

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF ARIZONA

Chad Lancaster v. City of Phoenix, et al.

Lancaster · No. CV-25-03200-PHX-DWL · Decided March 9, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the District of Arizona considers Defendants’ motion to dismiss claims brought by Phoenix firefighter-paramedic Chad Lancaster alleging race and sex discrimination, retaliation, and intentional infliction of emotional distress. The order addresses the timeliness of allegations and whether untimely conduct may be used as background evidence in support of timely claims. The motion is granted in part and denied in part.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the District of Arizona
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Dominic W. Lanza
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the District of Arizona
DECIDED	March 9, 2026
DOCKET	CV-25-03200-PHX-DWL
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Defendants moved under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6) to dismiss claims arising from alleged employment discrimination, retaliation, municipal liability, and intentional infliction of emotional distress, and to strike allegedly time-barred allegations and dismiss a punitive-damages request.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	On a Rule 12(b)(6) motion, the court accepts well-pleaded factual allegations as true and construes them in the light most favorable to the nonmoving party, but need not accept legal conclusions couched as factual allegations. The complaint must contain sufficient factual matter to state a facially plausible claim.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished

TOPICS

- motions to dismiss
- employment discrimination
- racial discrimination
- retaliation
- statute of limitations

PRACTICE AREAS

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether time-barred allegations could be included and used as background evidence in support of timely discrimination and retaliation claims.
2. Whether a Monell claim could be asserted solely against a municipal employee in his individual capacity.
3. Whether the allegations stated an Arizona claim for intentional infliction of emotional distress.
4. Whether punitive damages were available against the City for the § 1981 and Title VII claims.
5. Whether Plaintiff should receive leave to amend the dismissed claims.

HOLDINGS

1. Time-barred discriminatory acts may remain in the complaint and may be used as background evidence supporting timely claims, although they do not independently state actionable claims.
2. A Monell claim cannot be asserted solely against a municipal employee sued in his individual capacity; Monell provides a basis for municipal liability, not individual liability.
3. The complaint failed to allege conduct sufficiently extreme and outrageous to support an Arizona IIED claim.
4. Punitive damages were unavailable against the City on Plaintiff's § 1981 and Title VII claims.
5. Leave to amend was denied as futile for the Monell claim against Rideout but granted as to the IIED and punitive-damages claims.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Plaintiff is permitted to plead time-barred discriminatory acts as background evidence.” (at 5)

“But such a claim is different from a Monell claim, which is a mechanism for suing a municipal defendant.”
(at 10-11)

“The Court agrees with Defendants that the complaint fails to allege the sort of “extreme and outrageous” conduct necessary to support an IIED claim under Arizona law.” (at 17)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff, a white male firefighter-paramedic employed by the City of Phoenix, alleged that City personnel manipulated firefighter captain promotion processes and used race- and gender-related factors, causing him to receive lower rankings and lose promotion opportunities. He also alleged that he reported discriminatory practices and thereafter experienced various retaliatory and hostile workplace actions. The complaint asserted claims under 42 U.S.C. § 1981, Title VII, a Monell theory against former Fire Chief Jason Rideout, and Arizona-law IIED, and sought punitive damages.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff filed suit in Maricopa County Superior Court on July 28, 2025. Defendants removed the action to the United States District Court for the District of Arizona on September 2, 2025, and filed the motion to dismiss on September 23, 2025. The court granted the motion in part and denied it in part, dismissing the Monell claim, the IIED claim, and the punitive-damages request, while permitting amendment of the IIED and punitive-damages claims.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- In re Fitness Holdings International, Inc., 714 F.3d 1141, 1144-45 (9th Cir. 2013)
- Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662, 678-80 (2009)
- Mollett v. Netflix, Inc., 795 F.3d 1062, 1065 (9th Cir. 2015)
- Lyons v. England, 307 F.3d 1092, 1110, 1112 (9th Cir. 2002)
- Bond v. Wells Fargo Bank NA, 782 F. Supp. 3d 743, 753-55 (D. Ariz. 2025)
- Walsh v. J.B. Hunt Transportation, Inc., 2023 WL 1800962, at *4 (D. Ariz. 2023)
- Brodus v. Marine Inn & Air Force Services Agency, 2022 WL 2286476, at *11 (C.D. Cal. 2022)
- Griggs v. Sacramento City Unified School District, 2021 WL 1614405, at *6 (E.D. Cal. 2021)
- Martinez Patterson v. AT&T Services, Inc., 2019 WL 5294532, at *4 (W.D. Wash. 2019)
- Whittlestone, Inc. v. Handi-Craft Co., 618 F.3d 970, 974 (9th Cir. 2010)
- De Markoff v. Superior Court of California, 2013 WL 1896259, at *5 (E.D. Cal. 2013)
- Wright & Miller, 5C Federal Practice and Procedure § 1380
- XY Skin Care & Cosmetics, LLC v. Hugo Boss USA, Inc., 2009 WL 2382998, at *1 (D. Ariz. 2009)
- Starr v. Baca, 652 F.3d 1202, 1207 (9th Cir. 2011)
- Lockett v. County of Los Angeles, 977 F.3d 737, 741 (9th Cir. 2020)
- Pembaur v. City of Cincinnati, 475 U.S. 469 (1986)
- Guillory v. Orange County, 731 F.2d 1379, 1382 (9th Cir. 1984)
- Reason v. City of Richmond, 2021 WL 107225, at *5 (E.D. Cal. 2021)
- Tingirides v. California Department of Corrections & Rehabilitation, 2020 WL 4904661, at *10 (C.D. Cal. 2020)
- Mendez v. Becher, 2012 WL 12920630, at *1 (N.D. Cal. 2012)
- Citizen Publishing Co. v. Miller, 115 P.3d 107, 110 (Ariz. 2005)
- Morgan v. Freightliner of Arizona, LLC, 2017 WL 2423491, at *8 (D. Ariz. 2017)
- Reel Precision, Inc. v. FedEx Ground Package System, Inc., 2016 WL 4194533, at *2-3 (D. Ariz. 2016)
- Mintz v. Bell Atlantic Systems Leasing International, Inc., 905 P.2d 559, 563-64 (Ariz. Ct. App. 1995)
- Pankratz v. Willis, 744 P.2d 1182, 1189 (Ariz. Ct. App. 1987)
- Watts v. Golden Age Nursing Home, 619 P.2d 1032, 1035 (Ariz. 1980)

- Nelson v. Phoenix Resort Corp., 888 P.2d 1375, 1386 (Ariz. Ct. App. 1994)
- Pontikis v. Lucid USA Inc., 2023 WL 6127693, at *3 (D. Ariz. 2023)
- Henson v. Air National Guard Air Force Reserve Command Test Center, 2007 WL 2903993, at *12 (D. Ariz. 2007)
- White v. Washington Public Power Supply System, 692 F.2d 1286, 1290 (9th Cir. 1982)
- Reed v. City of Culver City, 2020 WL 7315016, at *4 (C.D. Cal. 2020)
- Ebner v. Fresh, Inc., 838 F.3d 958, 963 (9th Cir. 2016)
- Eminence Capital, LLC v. Aspeon, Inc., 316 F.3d 1048, 1051 (9th Cir. 2003)
- AmerisourceBergen Corp. v. Dialysist West, Inc., 465 F.3d 946, 951 (9th Cir. 2006)

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