

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF PUERTO RICO

Natanael María, et al. v. Héctor Emilio Colón

Civil No. 23-1344 (GLS) (D.P.R. Mar. 12, 2026) · No. Civil No. 23-1344 (GLS); 3:23-cv-01344 · Decided March 12, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the District of Puerto Rico considers Defendant Héctor Emilio Colón’s motion for summary judgment in a diversity personal-injury action arising from alleged sexual abuse of Natanael María Román. The court concludes that Natanael’s Article 1802 tort claims are barred by Puerto Rico’s one-year statute of limitations, while the excerpted text begins but does not complete the court’s analysis of Natanael’s parents’ emotional-distress claims under Article 1536. The motion is granted in part and denied in part.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the District of Puerto Rico
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Giselle López-Soler
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the District of Puerto Rico
DECIDED	March 12, 2026
DOCKET	Civil No. 23-1344 (GLS); 3:23-cv-01344
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Defendant moved for summary judgment on plaintiffs' diversity personal-injury claims. The court granted the motion as to Natanael María Román's claims and denied it as to his parents' derivative emotional-distress claims.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Summary judgment is appropriate when the movant shows that no genuine dispute as to any material fact exists and the movant is entitled to judgment as a matter of law. The court views the record and draws reasonable inferences in favor of the nonmovant, but disregards conclusory allegations, improbable inferences, and unsupported speculation. A nonmovant bearing the ultimate trial burden must identify specific facts supported by evidence of sufficient quality to demonstrate a genuine dispute.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district-court opinion; precedential status unknown

PARTIES

Natanael María Román, Lorenzo María Gullón, Matea Román v.
Héctor Emilio Colón

TOPICS

statute of limitations

summary judgment

hearsay

evidence

personal injury

PRACTICE AREAS

Torts

Civil procedure

Evidence

Remedies

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Natanael's Article 1802 tort claims were barred by Puerto Rico's one-year statute of limitations because he knew or reasonably should have known of his injury and its cause before June 30, 2022.
2. Whether the summary-judgment record contained sufficient evidence, including evidence concerning grooming and delayed recognition of abuse, to create a genuine dispute regarding accrual of Natanael's claims.
3. Whether Pastor López's deposition testimony concerning statements by Lorenzo and Natanael was inadmissible hearsay within hearsay and therefore could not establish that Lorenzo knew of Natanael's abuse before July 2022.
4. Whether the text messages between Lorenzo and Pastor López established, as a matter of law, that Lorenzo knew of Natanael's abuse before June 30, 2022.
5. Whether summary judgment was appropriate on Natanael's parents' derivative Article 1536 claims.

HOLDINGS

1. Natanael's claims were time-barred because the record established that he possessed, or reasonably should have possessed, knowledge of his injury and the identity of the person who caused it no later than 2018 and, at the latest, by November 2020.
2. Natanael failed to produce evidence from which a rational jury could find that a reasonable adult in his position remained unable to recognize the alleged abuse before June 30, 2022.
3. Pastor López's testimony could not establish that Lorenzo knew of Natanael's abuse on June 27, 2022 because it relayed two out-of-court statements offered for their truth and no exception to either layer of hearsay was identified.
4. Summary judgment was denied as to the parents' derivative claims because a genuine dispute of material fact existed regarding when they acquired knowledge of Natanael's abuse.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Under Rule 56 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, summary judgment is appropriate when “the movant shows that there is no genuine dispute as to any material fact and the movant is entitled to judgment as a matter of law.”” (Legal Standard)

“The concept of deemed knowledge is essentially parlance for the discovery rule.” (Discussion § 1)

“As such, a deposition testimony based only on inadmissible hearsay cannot defeat a motion for summary judgment.” (Discussion § 2)

“Natanael’s claims against Colón are time barred and will be dismissed. Natanael’s parents’ claims against Colón remain and will proceed to trial.” (Conclusion)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Natanael María Román alleged that Héctor Emilio Colón sexually assaulted him repeatedly between approximately 1999 and 2002, when Natanael was fifteen to eighteen years old and Colón was involved in leading a church youth group. Natanael discussed distress and events involving a trusted person with a psychologist in 2018, and later therapy records described him as having been molested and having a history of sexual abuse. Natanael claimed that he did not recognize the encounters as abuse until July 2022, while Colón argued that Natanael had knowledge sufficient to trigger the limitations period earlier. Natanael's parents alleged emotional-distress damages, but the evidence concerning when they learned of Natanael's abuse included disputed testimony and ambiguous text messages.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiffs filed the complaint on June 30, 2023, asserting claims against Colón, his wife Tamara Babilonia, and their Conjugal Partnership. The court dismissed all claims against Babilonia and the Conjugal Partnership and dismissed Natanael's punitive-damages claim against Colón, but allowed Natanael's tort claims and his parents' claims to proceed. On Colón's renewed motion for summary judgment, the court held Natanael's claims time-barred but found a genuine factual dispute regarding when his parents learned of the abuse.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Dunn v. Trs. of Bos. Univ., 761 F.3d 63, 68 (1st Cir. 2014)
- Cherkaoui v. City of Quincy, 877 F.3d 14, 23 (1st Cir. 2017)
- Sánchez v. Alvarado, 101 F.3d 223, 227 (1st Cir. 1996)
- Celotex Corp. v. Catrett, 477 U.S. 317, 323 (1986)
- Espacio Residencial, LLC v. Gómez-Sánchez, 2023 WL 3548974, at *2 (D.P.R. 2023)
- García-García v. Costco Wholesale Corp., 878 F.3d 411, 417 (1st Cir. 2017)
- Iverson v. City of Bos., 452 F.3d 94, 98 (1st Cir. 2006)
- McCarthy v. Nw. Airlines, Inc., 56 F.3d 313, 315 (1st Cir. 1995)
- Suero-Algarín v. CMT Hosp. HIMA San Pablo Caguas, 957 F.3d 30, 39 (1st Cir. 2020)
- González-Figueroa v. J.C. Penney Puerto Rico, Inc., 568 F.3d 313, 318 (1st Cir. 2009)
- Rodríguez-Suris v. Montesinos, 123 F.3d 10, 13-17 (1st Cir. 1997)

- *Alejandro-Ortiz v. Puerto Rico Elec. Power Auth.*, 756 F.3d 23, 27-28 (1st Cir. 2014)
- *Rivera-Carrasquillo v. Centro Ecuestre Madrigal, Inc.*, 812 F.3d 213, 216 (1st Cir. 2016)
- *Hodge v. Parke Davis & Co.*, 833 F.2d 6, 7 (1st Cir. 1987)
- *Riley v. Presnell*, 409 Mass. 239, 245-46, 565 N.E.2d 780, 785-86 (1991)
- *Espada v. Lugo*, 312 F.3d 1, 4 (1st Cir. 2002)
- *Doe 171 v. Order of Saint Benedict*, 2012 WL 1410320, at *2-3 (D.P.R. 2012)
- *Velázquez-Pérez*, 753 F.3d at 270
- *Medina-Muñoz v. R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co.*, 896 F.2d 5, 8 (1st Cir. 1990)
- *Hoult v. Hoult*, 792 F. Supp. 143, 144 (D. Mass. 1992)
- *Malavé-Torres v. Cusido*, 919 F. Supp. 2d 198, 204 (D.P.R. 2013)
- *Levine-Díaz v. Humana Health Care*, 990 F. Supp. 2d 133, 140 (D.P.R. 2014)
- *Vázquez v. López-Rosario*, 134 F.3d 28, 33 (1st Cir. 1998)
- *Dávila v. Corp. de Puerto Rico Para la Difusión Pública*, 498 F.3d 9, 17 (1st Cir. 2007)
- *González-Ortiz v. Puerto Rico Aqueduct and Sewer Auth.*, 2024 WL 3759659, at *10-11 (D.P.R. Aug. 12, 2024)
- *Candelaria-Fontanez v. Federal Bureau of Prisons*, 2023 WL 2895150, at *3 (D.P.R. Apr. 11, 2023)
- *Wiscovitch v. Cruz*, 2022 WL 1272153, at n.15 (D.P.R. 2022)

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