-8MPK>].
- 8 Appellant's Appendix (“A”) 573.
- 9 *Id.* at 580. On June 24, 2019, Defendant further stated that “she's not my type” and that it “never happened.” *Id.* at 590. As of November 15, 2023, Defendant's June 24 statement is no longer the subject of Plaintiff's defamation claim, although Plaintiff contends it remains relevant to the question of punitive damages. See Def. 28(j) Letter, *Carroll v. Trump*, No. 23-1045 (Nov. 17, 2023), ECF No. 121; Pl. Letter, *Carroll v. Trump*, No. 23-1045 (Nov. 20, 2023), ECF No. 124. We take judicial notice of this development, see *Liberty Mut. Ins. Co. v. Rotches Pork Packers, Inc.*, 969 F.2d 1384, 1388 (2d Cir. 1992), but it does not alter our analysis.
- 10 The Westfall Act immunizes federal employees acting within the scope of their office or employment from tort liability. See 28 U.S.C. § 2679(b)(1). Under the Act, the United States may remove a state court civil case to federal court upon certification by the Attorney General that the employee was acting within the scope of his employment at the time of the alleged incident. See *id.* § 2679(d)(2); *Osborn v. Haley*, 549 U.S. 225, 229-30, 127 S.Ct. 881, 166 L.Ed.2d 819 (2007). Whether the Westfall Act immunizes Defendant is not before us today. Cf. *Carroll v. Trump*, 66 F.4th 91 (2d Cir. 2023) (recounting the procedural history of this case's Westfall Act dispute and remanding to the District Court). After we remanded to the District Court, the Government decided not to issue Defendant a new Westfall Act certification in light of the filing of Plaintiff's amended complaint.
- 11 One month before Defendant moved for summary judgment, Plaintiff filed a separate lawsuit against Defendant for sexual assault and defamation. The defamation claim arose out of an October 2022 statement by Defendant denying Plaintiff's assault allegation. See Complaint, *Carroll v. Trump*, No. 22-cv-10016 (“*Carroll II*”) (S.D.N.Y. Nov. 24, 2022). In May 2023, the *Carroll II* jury awarded Plaintiff \$5 million in damages.

The verdict is the subject of a separate appeal currently pending before this Court. See *Carroll II*, appeal docketed, No. 23-793 (2d Cir. May 11, 2023).

12 Memorandum Opinion Denying Defendant's Motion for Summary Judgment (Corrected), *Carroll v. Trump* (“*Carroll I*”), No. 20-cv-7311, --- F.Supp.3d —, 2023 WL 4393067 (S.D.N.Y. July 5, 2023) (“July 5 Order”).

13 *Id.* at — – —, 2023 WL 4393067, at *9-13.

14 *Id.* at — – —, 2023 WL 4393067, at *13-14.

15 Memorandum Opinion Granting Plaintiff's Motion to Dismiss Defendant's Counterclaim and Certain Purported Affirmative Defenses, *Carroll v. Trump*, No. 20-cv-7311, — F.Supp.3d at —, 2023 WL 5017230, at *9 (S.D.N.Y. Aug. 7, 2023) (“August 7 Order”). The August 7 Order also dismissed Defendant's counterclaim that Plaintiff defamed him by accusing him of rape. *Id.* at — – —, 2023 WL 5017230, at *5-8. The District Court's dismissal of Defendant's counterclaim is not before us today.

16 Memorandum Opinion Denying Defendant's Motion to Stay, *Carroll I*, No. 20-cv-7311, — F.Supp.3d at — – —, 2023 WL 5312894, at *7-8 (S.D.N.Y. Aug. 18, 2023).

17 See Section II.A, *post*.

18 See Sections II.A-II.B, *post*.

19 See Section II.C, *post*.

20 See Section II.D, *post*.

21 See Section II.E, *post*.

22 We review the District Court's determination that Defendant waived his presidential immunity defense for “abuse of discretion.” See *Amara v. Cigna Corp.*, 53 F.4th 241, 256 (2d Cir. 2022). We review the District Court's denial of summary judgment and its determination that presidential immunity can be waived *de novo*. See *Johnson v. Killian*, 680 F.3d 234, 236 (2d Cir. 2012); *Berg v. Kelly*, 897 F.3d 99, 105 (2d Cir. 2018). We have appellate jurisdiction under the collateral order doctrine to review the District Court's determination that Defendant is not entitled to absolute immunity. See *Shmueli v. City of New York*, 424 F.3d 231, 236 (2d Cir. 2005) (“As the existence of absolute immunity protects an official not only from liability but also from suit, the validity of the defense should be determined at an early stage. Hence, an interlocutory order rejecting the defense is immediately appealable under the collateral order doctrine to the extent that the rejection turned on an issue of law.”).

23 See Def. Br. at 12-34; see also notes 1-6, *ante* (explaining concepts of waiver and presidential immunity).

24 533 U.S. 353, 373, 121 S.Ct. 2304, 150 L.Ed.2d 398 (2001); see also *Smith v. Scalia*, 44 F. Supp. 3d 28, 40 n.10 (D.D.C. 2014) (Jackson, J.) (“[A]bsolute judicial immunity is a non-jurisdictional bar.”), *aff'd*, No. 14-cv-5180, 2015 WL 13710107 (D.C. Cir. 2015). Qualified immunity shields officials from civil damages liability “insofar as their conduct does not violate clearly established statutory or constitutional rights of which a reasonable person would have known.” *Harlow v. Fitzgerald*, 457 U.S. 800, 818, 102 S.Ct. 2727, 73 L.Ed.2d 396 (1982). Absolute immunity, by contrast, “confers complete protection from civil suit.” *Tulloch v. Coughlin*, 50 F.3d 114, 116 (2d Cir. 1995). The parties do not dispute that presidential immunity is a form of absolute, rather than qualified, immunity.

- 25 See, e.g., *Chen v. Garland*, 43 F.4th 244, 252 n.6 (2d Cir. 2022); *Mitchell v. Fishbein*, 377 F.3d 157, 165 (2d Cir. 2004); see also *Beechwood Restorative Care Ctr. v. Leeds*, 436 F.3d 147, 154 n.3 (2d Cir. 2006) (holding absolute immunity defense to be waived because not adequately preserved for appellate review).
- 26 See Def. Br. at 15-16, 19, 22, 31 (quoting *Mississippi v. Johnson*, 71 U.S. 475, 500-01, 4 Wall. 475, 18 L.Ed. 437 (1867); *Nixon*, 457 U.S. at 754, 102 S.Ct. 2690; and *Clinton*, 520 U.S. at 710, 117 S.Ct. 1636).
- 27 *Wilkins v. United States*, 598 U.S. 152, 159-60, 143 S.Ct. 870, 215 L.Ed.2d 116 (2023) (quotation marks omitted).
- 28 *Id.* at 160, 143 S.Ct. 870 (quoting *Arbaugh*, 546 U.S. at 512, 126 S.Ct. 1235) (some quotation marks omitted).
- 29 *Id.* (quoting *Arbaugh*, 546 U.S. at 511, 126 S.Ct. 1235) (alteration adopted).
- 30 *Nixon*, 457 U.S. at 754, 102 S.Ct. 2690 (citations omitted); see Def. Br. at 19, 22-23, 30-31, 33.
- 31 *Nixon*, 457 U.S. at 741-43, 102 S.Ct. 2690; see also *id.* at 741, 102 S.Ct. 2690 (“Before addressing the merits of this case, we must consider two challenges to our jurisdiction.”).
- 32 See, e.g., *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 671, 129 S.Ct. 1937, 173 L.Ed.2d 868 (2009) (“We first address whether the Court of Appeals had subject-matter jurisdiction”); *In re Clinton Nurseries, Inc.*, 53 F.4th 15, 22 (2d Cir. 2022) (“At the outset, we must consider whether this Court has subject matter jurisdiction”); *Lanier v. Bats Exch., Inc.*, 838 F.3d 139, 146 (2d Cir. 2016) (“As a threshold matter, we must first satisfy ourselves that we have subject matter jurisdiction.”); *Rogers v. Petroleo Brasileiro, S.A.*, 673 F.3d 131, 137 (2d Cir. 2012) (“Notwithstanding our grave concerns regarding the merits of the complaint, we proceed, as we must, first to determine issues of subject matter jurisdiction.”).
- 33 *Nixon*, 457 U.S. at 741, 743 n.23, 102 S.Ct. 2690.
- 34 See generally *Johnson*, 71 U.S. 475.
- 35 See *Clinton*, 520 U.S. at 685, 117 S.Ct. 1636.
- 36 *Wilkins*, 598 U.S. at 160, 143 S.Ct. 870 (quotation marks omitted).
- 37 *Clinton*, 520 U.S. at 710, 117 S.Ct. 1636.
- 38 *Wilkins*, 598 U.S. at 160-61, 143 S.Ct. 870 (quotation marks omitted and alteration adopted).
- 39 Oral Arg. Audio Recording at 4:14-22; cf. *Blassingame v. Trump*, Nos. 22-7030, 22-7031, 87 F.4th 1 (D.C. Cir. Dec. 1, 2023) (affirming district court’s order denying Defendant’s presidential immunity defense without analyzing whether the defense is jurisdictional).
- 40 Def. Br. at 12-13.
- 41 See Answer to Complaint, *Bailey v. Kennedy*, No. 757,200 (Cal. Super. Ct. Jan. 19, 1961); Answer to Complaint, *Hills v. Kennedy*, No. 757,201 (Cal. Super. Ct. Jan. 19, 1962); see also *Clinton*, 520 U.S. at 692, 117 S.Ct. 1636 (summarizing the Kennedy litigation). In addition, lawsuits filed against Presidents Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman were dismissed without, it appears, either President invoking presidential immunity. See *Jones v. Clinton*, 72 F.3d 1354, 1362 n.10 (8th Cir. 1996), *aff’d*, 520 U.S. 681, 117 S.Ct. 1636, 137 L.Ed.2d 945.
- 42 July 5 Order, *Carroll I*, — F.Supp.3d at —, 2023 WL 4393067, at *8.

- 43 Def. Br. at 28-30.
- 44 *Id.* at 28-29.
- 45 *Nixon*, 457 U.S. at 751-52, 102 S.Ct. 2690 (quoting *Pierson v. Ray*, 386 U.S. 547, 554, 87 S.Ct. 1213, 18 L.Ed.2d 288 (1967)); see also *id.* at 758, 102 S.Ct. 2690 (“For the President, as for judges and prosecutors, absolute immunity merely precludes a particular private remedy for alleged misconduct in order to advance compelling public ends.”).
- 46 *Trump v. Vance*, — U.S. —, 140 S. Ct. 2412, 2426, 207 L.Ed.2d 907 (2020) (quoting *Nixon*, 457 U.S. at 752 n.32, 102 S.Ct. 2690).
- 47 See *Nixon*, 457 U.S. at 750, 102 S.Ct. 2690 (“The President’s unique status under the Constitution distinguishes him from other executive officials.”); *Harlow v. Fitzgerald*, 457 U.S. 800, 811 n.17, 102 S.Ct. 2727, 73 L.Ed.2d 396 (1982) (“As we explained in [*Nixon*], the recognition of absolute immunity for all of a President’s acts in office derives in principal part from factors unique to his constitutional responsibilities and station. Suits against other officials—including Presidential aides—generally do not invoke separation-of-powers considerations to the same extent as suits against the President himself.”).
- 48 *Nixon*, 457 U.S. at 750, 102 S.Ct. 2690; *Harlow*, 457 U.S. at 811 & n.17, 102 S.Ct. 2727. For the difference between qualified immunity and absolute immunity, see note 24, *ante*.
- 49 *Nixon*, 457 U.S. at 743, 102 S.Ct. 2690 (quotation marks omitted).
- 50 See Def. Br. at 23-27 (citing *Clapper v. Amnesty Int’l USA*, 568 U.S. 398, 133 S.Ct. 1138, 185 L.Ed.2d 264 (2013); *Lujan v. Defs. of Wildlife*, 504 U.S. 555, 112 S.Ct. 2130, 119 L.Ed.2d 351 (1992); *Commodity Futures Trading Comm’n v. Schor*, 478 U.S. 833, 106 S.Ct. 3245, 92 L.Ed.2d 675 (1986); *Lo Duca v. United States*, 93 F.3d 1100 (2d Cir. 1996); *Austin v. Healey*, 5 F.3d 598 (2d Cir. 1993); *Samuels, Kramer & Co. v. Comm’r*, 930 F.2d 975 (2d Cir. 1991); *Wellness Int’l Network, Ltd. v. Sharif*, 575 U.S. 665, 682, 135 S.Ct. 1932, 191 L.Ed.2d 911 (2015); *Kuretski v. Comm’r*, 755 F.3d 929, 937 (D.C. Cir. 2014); *Nixon*, 457 U.S. 731, 102 S.Ct. 2690, 73 L.Ed.2d 349; *Nixon*, 457 U.S. 731, 102 S.Ct. 2690, 73 L.Ed.2d 349 (Burger, C.J., concurring); *Johnson*, 71 U.S. 475).
- 51 See *Wellness Int’l Network*, 575 U.S. at 682 n.11, 135 S.Ct. 1932 (“The proposition that legal defenses based upon doctrines central to the courts’ structural independence can never be waived simply does not accord with our cases.”) (alteration adopted) (quoting *Plaut v. Spendthrift Farm, Inc.*, 514 U.S. 211, 231, 115 S.Ct. 1447, 131 L.Ed.2d 328 (1995)); *United States v. Donziger*, 38 F.4th 290, 303 (2d Cir. 2022) (“[S]tructural constitutional claims ... have no special entitlement to review. A party forfeits the right to advance on appeal a nonjurisdictional claim, structural or otherwise, that he fails to raise at trial.”) (quoting *Freytag v. Comm’r*, 501 U.S. 868, 893-94, 111 S.Ct. 2631, 115 L.Ed.2d 764 (1991) (Scalia, J., concurring in part and concurring in judgment)), *cert. denied*, — U.S. —, 143 S. Ct. 868, 215 L.Ed.2d 288 (2023); *United States v. Nelson*, 277 F.3d 164, 206 (2d Cir. 2002) (“[W]e do not imply that all claims of structural error ... are unwaivable.”).
- 52 See July 5 Order, *Carroll I*, — F.Supp.3d at — n.18, 2023 WL 4393067, at *5 n.18 (“It accordingly is clear that Mr. Trump does not dispute that if absolute presidential immunity can be waived, he in fact waived it in this case.”). See generally Def. Br.
- 53 Oral Arg. Audio Recording at 9:59-10:33, 11:53-12:18.
- 54 *Empire Merchs., LLC v. Reliable Churchill LLLP*, 902 F.3d 132, 139 (2d Cir. 2018) (quotation marks omitted).
- 55 “ ‘[A]buse of discretion’ ... is a nonpejorative term of art” that “implies no misconduct on the part of the district court.” *United States v. Bove*, 888 F.3d 606, 607 n.1 (2d Cir. 2018). “The term simply describes the

circumstance in which a district court bases its ruling on an erroneous view of the law or on a clearly erroneous assessment of the evidence, or renders a decision that cannot be located within the range of permissible decisions.” *Id.* (quotation marks omitted and alterations adopted).

- 56 That the amendment would have been futile constituted an independent basis for the District Court's decision. See July 5 Order, *Carroll I*, — F.Supp.3d at ———, 2023 WL 4393067, at *9-11. Because we affirm the District Court's determination on grounds of undue delay and undue prejudice, we do not reach the question whether the proposed amendment would have been futile.
- 57 Black's Law Dictionary defines “undue” as “[e]xcessive or unwarranted.” *Undue*, BLACK'S LAW DICTIONARY (11th ed. 2019); see also *Groff v. DeJoy*, 600 U.S. 447, 469, 143 S.Ct. 2279, 216 L.Ed.2d 1041 (2023) (holding that, in the context of the phrase “undue hardship,” “the modifier ‘undue’ means ... ‘excessive’ or ‘unjustifiable’ ”) (quoting RANDOM HOUSE DICTIONARY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE 1547 (1966)).
- 58 See, e.g., *McCarthy v. Dun & Bradstreet Corp.*, 482 F.3d 184, 202 (2d Cir. 2007) (1 year and 9 months); *Zahra v. Town of Southold*, 48 F.3d 674, 686 (2d Cir. 1995) (2 years and 3.5 months); *Evans v. Syracuse City Sch. Dist.*, 704 F.2d 44, 47 (2d Cir. 1983) (2 years and 9 months); *AEP Energy Servs. Gas Holding Co. v. Bank of Am., N.A.*, 626 F.3d 699, 726 (2d Cir. 2010) (3 years); see also *City of New York v. Grp. Health Inc.*, 649 F.3d 151, 158 (2d Cir. 2011) (3 years and 2 months). To be sure, we have allowed amendments to pleadings when similar or longer lengths of time have passed. See *Rachman Bag Co. v. Liberty Mut. Ins. Co.*, 46 F.3d 230, 235 (2d Cir. 1995) (“more than four years”); *Richardson Greenshields Sec., Inc. v. Lau*, 825 F.2d 647, 653 n.6 (2d Cir. 1987) (collecting cases). But those cases did not involve a finding of prejudice to the non-moving party.
- 59 See note 10, *ante* (describing the Westfall Act); *Carroll v. Trump*, 66 F.4th 91 (2d Cir. 2023) (discussing the procedural history of this case's Westfall Act dispute).
- 60 See *Prejudice*, BLACK'S LAW DICTIONARY (11th ed. 2019) (defining “prejudice” as “[d]amage or detriment to one's legal rights or claims”); see also note 55, *ante* (“defining abuse of discretion”).
- 61 *Ruotolo v. City of New York*, 514 F.3d 184, 192 (2d Cir. 2008) (quotation marks omitted).
- 62 *Pasternack v. Shrader*, 863 F.3d 162, 174 (2d Cir. 2017) (quotation marks omitted and alterations adopted); *Block v. First Blood Assocs.*, 988 F.2d 344, 350 (2d Cir. 1993) (quotation marks omitted).
- 63 See *AEP Energy Servs.*, 626 F.3d at 727.
- 64 Pl. Br. at 45; Oral Arg. Audio Recording at 26:06-30:02.
- 65 Oral Arg. Audio Recording at 26:06-27:44.
- 66 *Id.* at 27:45-28:22.
- 67 *Id.* at 28:23-29:20.
- 68 *Id.* at 28:57-29:04.
- 69 *Id.* at 39:40-40:28.
- 70 *Id.* at 39:50-40:05.

- 71 Compare *Trump v. Carroll*, 292 A.3d 220, 234 (D.C. 2023) (Westfall Act inquiry's "focus is on the subjective state of mind of the tortfeasor-employee"), with *Nixon*, 457 U.S. at 756, 102 S.Ct. 2690 (presidential immunity analysis rejecting "inquiry into the President's motives").
- 72 August 7 Order, *Carroll I*, — F.Supp.3d at —, 2023 WL 5017230, at *9.
- 73 See *Shields v. Citytrust Bancorp, Inc.*, 25 F.3d 1124, 1128 (2d Cir. 1994).
- 74 *Id.* (quotation marks omitted).
- 75 *Gilmore v. Shearson/Am. Exp. Inc.*, 811 F.2d 108, 112 (2d Cir. 1987), *abrogated in part on other grounds by Gulfstream Aerospace Corp. v. Mayacamas Corp.*, 485 U.S. 271, 108 S.Ct. 1133, 99 L.Ed.2d 296 (1988).
- 76 *Id.* at 113.
- 77 See, e.g., *Shields*, 25 F.3d at 1128 (failure to plead fraud with particularity is a revivable defense).
- 78 *Will v. Hallock*, 546 U.S. 345, 349, 126 S.Ct. 952, 163 L.Ed.2d 836 (2006) (quotation marks omitted). Defendant suggests that the only non-revivable defenses are those listed in *Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(2)-(5)*. Def. Br. at 42; Reply Br. at 27-29. Defendant is mistaken. A motion to compel arbitration, for instance, is non-revivable, even though it is not listed as a defense in *Rule 12*. See *Gilmore*, 811 F.2d at 112.
- 79 *Gilmore*, 811 F.2d at 113.
- 80 *Mead v. Reliastar Life Ins. Co.*, 768 F.3d 102, 113 (2d Cir. 2014) (alteration adopted) (quoting *Webb v. GAF Corp.*, 78 F.3d 53, 55 (2d Cir. 1996)).
- 81 *United States v. Rodgers*, 101 F.3d 247, 251 (2d Cir. 1996) (quotation marks and citations omitted).
- 82 See, e.g., *United States v. Salerno*, 868 F.2d 524, 539-40 (2d Cir. 1989); see also *Arthur Andersen LLP v. Carlisle*, 556 U.S. 624, 629, 129 S.Ct. 1896, 173 L.Ed.2d 832 (2009) ("Appellate courts can ... authorize the district court's retention of jurisdiction when an appeal is certified as frivolous.").
- 83 See *United States v. Rodríguez-Rosado*, 909 F.3d 472, 478 (1st Cir. 2018) ("We think applying the bench-made divestiture rule today would surely short-circuit its aim of judicial efficiency [W]ith jurisdiction back in its hands, the district court, undoubtedly, would again deny [defendant's] motion, like every other time it has confronted—and denied—the motion. And then, chances are that [defendant] would once more appeal his case to us. Which would present to us [another] variation on the original theme of this case, like an encore, featuring the very same parties, the very same motion, the very same denial order, and the very same arguments on the merits. That seems to us too much to ask of a rule fashioned to ferret imprudence out of the courts."); see also *United States v. Hickey*, 580 F.3d 922, 927 (9th Cir. 2009) ("[B]ecause [defendant's] interlocutory appeal was ultimately a losing one, any claimed error in proceeding with limited pretrial matters was harmless and no useful purpose would be served by requiring that court to redecide the pre-trial motions." (quotation marks omitted)).
- 84 *Rodgers*, 101 F.3d at 251.
- 85 20 MOORE'S FEDERAL PRACTICE - CIVIL § 303.32 (3d ed. 2023).
- 86 See *Rodgers*, 101 F.3d at 251-52 (collecting cases).
- 87 See note 22, *ante* (explaining that we have appellate jurisdiction under the collateral order doctrine to review the District Court's determination that Defendant is not entitled to absolute immunity).

88 See *Tarpon Bay Partners LLC v. Zerez Holdings Corp.*, 79 F.4th 206, 221 (2d Cir. 2023).

89 *Bolmer v. Oliveira*, 594 F.3d 134, 141 (2d Cir. 2010).

90 Def. Br. at 56-61.

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1997 WL 599355

Only the Westlaw citation is currently available.
United States District Court, N.D. New York.

Kenneth BROWN, Plaintiff,

v.

Andrew PETERS, Warden, Watertown Correctional Facility; Joseph Williams, Warden, Lincoln Work–Release Center; Francis J. Herman, Senior Parole Officer Interstate Bureau; T. Stanford, Senior Parole Officer; Deborah Stewart, Parole Officer; John Doe # 1, Parole Agent, Watertown Correctional Facility; John Doe # 2, Parole Agent, Lincoln Work Release Center; Susan Bishop, Director of Interstate Compact, South Carolina; Cecil Magee, Parole Officer, South Carolina; Frank Barton, Parole Officer, South Carolina; John McMahan, Parole Officer, South Carolina, Defendants.

No. Civ.A. 95CV1641RSPDS.

|

Sept. 22, 1997.

Attorneys and Law Firms

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DECISION AND ORDER

POOLER, J.

*1 The above matter comes to me following a Report–Recommendation by Magistrate Judge Daniel Scanlon, Jr., duly filed on April 17, 1997. Following ten days from the service thereof, the Clerk has sent me the entire file, including any and all objections filed by the parties herein.

Plaintiff Kenneth Brown commenced this Section 1983 civil rights action on November 17, 1995. On February 12,

1996, Magistrate Judge Scanlon ordered Brown to submit an amended complaint alleging the specific acts committed by the individuals named as defendants which Brown claimed violated his constitutional rights. Brown filed an amended complaint on March 21, 1996. In his amended complaint, Brown alleged that defendants violated his rights under the Eighth and Fourteenth Amendments by failing to process properly his interstate compact paperwork, resulting in Brown being imprisoned pursuant to a parole hold when in fact he had never violated the conditions of his parole. For a more complete statement of Brown's claims, see his amended complaint. Dkt. No. 5.

On August 5, 1996, defendants Peters and Williams made a motion to dismiss for failure to state a claim pursuant to Fed.R.Civ.P. 12(b)(6). Dkt. No. 13; Dkt. No. 14, at 2. On August 19, 1996, defendants Bishop, Magee, Barton, and McMahan made a motion to dismiss the complaint against them or, in the alternative, for summary judgment. Dkt. No. 20. On October 17, 1996, defendants Herman, Stewart, and Stanford made a motion to dismiss for failure to state a claim. Dkt. No. 34. On April 17, 1996, Magistrate Judge Scanlon recommended that all defendants' motions to dismiss be granted and that the complaint be dismissed. Dkt. No. 50.

On June 9, 1997, Brown filed objections to the magistrate judge's report-recommendation, having been granted additional time in which to do so. Dkt. No. 52. In addition, Brown filed on June 9, 1997, a motion for leave to file a second amended complaint and a copy of his proposed amended complaint. Dkt. No. 53. I turn first to the last motion filed, Brown's motion for leave to amend his complaint a second time.

Brown seeks to file a second amended complaint “setting forth in detail the personal involvement of each defendant and how their acts of commission and omission served to deprive plaintiff of Constitutionally secured rights.” Dkt. No. 53. The district court has discretion whether to grant leave to amend. *Ruffolo v. Oppenheimer & Co.*, 987 F.2d 129, 131 (2d Cir.1993). In exercising that discretion, the court should freely grant leave to amend when justice so requires. Fed.R.Civ.P. 15(a). However, the court need not grant leave to amend where it appears that amendment would prove to be unproductive or futile. *Ruffolo*, 987 F.2d at 131.

Here, Brown moved to amend his complaint to add additional allegations against the named defendants. However, the additional allegations fail to cure the deficiency which

forms the basis of defendants' motion to dismiss—the absence of defendants' personal involvement in a constitutional deprivation. Section 1983 imposes liability upon an individual only when personal involvement of that individual subjects a person to deprivation of a federal right. *See Monell v. Dep't of Soc. Servs.*, 436 U.S. 658, 98 S.Ct. 2018, 56 L.Ed.2d 611 (1978). A complaint is fatally defective if it fails to allege personal involvement sufficient to establish that a supervisor was “directly and personally responsible for the purported unlawful conduct.” *Alfaro Motors, Inc. v. Ward*, 814 F.2d 883, 886 (2d Cir.1987).

*2 Brown's proposed amended complaint alleges in conclusory fashion that defendants acted “in a grossly negligent and concerted manner which breached their duties owed to Plaintiff and is the proximate cause of [the violation of plaintiff's constitutional rights].” Proposed Am. Compl., at 3. Brown continues in the same vein, stating that defendants owed duties to plaintiff to carry out their jobs in a professional manner and they failed to carry out those duties appropriately. The complaint states that defendants held specific responsibilities, such as checking for outstanding warrants, which if performed properly should have alerted them to a problem. However, nowhere does the complaint set forth allegations that these defendants either participated directly in any constitutional infraction or that they were even aware of such an infraction. The proposed amended complaint merely alleges that these defendants failed in performing their supervisory and ministerial functions. “These bare assertions do not state a claim under 42 U.S.C. § 1983.” *Smiley v. Davis*, 1988 WL 78306, *2 (S.D.N.Y.).

This plaintiff previously has had the opportunity to amend his complaint for the same reason asserted here, to allege personal involvement on the part of defendants. Brown's first amended complaint failed to accomplish that task, and it appears that even if allowed to amend again Brown would be unable to make the requisite allegations with sufficient specificity to sustain his complaint. Consequently, I find that amendment would be futile, and I deny Brown's motion for leave to amend his complaint.

I turn now to the magistrate judge's report-recommendation and defendants' motions. The magistrate judge recommends that I grant defendants' motions and dismiss the complaint as to all defendants. The report-recommendation clearly describes the grounds on which the magistrate judge recommends dismissal as to each defendant. Fed.R.Civ.P. 72(b) requires the district judge to make a *de novo*

determination on “any portion of the magistrate's disposition to which specific, written objection has been made.” Brown's objections fail to address directly any of the analysis. Brown's objections state (1) that he has been deprived of his constitutional rights; (2) that he has stated a cause of action; (3) that the court wrongly refused to appoint an attorney for him and wrongly stayed discovery pending the outcome of these motions; (4) that he seeks to file an amended complaint; (5) the standard of review for a Fed.R.Civ.P. 12(b) (6) motion; (6) that he disagrees with the magistrate judge's recommendation to grant defendants' motions because the allegations in his complaint, which he repeats, show that his rights were violated; and (7) the text of the Fourteenth and Eighth Amendments.

Even affording the objections the liberal reading required for *pro se* pleadings, I find that these objections fail to state any basis whatsoever, much less a specific one, for the court not to adopt the magistrate judge's rulings. They simply re-state the relief sought and the facts on which Brown grounds his complaint and conclude that the magistrate judge's conclusions are wrong. When the parties make only frivolous, conclusive, or general objections, the court reviews the report-recommendation for clear error. *See Camardo v. General Motors Hourly-Rate Employees Pension Plan*, 806 F.Supp. 380, 382 (W.D.N.Y.1992) (court need not consider objections which are frivolous, conclusive, or general and constitute a rehashing of the same arguments and positions taken in original pleadings); *Chambrier v. Leonardo*, 1991 WL 44838, *1 (S.D.N.Y.) (restatement of allegations already before the court and assertion that valid constitutional claim exists insufficient to form specific objections); *Schoolfield v. Dep't of Correction*, 1994 WL 119740, *2 (S.D.N.Y.) (objections stating that magistrate judge's decisions are wrong and unjust, and restating relief sought and facts upon which complaint grounded, are conclusory and do not form specific basis for not adopting report-recommendation); *Vargas v. Keane*, 1994 WL 693885, *1 (S.D.N.Y.) (general objection that report does not address violation of petitioner's constitutional rights is a general plea that report not be adopted and cannot be treated as objection within the meaning of 28 U.S.C. § 636), *aff'd*, 86 F.3d 1273 (2d Cir.), *cert. denied*, 519 U.S. 895, 117 S.Ct. 240, 136 L.Ed.2d 169 (U.S.1996). *See also Scipio v. Keane*, 1997 WL 375601, *1 (1997) (when objections fail to address analysis directly, court reviews report-recommendation for clear error); Fed.R.Civ.P. 72(b), Advisory Comm. Note (when no specific, written objections filed, “court need only satisfy itself that there is

no clear error on the face of the record in order to accept the recommendation”).

*3 Because Brown fails to make specific objections or provide any basis for his general objections, I review the report-recommendation for clear error. After careful review, I conclude that the magistrate judge's report-recommendation is well-reasoned and is not clearly erroneous.¹ The magistrate judge employed the proper standard, accurately recited the facts, and reasonably applied the law to those facts. Consequently, I adopt the report-recommendation.

CONCLUSION

Because plaintiff's proposed amendment demonstrates that amendment would be futile, I deny plaintiff's motion for leave to amend his complaint. I approve the magistrate judge's recommendation and grant defendants' motions to dismiss. Plaintiff's complaint is dismissed in its entirety.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

ORDER and REPORT-RECOMMENDATION

This matter was referred to the undersigned for report and recommendation by the Hon. Rosemary S. Pooler, United States District Judge, by Standing Order dated November 12, 1986. Currently before this Court are a number of motions. Defendants Peters and Williams have filed a motion to dismiss (dkt.13); defendants Bishop, Magee, Barton and McMahan have filed a motion for summary judgment, or in the alternative to dismiss (dkt.20); and defendants Herman, Stewart and Stanford also have filed a motion to dismiss (dkt.34). Plaintiff opposes these three motions (dkts.27, 29, 33, 38). Defendants Bishop, Magee and McMahan have filed a motion to stay discovery (dkt.41) and plaintiff has filed a motion to extend time (dkt.44) in which to file opposition to the latter motion for a stay of discovery.

The Court addresses these issues *seriatim*.

BACKGROUND

Plaintiff's amended complaint, which he has brought pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983, alleges the following facts. In

October, 1991, plaintiff was incarcerated in the Watertown Correctional Facility in Watertown, New York. He applied for an interstate compact because he wanted to return to South Carolina to live with his common law wife, Pamela Reid. During the application process, he was interviewed by the facility's parole officer, identified only as defendant John Doe # 1. After signing the necessary papers, his application was forwarded to defendant Andrew Peters, the facility's superintendent, who reviewed, signed and forwarded the papers to the Interstate Bureau. Amend. Compl. at ¶¶ 1-2; Exs. A, B.

On or about January 15, 1992, while his compact was waiting for review at the Interstate Bureau, plaintiff was approved for work release and sent to the Lincoln Work Release Center in New York City. While at the center, plaintiff spoke to a parole officer, defendant John Doe # 2, and told him that he was seeking a compact that would return him to South Carolina upon his conditional release. Plaintiff claims the parole officer told him that he would handle the necessary paperwork, although the officer had had no experience with an interstate compact. Amend. Compl. at ¶¶ 3, 4.

*4 Plaintiff, meanwhile, asked Reid whether any officials had contacted her in South Carolina regarding his prospective residence in that state. Upon discovering no one had contacted her, plaintiff asked a lawyer he knew, Navron Ponds, to inquire as to his compact status. In March, 1992, the lawyer spoke with defendant Susan Bishop, who is the director of the interstate compact program in South Carolina. Bishop allegedly told Ponds that plaintiff “was disapproved because there was a discrepancy about approving plaintiff[s] compact.” The “discrepancy” was the fact that plaintiff owed the state of South Carolina eighty-six days of confinement from a previous sentence. Plaintiff claims Bishop told Ponds to contact defendants Cecil Magee and Frank Barton, who worked for the South Carolina Parole Department. Sometime in March, 1992, Ponds made some calls to Barton and Magee. A verbal agreement was reached, and plaintiff, upon speaking with Barton and Magee was told that his compact had been approved. He also was told that he should report to the South Carolina Department of Parole upon being released. Amend. Compl. at ¶¶ 5-7.

Prior to leaving the Lincoln Work Release Center, plaintiff processed paperwork related to his interstate compact. His paperwork was sent by Doe # 2 to defendant Joseph Williams, the superintendent of the center. Williams reviewed, signed and returned the paperwork to plaintiff. On May 1, 1992,

upon his release from the center, plaintiff traveled to South Carolina. Three days later, he entered a South Carolina parole office and promptly was arrested because of the eighty-six days of confinement that he owed the state. Plaintiff's paperwork was given to defendant John McMahan, a parole officer. Plaintiff claims that McMahan never returned this paperwork to him. On May 20, 1992, the state of South Carolina revoked plaintiff's parole and plaintiff was returned to prison to serve the eighty-six days that he owed. When he asked McMahan what would happen to his one year of parole from New York, the officer allegedly told him that his New York parole would run concurrently with his South Carolina parole, and that when he finished his South Carolina parole, he would not owe any parole whatsoever. Plaintiff served the eighty-six days he owed and was released on July 31, 1992. Amend. Compl. at ¶¶ 8–10.

In February, 1993, plaintiff was arrested on robbery charges in South Carolina. The charges ultimately were dropped, but he apparently encountered some difficulties regarding this arrest as a result of a parole hold that New York state had placed upon him. Bishop's office told him that it had nothing to do with his parole hold and that any problem that he had was between him and the state of New York. He talked to authorities in Albany, New York regarding the parole hold, but was not successful in his efforts to have the hold removed. On September 30, 1993, after had been extradited to New York as a fugitive from justice, plaintiff was given a preliminary hearing at Riker's Island, New York. The hearing officer found no probable cause that plaintiff had violated any condition of parole. He was released. Amend. Compl. at ¶¶ 11–14; Exs. C–J.

*5 Plaintiff claims that he would not have suffered hardships if his interstate compact had been handled correctly. He alleges that defendant Deborah Stewart failed to follow up and see whether plaintiff had arrived in South Carolina. If she had, he argues, she would have discovered that he had been arrested upon his arrival. He alleges that defendant Francis Herman, a parole officer at the Interstate Bureau failed to do his job by not investigating plaintiff's violation reports. Amend. Compl. at ¶¶ 15–17; Exs. F–I.

Plaintiff asserts that the foregoing amounts violations of his Eighth and Fourteenth Amendment rights, wherefore he both compensatory and declaratory relief.

DISCUSSION

A. Motion to Dismiss by Williams and Peters.

Williams and Peters have filed a motion to dismiss plaintiff's complaint pursuant to FED.R.CIV.P. 12(b)(6) on the grounds that it fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted. In a Rule 12(b)(6) motion, all factual allegations in the complaint must be taken and construed in plaintiff's favor. See *LaBounty v. Adler*, 933 F.2d 121, 122 (2d Cir.1991) (citing *Ortiz v. Cornette*, 867 F.2d 146, 149 (1989)). The Court's role is not to assess whether plaintiffs have raised questions of fact or demonstrated an entitlement to a judgment as a matter of law, as in a motion made pursuant to FED.R.CIV.P. 56 for summary judgment, but rather to determine whether plaintiff's complaint sufficiently alleges all of the necessary legal elements to state a claim under the law. See *Christopher v. Laidlaw Transit, Inc.* 899 F.Supp. 1224, 1226 (S.D.N.Y.1995), (citing *Ricciuti v. New York City Transit Authority*, 941 F.2d 119, 124 (2d Cir.1991)). Factual allegations in brief or memoranda may not be considered. *Fonte v. Board of Managers of Continental Towers Condominium*, 848 F.2d 24, 25 (2d Cir.1988). The Court now turns to the issues presented.

Personal involvement of defendants in alleged constitutional deprivations is a prerequisite to an award of damages under § 1983. *Wright v. Smith*, 21 F.3d 496, 501 (2d Cir.1994). As superintendents at New York State Correctional facilities, Williams and Peter may be found personally involved in the alleged deprivation of plaintiff's constitutionally protected rights by a showing that they: (1) directly participated in the infraction; (2) knew of the infraction, but failed to remedy the wrong; (3) created or continued a policy or custom under which unconstitutional practices occurred; or (4) were grossly negligent in managing subordinates who caused unlawful conditions or events. *Id.*, (quoting *Williams v. Smith*, 781 F.2d 319, 323–24 (2d Cir.1986)). Supervisory liability also may be imposed against Williams or Peters with a showing of gross negligence or deliberate indifference to plaintiff's constitutional rights. *Id.* Absent some personal involvement by Williams or Peters in the allegedly constitutionally infirm conduct of their subordinates, neither can be held liable under § 1983. *Gill v. Mooney*, 824 F.2d 192, 196 (2d Cir.1987).

*6 Plaintiff has not provided any evidence linking either Williams or Peters to his alleged constitutional deprivations. All that plaintiff has alleged is that Williams and Peters, as superintendents, have reviewed and signed paperwork

relating to plaintiff's compact. Though it has long been held that *pro se* complaints are held to "less stringent standards than formal pleadings drafted by lawyers" for the purpose of a motion to dismiss under Rule 12(b)(6), *Haines v. Kerner*, 404 U.S. 519, 520, 92 S.Ct. 594, 595–96, 30 L.Ed.2d 652 (1972), plaintiff has not explained how the ministerial conduct of these two defendants was violative of the Constitution. Their motion to dismiss should be granted.

B. Motion for Summary Judgment or to Dismiss by Bishop, Magee, Barton and McMahan.

Bishop, Magee, Barton and McMahan have filed a motion for summary judgment, or in the alternative a motion to dismiss. The Court will treat their motion as a motion to dismiss. "[C]omplaints relying on the civil rights statutes are insufficient unless they contain some specific allegations of fact indicating a deprivation of rights, instead of a litany of general conclusions that shock but have no meaning." *Barr v. Adams*, 810 F.2d 358, 363 (2d Cir.1987). Plaintiff has not alleged specifically how the conduct of these four defendants infringed upon his constitutional rights. In his amended complaint, he contends that defendants violated the Constitution by "continuously breaching [[[their] duty]" to him. This language underscores the defect with the complaint: if it alleges anything at all, it alleges that defendants were negligent in handling plaintiff's interstate compact and parole. To state a cognizable § 1983 claim, the prisoner must allege actions or omissions sufficient to demonstrate deliberate indifference; mere negligence will not suffice. *Hayes v. New York City Dept. of Corrections*, 84 F.3d 614, 620 (2d Cir.1996); *Morales v. New York State Dep't of Corrections*, 842 F.2d 27, 30 (2d Cir.1988) (section 1983 does not encompass a cause of action sounding in negligence).

The Court finds that the claims against Bishop, Magee, Barton and McMahan should be dismissed.

C. Motion to Dismiss by Herman, Stewart and Stanford.

Plaintiff's claim against Stewart is that she failed to follow up and see whether plaintiff had arrived in South Carolina. Herman, he likewise asserts, failed to do his job because he did not investigate plaintiff's violation reports. Plaintiff has not alleged how these actions run afoul of the Constitution; and again, these claims seem to be grounded in negligence, which is not actionable under § 1983. *Hayes*, 84 F.3d at 620.

Plaintiff's claim against Stanford must fail because his complaint literally fails to state a claim against that

defendant. Aside from naming Stanford as a defendant, and alleging that he was the appointed Senior Parole Officer at plaintiff's September 30, 1993 revocation hearing at Riker's Island, plaintiff does not detail how Stanford violated his constitutional rights. Absent some personal involvement by Stanford in the allegedly constitutionally infirm conduct of his subordinates, he cannot be held liable under § 1983. *Gill*, 824 F.2d at 196.

*7 Accordingly, the Court finds that Stanford, Stewart and Herman's motion to dismiss should be granted.

D. Plaintiff's "John Doe" Claims.

In so far as neither John Doe # 1 nor John Doe # 2 have been identified and served in this matter, the Court does not have jurisdiction over these parties and does not reach the merits of plaintiff's claims against them.

E. Discovery Motions.

Defendants Bishop, Magee and McMahan have filed a motion to stay discovery until the Court has made a ruling on their motion to dismiss. Plaintiff has filed a motion to extend the time in which he may file opposition to defendants' motion. Plaintiff, however, has filed his opposing response (dkt.47), therefore his instant discovery motion is denied as moot. In that the Court recommends granting defendants' motion to dismiss, discovery in this matter would be fruitless. Accordingly, defendants' motion for a stay of discovery pending the resolution of their motion to dismiss is granted.

CONCLUSION

WHEREFORE, based upon the foregoing analysis, it is hereby

ORDERED, that plaintiff's motion to extend the time to file an opposing reply (dkt.44) is denied as moot; and it is further

ORDERED, that defendants Bishop, Magee and McMahan's motion to stay discovery until their motion to dismiss is decided (dkt.41) is granted; and it is further

RECOMMENDED, that defendants Peters and Williams' motion to dismiss (dkt.13) be granted; and it is further

RECOMMENDED, that defendants Bishop, Magee, Barton and McMahan's motion to dismiss (dkt.20) be granted; and it is further

RECOMMENDED, that defendants Herman, Stewart and Stanford's motion to dismiss (dkt.34) be granted.

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1) and Local Rule 72.1(c), the parties have ten (10) days within which to file written objections to the foregoing report. Such objections shall be

filed with the Clerk of the Court. ***FAILURE TO OBJECT TO THIS REPORT WITHIN TEN (10) DAYS WILL PRECLUDE APPELLATE REVIEW.*** *Roldan v. Racette*, 984 F.2d 85, 89 (2d Cir.1993) (citing *Small v. Secretary of Health and Human Services*, 892 F.2d 15 (2d Cir.1989)); 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1); FED.R.CIV.P. 6(a), 6(e) and 72.

All Citations

Not Reported in F.Supp., 1997 WL 599355

Footnotes

1 I note, however, that the report-recommendation would survive even *de novo* review.

1995 WL 316935

Only the Westlaw citation is currently available.
United States District Court,
N.D. New York.

Mina POURZANDVAKIL, Plaintiff,

v.

Hubert HUMPHRY, Judicial System of The State of Minnesota and Olmsted County Court System, and State of Minnesota, Saint Peter State Hospital, Doctor Gammel Stephelton, et el Erickson, North West Bank and Trust, Olmsted County Social Service, J.C. Penny Insurnce, Metmore Finicial, Traveler Insurnce, Comecial Union Insurnce, Hirman Insurnce, Amrican State Insurnce, Farmers Insurnce, C. O Brown Insurnce, Msi Insurnce, Steven Youngquist, Kent Chirstain, Micheal Benson, United Airline, Kowate Airline, Fordmotor Cridite, First Bank Rochester, George Restwich, British Airways, Western Union, Prudential Insurnce, T.C.F. Bank, Judge Sandy Kieth, Judge Niergari, Olmstead County Judgering, Judge Mores, Judge Jacobson, Judge Challien, Judge Collin, Judge Thomase, Judge Buttler, Judge Morke, Judge Moweer, Sera Clayton, Susan Mudhaul, Ray Schmite, Defendants. ¹

Civ. A. No. 94-CV-1594.

|

May 23, 1995.

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Richard Maki, Rochester, MN, pro se.

MEMORANDUM-DECISION AND ORDER

POOLER, District Judge.

INTRODUCTION

*1 In the four and one-half months since she filed this action, plaintiff Mina Pourzandvakil has filed three amended complaints and ten motions. She also has sought and received entry of default against ten defendants, none of whom she properly served. She twice has sought and been denied temporary restraining orders. She has included in her action defendants with no apparent connection to this forum, that were vindicated in actions she brought in other forums.

In response, several individual defendants and groups of defendants have filed a total of twelve motions, some seeking vacation of the defaults entered against them, some seeking dismissal and others seeking both. We grant defendants' motions insofar as they seek vacation of the clerk's entries of default and dismissal of the complaint. We vacate *sua sponte*

the entries of default against the non-moving defendants. Finally, we dismiss the complaint in its entirety against all defendants.

BACKGROUND

Pourzandvakil commenced this action by filing a complaint in the Office of the Clerk on December 9, 1994 (Docket No. 1). The complaint named as defendants the Attorney General of the State of Minnesota, the State of Minnesota and Olmsted County, Minnesota judicial systems, various Minnesota judges and prosecutors, St. Peter State Hospital in Minnesota and various doctors who worked at St. Peter's. Without specifying the time or defendant involved, the complaint accused the defendants of kidnapping Pourzandvakil and her daughter, torturing Pourzandvakil in the Mayo Clinic since April 1985, and causing Pourzandvakil and her daughter to suffer physically, financially and emotionally. Pourzandvakil twice requested that we issue a temporary restraining order. We denied both requests. *See* Order entered December 14, 1994 (Docket No. 4) and Memorandum-Decision and Order entered December 22, 1994 (Docket No. 6).

On December 27, 1994, Pourzandvakil filed an amended complaint (the "first amended complaint") (Docket No. 7) that appears to differ from the original complaint by adding British Airways as a defendant without making any allegations against British Airways. The first amended complaint also differs by requesting additional damages for prior cases and adding descriptions of several previous cases. Annexed to the first amended complaint is another document labeled amended complaint (the "annexed amended complaint") (Docket No. 7) whose factual allegations differ substantially from both the original complaint and the first amended complaint. The annexed amended complaint also adds British Airways as a party but specifies only that Pourzandvakil has travelled on that airline and that British Airways, along with other airlines on which Pourzandvakil has travelled, is aware of all the crimes committed against her.

Pourzandvakil filed yet another amended complaint on January 13, 1995 (the "second amended complaint") (Docket No. 11). The second amended complaint adds as defendants several banks, other financial institutions, insurance companies, insurance agents or brokers, attorneys and airlines as well as the Postmaster of Olmsted County and Western Union. The allegations against these defendants defy

easy summarization and will be addressed only insofar as they are relevant to the various motions.

*2 The Clerk of the Court has entered default against the following defendants: J.C. Penney Insurance (*sic*)² ("J.C. Penney"), British Airways, Kowate (*sic*) Airline ("Kuwait"), MSi Insurance (*sic*) ("MSI"), Judge Mork, Steven Youngquist ("Youngquist"), Prudncial Insurance (*sic*) ("Prudential"), Ford Motor Credit ("Ford"), First Bank Rochester, and TCF Bank ("TCF"). Based on the submissions Pourzandvakil made in support of her requests for entry of default, it appears that she served these defendants by certified mail.

The court has received answers from the following defendants: Hubert H. Humphrey III, St. Peter Regional Treatment Center, and Drs. Gerald H. Gammell, William D. Erickson, and Thomas R. Stapleton (joint answer filed January 9, 1995); Olmsted County, Ray Schmitz ("Schmitz"), Susan Mundahl ("Mundahl"), C.O. Brown Agency, Inc. ("C.O. Brown") (answer to amended complaint filed January 23, 1995); George Restovich ("Restovich") (answer to complaint or amended complaint filed January 30, 1995); Norwest Corporation ("Norwest") (answer to amended complaint filed January 31, 1995, amended answer of Norwest Bank Minnesota, N.A. to amended complaint filed February 13, 1995); Travelers Insurance Company ("Travelers") (answer filed February 1, 1995); Michael Benson ("Benson") (answer filed February 6, 1995); Hirman Insurance ("Hirman") (answer filed February 6, 1995); Richard Maki ("Maki") (answer to complaint or amended complaint filed February 17, 1995); Western Union (answer filed February 21, 1995); Steven C. Youngquist ("Youngquist") (answer to complaint or amended complaint filed February 23, 1995); Kuwait (answer filed March 6, 1995); J.C. Penney (answer filed March 22, 1995); Susan E. Cooper³ (answer to amended complaint filed March 24, 1995); and Chief Judge Anne Simonett, Judge Jack Davies, Judge Roger Klaphke, Judge Dennis Challeen and Judge Lawrence Collins (joint answer filed April 3, 1995).

The court has also received a total of ten motions from Pourzandvakil since February 27, 1995. She moved for a default judgment against defendants J.C. Penney, First Bank Rochester, Prudential, Ford, MSI, British Airways, and TCF. She moved for immediate trial and "venue in a different place" against several defendants and also requested action according to law and criminal charges. Finally, she made motions opposing defendants' motions.

The court also has received a total of thirteen motions⁴ from defendants. Several of the defendants moved for dismissal either under Rule 56 or Rule 12 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure. For instance, Commercial Union Insurance Companies (“Commercial”) moved for dismissal of Pourzandvakil's complaint pursuant to Fed. R. Civ. P. 12(b) or, in the alternative, for a more definite statement. Commercial argued that Pourzandvakil's complaint against it is barred by *res judicata* and collateral estoppel and that this court does not have subject matter jurisdiction over the complaints against Commercial. American States Insurance Company (“ASI”) moved for dismissal based on plaintiff's failure to state a claim upon which relief can be granted. ASI further moved for an order enjoining Pourzandvakil from further litigation against it. Maki moved for summary judgment based on lack of personal jurisdiction, improper venue, plaintiff's failure to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, and lack of subject matter jurisdiction. Hubert H. Humphrey, III, the Judicial System of the State of Minnesota, Judge James L. Mork, St. Peter Regional Treatment Center and Drs. Gammell, Erickson and Stapleton (collectively, the “state defendants”) moved for summary judgment alleging lack of personal jurisdiction, improper venue, plaintiff's failure to state a claim on which relief can be granted, lack of subject matter jurisdiction, sovereign immunity, and, on behalf of Judge Mork and the judicial system, absolute judicial immunity. The state defendants also requested costs and attorney's fees. Travelers moved for summary judgment based on *res judicata* and/or collateral estoppel, frivolity, lack of subject matter jurisdiction, and improper venue. Travelers sought a transfer of venue to Minnesota in the alternative. Hirman moved for summary judgment based on frivolity, lack of subject matter jurisdiction, and improper venue. Hirman also sought transfer of venue in the alternative. Olmsted County, Schmitz, Mundahl, C.O. Brown and Norwest sought dismissal based on lack of personal jurisdiction, improper venue, and plaintiff's failure to state a claim upon which relief can be granted. With respect to Schmitz and Mundahl, defendants sought dismissal based on absolute prosecutorial immunity, and with respect to C.O. Brown, defendants sought dismissal on *res judicata* grounds. Metmor Financial, Inc. (“Metmor”) sought dismissal based on lack of personal jurisdiction, lack of subject matter jurisdiction, improper venue, and plaintiff's failure to state a claim upon which relief can be granted. Finally, Restovich moved for dismissal based on lack of personal jurisdiction.⁵

*3 Four defendants, British Airways, Kuwait, Prudential, and Youngquist, sought vacatur of the defaults entered against

them. Prudential coupled its request with a request for an order enjoining plaintiff from filing or intervening in any litigation against it. Youngquist also requested dismissal of the complaint based on lack of personal jurisdiction and lack of subject matter jurisdiction.

ANALYSIS

The Defaults

We vacate the defaults entered in this matter because plaintiff improperly served defendants. Each application for entry of default shows service by certified mail, which is not permitted by relevant federal, New York or Minnesota rules. Under the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, service on an individual may be made by (1) delivery to the named defendant; or (2) delivery to a person of suitable age and discretion at the defendant's dwelling house or usual place of abode; or (3) delivery to an agent authorized by law or by the defendant to receive service of process. Fed. R. Civ. P. 4(e)(2). Service on an individual also can be accomplished through a method authorized by the state in which the district court sits or in which the individual is located. Fed. R. Civ. P. 4(e)(1). Service on a corporation may be accomplished in a judicial district of the United States (1) pursuant to a method authorized by the law of the state in which the court sits or in which the corporation is located; or (2) by delivering a copy of the summons and complaint to an officer, managing or general agent, or to any other agent authorized by statute to receive service and, if the statute so requires, by also mailing a copy to the defendant. Fed. R. Civ. P. 4(h)(1) and 4(e)(1). Neither New York nor Minnesota law authorizes personal service on an individual or corporation by certified mail. See N.Y. Civ. Prac. L. & R. §§ 308, 311 (McKinney Supp. 1995); N.Y. Bus. Corp. Law § 306 (McKinney Supp. 1995); Minn. Stat. § 543.08 (1995); Minn. R. 4.03 (1995). Finally, service on states, municipal corporations or other governmental organizations subject to suit can be effected by (1) delivering a copy of the summons and complaint to the state's chief executive officer; or (2) pursuant to the law of the state in which the defendant is located. Fed. R. Civ. P. 4(j)(2). Minnesota law does not authorize service on a governmental entity by certified mail. See Minn. R. 4.03(d) and (e) (1995).

We therefore grant the motions by British Airways, Prudential, Kuwait, and Youngquist to vacate the defaults entered against them based both on the defective service and also on the meritorious defenses discussed below. We vacate *sua sponte* the entries of default against MSI, Ford, First Bank

Rochester and TCF, all of whom were served improperly and preserved the service issue by raising it or declining to waive it. Concomitantly, we deny Pourzandvakil's motion for a default judgment against J.C. Penney, First Bank Rochester, Prudential, Ford, MSI, British Airways and TCF. We vacate *sua sponte* the entry of default against J. C. Penney, which preserved the issue of service in its answer. By moving to dismiss or for summary judgment without raising the issue of service, Judge Mork may have waived the service issue. However Judge Mork objected to personal jurisdiction as inconsistent with due process and otherwise presented meritorious defenses. We therefore treat his motion for summary judgment as including a motion to vacate the entry of default and accordingly grant it.

II. The Jurisdictional Arguments

*4 In addition to raising various other grounds for dismissal, such as plaintiff's failure to state a claim on which relief can be granted and *res judicata*, most of the moving defendants urge (1) that this court lacks jurisdiction over either their persons or the subject matter of the controversy or (2) that this action is improperly venued. As we must, we examine jurisdiction and venue first.

A. Personal Jurisdiction

Maki, the state defendants, Olmsted County, Schmitz, Mundahl, C.O. Brown, Norwest, Metmor, Restovich and Youngquist each allege that this court cannot exercise personal jurisdiction over them consistent with due process constraints. In support of their motions, these defendants present affidavits showing that they have had no significant contacts with the state of New York relevant to this lawsuit and that their contacts with Pourzandvakil all occurred in Minnesota. Nothing in plaintiff's voluminous submissions links any of these defendants with New York. Plaintiff's extraterritorial service of process can be effective only under any of the following circumstances: (1) if defendants could be subjected to the jurisdiction of a court of general jurisdiction in New York State; (2) if the defendant is subject to federal interpleader jurisdiction; (3) if the defendant is joined pursuant to [Rule 14](#) or [Rule 19 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure](#) and is served within a judicial district of the United States and not more than 100 miles from the place from which the summons issues; (4) if a federal statute provides for long-arm jurisdiction; or (5) if plaintiff's claims arise under federal law and the defendants could not be subject to jurisdiction in the courts of general jurisdiction in any state of the United States. [Fed. R. Civ. P. 4\(k\)](#). Defendants

are not subject to federal interpleader jurisdiction and they were not joined pursuant to [Rule 14](#) or [Rule 19](#). In addition, no federal long-arm statute is argued as a basis for jurisdiction, and the moving defendants all would be subject to jurisdiction in Minnesota. Therefore, we must look to New York's long-arm statute to determine whether plaintiff's extraterritorial service of process could be effective under the one ground remaining pursuant to [Rule 4\(k\)](#). See [N.Y. Civ. Prac. L. & R. § 302 \(McKinney Supp. 1995\)](#). This rule provides that in order to obtain jurisdiction over a non-domiciliary, the plaintiff must show both certain minimal contacts between the defendant and the state (such as transacting any business in the state) and that the harm plaintiff suffered springs from the act or presence constituting the requisite contact. [Id. §302\(a\)](#). The moving defendants have demonstrated that plaintiff does not claim harm stemming from acts or contacts within the purview of [Section 302\(a\)](#). Therefore, we grant these defendants' motions to dismiss the complaint for lack of personal jurisdiction.

B. Subject Matter Jurisdiction

Pourzandvakil's complaint does not contain the jurisdictional allegations required by [Fed. R. Civ. P. 8\(a\)\(1\)](#). Several defendants move for dismissal based either on this pleading defect or on an affirmative claim that no subject matter jurisdiction exists. Commercial, Travelers and Hirman (collectively, the "moving insurance companies") moved for dismissal because plaintiff has not pled the complete diversity of citizenship required for subject matter jurisdiction. The state defendants, relying on [District of Columbia Court of Appeals v. Feldman](#), argue that we lack subject matter jurisdiction over any issue that was determined in a state court proceeding to which plaintiff was a party. [District of Columbia Court of Appeals v. Feldman](#), 460 U.S. 462, 482 (1983). These issues include plaintiff's hospitalization at St. Peter Regional Treatment Center. Finally, Metmor also moved for dismissal based on lack of subject matter jurisdiction because plaintiff has failed to plead a jurisdictional basis.

*5 The moving insurance companies note correctly that insofar as the claims against them can be deciphered, plaintiff states that Traveler's and Commercial did not pay for damages to Pourzandvakil's property, harassed her and cancelled her policy. Pourzandvakil does not mention Hirman in her complaint, but Hirman's attorney states that Pourzandvakil informed him in a telephone conversation that her complaint against Hirman stemmed from actions it took as an agent of

Travelers in denying Pourzandvakil's 1985 property damage claim.

The moving insurance companies argue that this court has no jurisdiction over the state insurance law claims absent complete diversity of citizenship between plaintiff and the defendants. 28 U.S.C. § 1332. They point out that plaintiff lists a Syracuse, New York address for herself and that Kuwait's address as listed in the complaint is also in New York. Therefore, they argue, there is no complete diversity and this court lacks subject matter jurisdiction absent a basis for pendent jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. § 1367(a). Section 1367(a) requires a relationship between the state and federal claims so that “they form part of the same case or controversy.” *Id.* Because plaintiff's claims of denial of insurance coverage bear no apparent relationship to her other claims of rape, torture, harassment and kidnapping, we do not believe that an adequate basis for supplemental jurisdiction exists. *Id.* Plaintiff's complaint therefore shows no basis for subject matter jurisdiction against the moving insurance companies, and we dismiss as against them.⁶

We also agree with the state defendants that state court decisions may render certain of plaintiff's claims against them unreviewable either because of *res judicata* or lack of subject matter jurisdiction. However, because plaintiff's claims are so generally stated and so lacking in specifics, we are unable to discern at this juncture what parts of her complaint would be outside the jurisdiction of the court. In any case, we already have determined that the state defendants are clearly entitled to dismissal on personal jurisdiction grounds. As for Metmor, we believe that plaintiff may be attempting to state a civil rights claim by alleging a conspiracy to murder in connection with a judge although she fails to articulate an actionable claim. We note that we already have determined, in any case, that Metmor is entitled to dismissal on personal jurisdiction grounds.

C. Venue

Metmor, Travelers, Maki, Hirman, Norwest, Olmsted County, C.O. Brown, Schmitz and Mundahl also allege that Pourzandvakil's action is not properly venued in this court. Although these defendants are entitled to dismissal on independent grounds, improper venue also would support dismissal as to these defendants. The general venue statute provides that a diversity action, except as otherwise provided by law, may be brought only in

(1) a judicial district where any defendant resides, if all defendants reside in the same State, (2) a judicial district in which a substantial part of the events or omissions giving rise to the claim occurred, or a substantial part of property that is the subject of the action is situated, or (3) a judicial district in which the defendants are subject to personal jurisdiction at the time the action is commenced, if there is no district in which the action may otherwise be brought.

*6 28 U.S.C. § 1391(a). Section 1391(b) provides that federal question actions, except as otherwise provided by law, may be brought only in

(1) a judicial district where any defendant resides, if all defendants reside in the same State, (2) a judicial district in which a substantial part of the events or omissions giving rise to the claim occurred, or a substantial part of property that is the subject of the action is situated, or (3) a judicial district in which any defendant may be found, if there is no district in which the action may otherwise be brought.

Id. § 1391(b). The majority of the defendants in this action are residents of Minnesota and all of the events of which Pourzandvakil complains occurred in Minnesota. No defendant resides in the Northern District of New York, and none of the conduct plaintiff complains of occurred in this district. Therefore, venue in the Northern District of New York is clearly improper. Where venue is laid in the wrong district, the court “shall dismiss, or if it be in the interest of justice, transfer such case to any district or division in which it could have been brought.” *Id.* § 1406(a). Because, as we will explain below, Pourzandvakil's complaint not only fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted but is also frivolous, we do not deem it to be in the interest of justice to transfer this case to another district. The purpose of the court's

discretionary authority to transfer rather than dismiss in cases of improperly laid venue is “to eliminate impediments to the timely disposition of cases and controversies on their merits.” *Minnette v. Time Warner*, 997 F.2d 1023, 1027 (2d Cir. 1993) (holding that it was an improper exercise of discretion to dismiss rather than transfer when the statute of limitations on a timely filed complaint ran between filing and dismissal). In this case, as discussed below, a review of the complaint and the plaintiff’s submissions on these motions indicates that her claims are frivolous. We therefore dismiss as to the moving defendants both on venue grounds and on the other grounds already identified as applicable. We note also that plaintiff has made claims similar to those in this action against many of the same defendants in the United States District Court for the District of Minnesota. *Pourzandvakil v. Price*, Civ. No. 4-93-207 (D.Minn. 1993). This action was dismissed by Order to Show Cause entered April 12, 1993.

III. Failure to State a Claim on Which Relief Can be Granted and Frivolity

Defendants ASI, Travelers, Hirman, Norwest, C.O. Brown, Olmsted County, Schmitz, Mundahl, Prudential, Metmor, and Youngquist as well as the state defendants have attacked the sufficiency of plaintiff’s complaint. Travelers and Hirman urge that the complaint is frivolous while the remaining defendants argue only that the complaint fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted. *Fed. R. Civ. P. 12(b)(6)*.⁷ We already have dismissed against all the moving parties except ASI on jurisdictional grounds and therefore have the power to address the *Rule 12(b)(6)* issue only on ASI’s motion. *See Bell v. Hood*, 327 U.S. 678, 682-83 (1946) (subject matter jurisdiction); *Arrowsmith v. United Press Int’l*, 320 F.2d 219, 221 (2d Cir. 1963) (personal jurisdiction). We grant ASI’s motion and note in passing that were we empowered to reach the merits regarding the remaining moving defendants, we also would dismiss the complaint against them for failure to state a claim upon which relief can be granted. We also dismiss *sua sponte* as frivolous the complaint against all defendants who have not been granted dismissal previously on jurisdictional grounds.

*7 Pourzandvakil has not specified a statutory or constitutional basis for her claims against ASI or any of the other defendants. She alleges that certain of the insurance company defendants denied her claims for damages without alleging that the denial was in any respect wrongful. She also alleges in general terms that the defendants harassed, tortured, kidnapped and raped her and perhaps were involved

in a murder plot but does not supply (1) the dates on which these actions occurred, except to say that they began in 1984 and 1985; (2) the names of the specific defendants involved in any particular conduct; or (3) a description of any particular conduct constituting the harassment, torture or kidnapping. She suggests without further detail that ASI was involved in a plot to murder her by placing her in the Mayo Clinic. Although plaintiff does not allege specific constitutional provisions or statutes that defendants have violated, we assume -- largely because many of the defendants involved are state officials or state employees and she appears to complain of certain aspects of various trials -- that she wishes to complain of violations of her civil rights. Complaints that rely on civil rights statutes are insufficient unless “they contain some specific allegations of fact indicating a deprivation of rights, instead of a litany of general conclusions that shock but have no meaning.” *Barr v. Abrams*, 810 F.2d 358, 363 (2d Cir. 1987). A *pro se* plaintiff’s complaint must be construed liberally and should be dismissed only “if it appears beyond doubt that the plaintiff can prove no set of facts in support of his claim which would entitle him to relief.” *Estelle v. Gamble*, 429 U.S. 97, 106 (1976) (quotation omitted). Pourzandvakil has not satisfied even this minimal test; her complaint and submissions on this motion demonstrate that she cannot prove any set of facts in support of her claim which would entitle her to relief. Her complaint consists of a “litany of general conclusions” rather than “specific allegations of fact”. *Barr*, 810 F. 2d at 363.

Ordinarily we would allow plaintiff an opportunity to replead to state specific allegations against ASI, but three factors militate against this course of action. First, our December 22, 1994, Memorandum - Decision and Order denying plaintiff’s request for a temporary restraining order indicated that she had not shown a likelihood of success on the merits of her claim because she had not pled any specific actionable facts. Despite the fact that plaintiff since has filed three amended complaints, she still fails to set forth specific actionable conduct. Second, the defendants’ motions themselves have alerted plaintiff to the need to show specific actionable facts, and yet her voluminous submissions in opposition to the motions contain no specific actionable facts. Finally, plaintiff has asserted similar allegations against many of the same defendants sued in this action -- although not ASI -- as well as others in several different jurisdictions. *See Pourzandvakil v. Blackman*,⁸ Civ. No. 94-C944 (D.D.C. 1994), *Pourzandvakil v. Doty* (E.D.N.Y. 1993), *Pourzandvakil v. Price*, Civ. No. 7 (D.Minn. 1993). Where the results are known to us these actions resulted in dismissals for failure to state a claim upon

which relief can be granted. *Pourzandvakil v. Price*, Civ. No. 4-93-207, Order to Show Cause entered April 12, 1993; *Pourzandvakil v. Blackman*, Civ. No. 94-C-94, Order entered April 28, 1994, *aff'd* Civ. No. 94-5139 (D.C. Cir. 1994) (*per curiam*). In the Minnesota case, dismissal took place after the district court offered plaintiff an opportunity to amend her pleading and plaintiff still was not able to offer specifics.⁹ Even *pro se* complaints must show “some minimum level of factual support for their claims.” *Pourzandvakil v. Blackman*, Civ. No. 94-C-94, (quoting *White v. White*, 886 F.2d 721, 724 (4th Cir. 1989)). We therefore dismiss plaintiff’s complaint against ASI for failure to state a claim upon which relief can be granted. Fed. R. Civ. P. 12(b)(6).

*8 We note that in *Pourzandvakil v. Blackman*, Judge John H. Pratt dismissed plaintiff’s *in forma pauperis* complaint *sua sponte* under 28 U.S.C. §1915(d), holding both that it failed to state a claim on which relief can be granted and that it was frivolous. We consider here whether we have the authority to dismiss *sua sponte* plaintiff’s complaint, which was not filed *in forma pauperis*, as frivolous as against all non-moving defendants. The Supreme Court explicitly has acknowledged a district court’s power under Section 1915(d) to dismiss as frivolous a complaint which “lacks an arguable basis either in law or in fact.” *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319, 325 (1989). The Supreme Court explicitly declined to rule, however, on whether a district court has the authority to dismiss *sua sponte* frivolous complaints filed by non-indigent plaintiffs. *Id.* at 329 n.8. The law in this circuit is that a district court may *sua sponte* dismiss a frivolous complaint even if the plaintiff has paid the filing fee. See *Tyler v. Carter*, 151 F.R.D. 537, 540 (S.D.N.Y. 1993), *aff'd* 41 F.3d 1500 (2d Cir. 1994); *cf. Pillay v. I.N.S.*, 45 F.3d 14, 17 (2d Cir. 1995) (*per curiam*) (dismissing *sua sponte* appeal for which appellant had paid normal filing fee). We believe that *sua sponte* dismissal is appropriate and necessary here because (1) plaintiff’s claims lack an arguable basis in law and fact; (2) plaintiff has repeatedly attempted to replead her claims without being able to articulate actionable conduct; (3) some of plaintiff’s claims have been tested in other courts and found to be without merit; and (4) the issue of frivolity has been presented by at least some of the moving defendants.

We therefore dismiss with prejudice plaintiff’s complaint as frivolous as to all defendants -- regardless of whether they have moved for dismissal -- that have not been granted dismissal on jurisdictional grounds. We direct the clerk to return plaintiff’s filing fee to her. *Tyler*, 151 F.R.D. at 540.

IV. Requests for Sanctions, Costs, Attorney's Fees and Injunction Against Filing Further Actions

Because plaintiff is *pro se* and appears to have a belief in the legitimacy of her complaint, we do not believe that the purpose of Rule 11 would be served by awarding sanctions. See *Carlin v. Gold Hawk Joint Venture*, 778 F. Supp. 686, 694-695 (S.D.N.Y. 1991). Moreover, her litigiousness has not yet reached the point at which courts in this circuit have justified injunctive relief. See *id.* at 694 (and collected cases). We therefore deny the requests of ASI and Prudential for injunctive relief. Our refusal to grant sanctions and injunctive relief, however, is conditioned on this dismissal putting an end to plaintiff’s attempts to sue these defendants on these claims in this forum. Any further attempts by plaintiff to revive these claims will result in our revisiting the issue of sanctions. *Id.* at 695.

CONCLUSION

*9 All defaults entered by the clerk are vacated. Plaintiff’s complaint is dismissed in its entirety against all moving and non-moving defendants. The dismissal of the complaint against Maki, the state defendants, Olmsted County, Schmitz, Mundahl, C.O. Brown, Norwest, Metmor, Restovich, Youngquist, Commercial, Travelers and Hirman is without prejudice as it is premised on this court’s lack of power either over the person of the defendant or the subject matter of the controversy. See *Voisin’s Oyster House, Inc. v. Guidry*, 799 F.2d 183, 188-9 (5th Cir. 1986) (dismissal for lack of subject matter jurisdiction is not a dismissal on the merits); *John Birch Soc’y. v. National Broadcasting Co.*, 377 F.2d 194, 199 n.3 (2d Cir. 1967) (dismissal for lack of subject matter jurisdiction implies no view of merits); *Orange Theatre Corp. v. Rayherstz Amusement Corp.*, 139 F.2d 871, 875 (3d Cir.) *cert. denied*, 322 U.S. 740(1944) (dismissal for lack of personal jurisdiction is not a dismissal on the merits). The dismissals against the remaining defendants are with prejudice. All requests for sanctions and attorney’s fees are denied. The requests of defendants ASI and Prudential for an injunction with respect to future litigation is denied. However, plaintiff is cautioned that any litigation in this forum attempting to revive the claims addressed herein may subject her to sanctions. Plaintiff’s motions are denied as moot.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

All Citations

Not Reported in F.Supp., 1995 WL 316935

Footnotes

- 1 Names in the caption are spelled to reflect plaintiff's complaint.
- 2 Plaintiff's spelling is idiosyncratic, and we preserve the spelling in its original form only where absolutely necessary for accuracy of the record. Otherwise we substitute the word we believe plaintiff intended for the word she actually wrote, e.g., "tortured" for "tureared."
- 3 Susan E. Cooper is not named as a defendant in the original complaint or any amended complaint filed with this court. From correspondence with Cooper's attorney, it appears that plaintiff sent Cooper a copy of a different version of the complaint. Because the original of this version was not filed with the court, no action against Cooper is pending in this court.
- 4 The court has also received three additional motions returnable May 22, 1995. The first -- from Judges Davies, Klaphake, Challeen, Collins and Chief Judge Simonett requests summary judgment dismissing the complaint based on lack of personal jurisdiction. The second by Western Union also requests summary judgment based, *inter alia*, on plaintiff's failure to state a claim on which relief can be granted. The third, by British Airways, also requests dismissal based, *inter alia*, on plaintiff's failure to state a claim on which relief can be granted. All three motions are mooted by this memorandum-decision and order which dismisses the complaint in its entirety against non-moving defendants for failure to state a claim on which relief can be granted.
- 5 The court also received an affidavit and memorandum of law in support of summary judgment from J.C. Penney. However, the documents were not accompanied by a notice of motion.
- 6 We ordinarily would offer plaintiff an opportunity to amend her complaint because her submissions and Kuwait's answer indicate two bases on which plaintiff might be able to argue diversity of citizenship. First, although plaintiff lists her address in Syracuse, New York, she also has indicated on the civil cover sheet that she is an Iranian Citizen and we are not aware of her residence status. As a permanent resident, she would be deemed a citizen of the state in which she resides. 28 U.S.C. § 1332(a). However, if she lacks permanent resident status, her citizenship would be considered diverse from that of all the defendants. *Id.* § 1332(a)(2). Second, Kuwait has submitted an answer in which it claims to be a foreign state within the meaning of 28 U.S.C. § 1603. If Kuwait is correct, plaintiff may have an independent basis for jurisdiction over Kuwait. See 28 U.S.C. § 1330. If Pourzandvakil could show subject matter jurisdiction over Kuwait without resort to diversity of citizenship, then Kuwait's residence in New York may not be relevant to the issue of whether this court has diversity jurisdiction under Section 1332. Cf. *Hiram Walker & Sons, Inc. v. Kirk Line*, 877 F.2d 1508, 1511-1512 (11th Cir. 1989), *cert. denied*, 115 S.Ct. 1362 (1995) (holding that the joinder of a non-diverse defendant sued under federal question jurisdiction did not destroy diversity as to the remaining defendant). Here, however, plaintiff's complaint is subject to so many other meritorious defenses -- including complete failure to state a cause of action -- that an amendment would be an exercise in futility. Additionally, plaintiff has not requested permission to amend, proffered an amended pleading, or indeed even supplied an affidavit stating her residency status or alleging a basis of jurisdiction over her claims against Kuwait other than diversity under 28 U.S.C. § 1332.

- 7 J.C. Penney also submits an affidavit requesting dismissal on this basis and others, but has not filed or served a notice of motion.
- 8 Former Supreme Court Justice Harry A. Blackmun.
- 9 We note also that plaintiff has not requested leave to amend in this action.

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