

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Jane Doe v. Tea Dating Advice, Inc.

Doe v. Tea Dating Advice · No. 25-cv-06559-TSH · Decided August 6, 2025

OPINION

Doe v. Tea Dating Advice, Inc.

PER CURIAM.

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4 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

5 NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

6 7 JANE DOE, Case No. 25-cv-06559-TSH 8 Plaintiff,

ORDER GRANTING PERMISSION TO

9 v. PROCEED UNDER PSEUDONYM

10 TEA DATING ADVICE, INC.,

11 Defendant. 12

13 Plaintiff Jane Doe brings this putative class action against Defendant Tea Dating Advice, 14
Inc., alleging it failed to protect class members' private information on its mobile application, Tea
15 Dating Advice, leading to hackers accessing their information, including photos, information
from 16 government IDs, and users' posts and chats. Plaintiff filed this case using a pseudonym
"in order 17 [to] protect her identity given the sensitive nature of this action." Compl. ¶ 10, ECF
No. 1. 18 "The normal presumption in litigation is that parties must use their real names." Doe v.
19 Kamehameha Schools/Bernice Pauahi Bishop Estate, 596 F.3d 1036, 1042 (9th Cir. 2010); see
20 also Fed. R. Civ. P. 10(a) (requiring that the title of every complaint "include the names of all
the 21 parties"). However, the Ninth Circuit allows parties to use pseudonyms under special 22
circumstances where nondisclosure of the party's identity is necessary to protect a person from 23
harassment, injury, ridicule or personal embarrassment.¹ Does I through XXIII v. Advanced 24 25
1 The Ninth Circuit does not require a plaintiff to obtain leave to proceed anonymously before
filing an anonymous pleading. See Doe v. UNUM Life Ins. Co. of Am., 164 F. Supp. 3d 1140, 26
1144 (N.D. Cal. 2016) (holding that a plaintiff is not required to obtain leave to proceed
anonymously before filing an anonymous pleading because any attempt to proceed anonymously
27 would be pointless if a plaintiff had to use his or her real name first); Doe v. Penzato, 2011 WL
1 Textile, 214 F.3d 1058, 1067-68 (9th Cir. 2000) (citations omitted). A court must balance the
need 2 for anonymity against the risk of prejudice to the opposing party and the public's interest in
3 knowing the party's identity. Jane Roes 1-2 v. SFBSC Mgmt., LLC, 77 F. Supp. 3d 990, 993
(N.D.

4 Cal. 2015); *Advanced Textile*, 214 F.3d at 1068. Applying the balancing test, courts have
5 permitted plaintiffs to use pseudonyms in three situations: (1) when identification creates a risk
6 of retaliatory physical or mental harm; (2) when anonymity is necessary to preserve privacy in a
7 matter of sensitive and highly personal nature; and (3) when the anonymous party is compelled
8 to admit his or her intention to engage in illegal conduct. *Jane Roes 1-2*, 77 F. Supp. 3d at 993 9
(citing *Advanced Textile*, 214 F.3d at 1068). 10 The Court must determine the precise prejudice at
each stage of the proceedings to the 11 opposing party, and whether proceedings may be
structured to mitigate that prejudice. *Advanced 12 Textile*, 214 F.3d at 1068. The Court must also
decide whether the public's interest in the case 13 would be best served by requiring that the
litigants reveal their identities. *Id.* at 1069. In cases 14 where plaintiff has demonstrated a need for
anonymity, the district court should use its powers to 15 manage pretrial proceedings under Rule
16(b) and to issue protective orders limiting disclosure of 16 the party's name under Rule 26(c)
"to preserve the party's anonymity to the greatest extent 17 possible without prejudicing the
opposing party's ability to litigate the case." *Id.*; Fed. R. Civ. P. 18 16(b) & 26(c). 19 Given the
nature of the claims in this case, the Court finds the need of Plaintiff for 20 anonymity outweighs
the risk of prejudice to Defendant at this preliminary stage, as Plaintiff has 21 shown anonymity is
necessary to preserve privacy in a matter of sensitive and highly personal 22 nature. The Ninth
Circuit has explained that, where a defendant does not know the plaintiff's 23 name, "at some
later point in the proceedings it may be necessary to reveal plaintiffs' identities to 24 defendants
so that defendants may refute [their] individualized accusations." *Advanced Textile*, 25 214 F.3d at
1058. Thus, Defendant can later seek disclosure of Plaintiff's true name. See *Doe 1 v. 26 GitHub*,
Inc., 672 F. Supp. 3d 837, 853 (N.D. Cal. 2023) (concluding that defendants would not be 27
prejudiced because "Plaintiffs have disclosed their true names to Defendants subject to a 1
Further, the public interest factor does not weigh against permitting Plaintiff to proceed 2 ||
pseudonymously. "The normal presumption in litigation . . . that parties must use their real names
3 ... 18 loosely related to the public's right to open courts and the right of private individuals to 4 ||
confront their accusers." *Kamehameha*, 596 F.3d at 1042. Where the plaintiffs' identities are not 5
central to the issues raised by a case, however, the public interest may not be harmed by 6 ||
permitting plaintiffs to proceed pseudonymously. See *Advanced Textile*, 214 F.3d at 1072 7
(reversing denial of anonymity where "[t]he district court did not explain, and we fail to see, how
8 || disguising plaintiffs' identities will obstruct public scrutiny of the important issues in th[e]
case"); 9 || *Kamehameha*, 596 F.3d at 1043 (noting that, where plaintiffs brought "claims of
widespread 10 discrimination," "it [wa]s difficult to see 'how disguising plaintiffs' identities
w[ould] obstruct 11 public scrutiny of the important issues in th[e] case'") (quoting *Advanced*
Textile, 214 F.3d at 12 1072). There is no indication that withholding Plaintiff's identity will
obstruct public scrutiny of 13 the issues raised, as the identity appears to have no bearing on the
central issues of this case, 14 || including whether Defendant failed to safeguard its users' private
information. Thus, the Court 3 15 finds the public interest factor does not weigh against

anonymity at this stage of the litigation. See *16 GitHub, Inc.*, 672 F. Supp. 3d at 855 (finding public interest factor weighed in favor of anonymity 3 17 where the plaintiffs’ identities appeared to have no bearing on the resolution of the issues, and S 18 allowing plaintiffs to proceed pseudonymously would not impede public access to the substance of 19 the proceedings); *Doe v. County of El Dorado*, 2013 WL 6230342, at *5 (E.D. Cal. Dec. 2, 2013) 20 (same).” Accordingly, the Court shall permit Plaintiff to proceed under a pseudonym. 21 IT IS SO ORDERED. 22 Dated: August 6, 2025 23 24 A\.\°4 _

THOMAS S. HIXSON

25 United States Magistrate Judge 26 07 ? The Court is mindful that, like the other factors, the public interest in Plaintiff’s identity may change as the suit progresses. See *Doe v. NFL Enters., LLC*, 2017 WL 697420, at *2 (N.D. Cal. 2g || Feb. 22, 2017) (noting that “class members will . . . have a right to know the identity of their representative in this litigation” in later stages of the case).