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5	SUPERIOR COURT OF T	HE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
Ũ		OF ORANGE
6		
	SARA KHALIL FARSAKH, an	Case No.: 30-2016-00849787-CU-CR-CJC
7	individual; SOONDUS AHMED, an	
	individual; RAWAN HAMDAN, an	Hon. John C. Gastelum
8	individual; SARA C., an individual;	Dept. C-13
	YUMNA H., an individual; SAFA R., an	
9	individual; MARWA R., an individual,	CROSS-COMPLAINANTS' NOTICE OF
10		MOTION AND MOTION FOR LEAVE TO
10	Plaintiffs,	FILE FIRST AMENDED CROSS-
11	vs.	COMPLAINT
11		Hearing Date: October 31, 2017
12	URTH CAFFE CORPORATION; URTH	Time: 2:00 PM
	CAFFE LAGUNA BEACH	Department: C-13, Central Justice Center
13	DEVELOPMENT, LLC; URTH	RESERVATION #: 72657177
	PAYROLL SERVICES, INC.; AND	(Transaction #: 544960377)
14	URTH CAFFE ASSOCIATES VI, LLC,	
15	Defendants.	
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16	URTH LAGUNA BEACH	Discovery Cut-Off: By Code
17	DEVELOPMENT, LLC, a California	Motion Cut-Off: By Code
1/	limited liability company; and URTH	Trial Date: March 5, 2018
18	CAFFE' ASSOCIATES VII, LLC, a	
- ~	California limited liability company,	Action Filed: May 2, 2016
19		
	Cross-Complainants,	
20	VS.	
21	SARA KHALIL FARSAKH, an	
	individual; SOONDUS AHMED, an	
22	individual; RAWAN HAMDAN, an	
22	individual; SARA C., an individual;	
23	YUMNA H., an individual; SAFA R., an	
24	individual; MARWA R., an individual,	
27		
25	Cross-Defendants.	

Cross-Complainants' Notice of Mot. & Mot. for Leave to File First Am. Cross-Compl.

# TO THE COURT, ALL PARTIES AND THEIR ATTORNEYS OF RECORD:

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that on October 31, 2017, at 2:00 p.m., or as soon thereafter as the matter may be heard in the above entitled court located at 700 Civic Center Drive West, Santa Ana, CA 92701, Cross-Complainants Urth Laguna Beach Development, LLC, and Urth Caffe' Associates VI, LLC ("Cross-Complainants") in the above-entitled action, will and hereby do move this Court for an order granting leave to file the proposed first amended cross-complaint filed herewith and that the proposed first amended complaint filed herewith be deemed filed.

The substantive changes sought by the proposed first amended complaint include what Urth Caffe believes to be the full legal names of the four anonymous Cross-Defendants, the birth dates of all Cross-Defendants, and the street and city of residence of five of the Cross-Defendants.

This motion is based on the instant notice, the attached memorandum of points and authorities together with its appendix setting forth the proposed amendments pursuant to California Rules of Court, Rule 3.1324(a)(2)-(3), the Declaration of David Yerushalmi and attached exhibits, including the proposed first amended complaint in a "clean" and "redlined" version, and any pleadings and files maintained by the Court on this action, as well as on any oral argument or evidence which may be presented at the hearing on this motion.

By:

DATED: September 6, 2017

AMERICAN FREEDOM LAW CENTER, INC.

DAVID YERUSHALMI Attorneys for Defendants/Cross-Complainants

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# I. CONTEXT.

This motion for leave to file Cross-Complainants' proposed First Amended Verified Cross-Complaint comes before this Court as part of an underlying lawsuit involving an allegation by seven young women who visited the Urth Caffe in Laguna Beach on Friday night, April 22, 2016. Plaintiffs/Cross-Defendants ("Plaintiffs" or "Cross-Defendants" as context requires) claim they were asked to leave because six of the women wore hijabs—that is, Plaintiffs allege that the Urth Caffe in Laguna Beach<sup>1</sup> is liable for religious discrimination in violation of the Unruh Civil Rights Act. (Compl. ¶¶ 45-51). Plaintiffs, however, present no actual evidence of discrimination. In fact, at the time, the women did not claim religious discrimination, but rather that they were being treated unfairly and singled-out. (Cross-Compl. ¶¶ 1-17; *see also* Compl. at ¶¶ 23-39).

To suggest an anti-Muslim bias by Urth Caffe is counterfactual and illogical. It is well known to Urth Caffe's customers, to the neighbors of the Laguna Beach café, and even to Plaintiffs, that the Urth Caffe in Laguna Beach is enormously popular among the local young Arab and Muslim population. (This is also true of most of the Urth Caffe locations.) Muslims make up a very large portion of the paying customer base of Urth Caffe. (Cross-Compl. ¶¶ 3-6; *see also* Compl. ¶¶ 21-22).

The reality is that no one at Urth Caffe instituted or carried out any policy of religious discrimination or engaged in any act of religious discrimination. (Cross-Compl. ¶¶ 7-20). On the night of April 22, one of the senior managers of Urth Caffe, Antino Jimenez, began implementing Urth Caffe's regular "45-minute" policy. In anticipation of the very busy hours on Friday night and at the first sign of lines queuing for the high-demand patio seats, Antino

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Plaintiffs named several Urth Caffe related entities as Defendants in their complaint ("Complaint"). Most of these entities have no connection to the operation or ownership of the Urth Caffe in Laguna Beach. The two Cross-Complainants are, respectively, the owner of the premises upon which the Urth Caffe in Laguna Beach operates and the entity that owns and operates the café. (Cross-Compl. ¶¶ 21-22). We will refer to Defendants/Cross-Complainants

collectively as "Urth Caffe" in the singular.

informed several groups of customers, each of whom had been seated for more than an hour, that
 they should be prepared to share their tables or move to some other location. (Plaintiffs had
 occupied three tables for more than an hour.) This would allow other customers to rotate into
 the high-demand popular tables. (Cross-Compl. ¶ 9).

Plaintiffs refused to follow the policy, and their disruptive, rude, and aggressive conduct resulted in an Urth Caffe security guard asking them to leave the café. They refused. Jilla Berkman authorized staff to contact the local police who arrived on the scene. Only after 45 minutes did Plaintiffs leave the premises, and this was only after the police were called and arrived on the scene. (Cross-Compl. ¶¶ 10-17).

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## II. THE RELEVANT FACTS.

Plaintiffs filed the Complaint on May 2, 2016. Plaintiffs utilized only the first name and first letter of the last name for four of the Plaintiffs in the caption and in the allegations (*i.e.*, "SARA C., an individual; YUMNA H., an individual; SAFA R., an individual; MARWA R., an individual"). (Yerushalmi Dec. ¶ 3).

Urth Caffe served identical Form Interrogatories (General) and Requests for Production of Documents on each Plaintiff on July 11, 2017. General Form Interrogatory 2.1 sought the full names of all Plaintiffs and any names used in the past. For each of the four anonymous Plaintiffs, Plaintiffs' responses provided only the first name and first letter of the last name as it appeared in the caption of the Complaint. After several meet-and-confer telephone conferences and email exchanges, the anonymous Plaintiffs continue to refuse to provide their full names. (Yerushalmi Dec. ¶ 8).

On August 11, 2017, the parties jointly briefed and filed an *ex parte* application in which Plaintiffs sought an order permitting the four anonymous Plaintiffs to continue litigating anonymously and, further, to withhold providing their full names to Urth Caffe even under seal pursuant to the stipulated protective order entered into earlier in this matter. In the *ex parte*  application, for its part, Urth Caffe sought an order requiring Plaintiffs to provide their full names
for the record. On August 16, 2017, the Court denied the *ex parte* application and informed the
parties that they may move by motion for the requested relief without prejudice. (Yerushalmi
Dec. ¶ 11).

During the depositions of Sara Farsakh, Sara C., a/k/a Sara Soumaya Chamma and Yumna H. a/k/a Yumna H. Hameed, respectively on August 22, 25, and 28, each of the Plaintiffdeponents refused to provide the full names of the anonymous Plaintiffs upon instruction from their counsel. (Yerushalmi Dec. ¶ 11).

Plaintiffs have filed no motion seeking a protective order or any other order relating to their claim for anonymity. (Yerushalmi Dec. ¶ 12).

Based upon information obtained during the three depositions set forth above and upon a deeper search of public records, Urth Caffe determined what it believes to be the full legal names of the four anonymous Plaintiffs/Cross-Defendants. (Yerushalmi Dec. ¶ 13).

**III. MEET-AND-CONFER.** 

# MEET-AND-CONFER.

The parties have met and conferred extensively on the issue of anonymity and have jointly briefed an *ex parte* application on the matter. Plaintiffs/Cross-Defendants have refused to provide the full names of the anonymous Plaintiffs and have indicated that they oppose any effort to have their names set out in the public record of this litigation. (Yerushalmi Dec. ¶ 14).

# IV. LEAVE SHOULD BE GRANTED TO FILE THE FIRST AMENDED CROSS-COMPLAINT.

"The court may, in furtherance of justice, and on any terms as may be proper, allow a party to amend any pleading[.]" Cal. Civ. Proc. Code § 473(a)(l); *see also* Cal. Civ. Proc. Code § 576 ("Any judge, at any time before or after commencement of trial, in the furtherance of justice, and upon such terms as may be proper, may allow the amendment of any pleading.").

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"There is a strong policy in favor of liberal allowance of amendments." Mesler v. Bragg 1 Mgmt. Co., 39 Cal. 3d 290, 296 (Cal. 1985). In some instances, leave to amend a complaint will 2 be denied if there has been an unreasonable delay in seeking leave, and where, as a result of that 3 delay, granting leave would prejudice the defendant. See A.N. v. Cnty. of L.A., 171 Cal. App. 4th 4 1058, 1068 (Cal. App. 2009). But even unreasonable delay does not justify denial of leave when 5 leave is sought well before trial and the proposed amendment only concerns the introduction of 6 7 new legal theories that "relate to the same general set of facts" previously pleaded. See Kittredge Sports Co. v. Super. Ct., 213 Cal. App. 3d 17 1045, 1048 (Cal. App. 1989) (citation omitted); 8 accord Morgan v. Super. Ct., 172 Cal. App. 2d 527, 530 (Cal. App. 1959) ("It is a rare case in 9 which a court will be justified in refusing a party leave to amend his pleadings so that he may 10 properly present his case.") (citations omitted) (internal quotation marks omitted). 11 12 A. This Motion for Leave to Amend Is Timely. 13 Urth Caffe only recently determined the full names of the anonymous Plaintiffs/Cross-

Defendants based upon information gleaned from the recently conducted depositions of three of the Plaintiffs and a deeper examination of the public record. There has been no delay in seeking leave to amend.

Further, the trial of this matter is set for March 5, 2018, and discovery continues. In fact, while Plaintiffs and Defendants had agreed upon a deposition schedule for August and September 2017 for all Plaintiffs and five Urth Caffe employees, Plaintiffs just recently cancelled all of the depositions scheduled for the Urth Caffe employees, with their counsel suggesting the parties will need to reschedule those depositions at a later undetermined date. Urth Caffe intends to complete its scheduled depositions of all Plaintiffs except one by September 13. (N.B.: The one Plaintiff deposition that will not be completed as agreed to by the parties is Rawan Hamdan, who apparently resides in Jordan and has refused to have her deposition taken in California. While the parties agreed to take her deposition by video, at the last minute Hamdan's counsel informed

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Urth Caffe's counsel that his client could not arrange to have a deposition officer present as required by statute. *See* Cal. Civ. Proc. Code § 2025.310(b).)

## B. The First Amended Cross-Complaint Will Not Prejudice Cross-Defendants.

The only substantive changes sought by the proposed First Amended Verified Cross-Complaint is to include what Urth Caffe believes to be the full legal names of the four anonymous Cross-Defendants, the birth dates of all Cross-Defendants, and the street and city of residence of five of the Cross-Defendants.

As is well-known, a plaintiff, or in this case a cross-complainant, is the "'master' of [the] complaint." *See, e.g., Fuller v. First Franklin Fin. Corp.*, 216 Cal. App. 4th 955, 963, 163 Cal. Rptr. 3d 44, 50 (Cal. App. 2013) (citing *Nagy v. Nagy*, 210 Cal.App.3d 1262, 1267 [Cal. App. 1989]). Thus, we begin with the proposition that Urth Caffe has the right to name Cross-Defendants and to identify them for the public record. There is no statute, rule of court, or order that provides otherwise.

We further note that Cross-Defendants have had the opportunity to move the Court for a protective order and have chosen not to do so. Finally, we note that Cross-Defendants have had the opportunity to provide this information to Urth Caffe under seal pursuant to the existing protective which would have necessitated the filing of this motion under seal. Cross-Defendants have chosen not to avail themselves of this avenue either.

As important, we note that federal and state constitutional law preclude the purposeful concealment of litigation matters from the public without good cause. In effect, what the four anonymous Plaintiffs/Cross-Defendants have attempted to do by refusing to identify themselves for the record is to impose a seal on the public's access to their identifications unilaterally without this Court's approval. This violates the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, provisions of the California Constitution, and California procedural law:

The public has a First Amendment right of access to civil litigation documents filed in court and used at trial or submitted as a basis for adjudication. (NBC Subsidiary (KNBC-TV), Inc. v. Superior Court (1999) 20 Cal.4th 1178, 1208–1209, fn. 25, 1212 [86 Cal. Rptr. 2d 778, 980 P.2d 337].) Substantive courtroom proceedings in ordinary civil cases, and the transcripts and records pertaining to these proceedings, are "presumptively open." (*Id.* at p. 1217.) Therefore, before a trial court orders a record sealed, it must hold a hearing and make findings that (1) there is an overriding interest supporting sealing of the records; (2) there is a substantial probability that absent \*\*\* sealing, such interest will be prejudiced; (3) the sealing order is narrowly tailored to serve the overriding interest; and (4) a less restrictive means of meeting that interest is not available. (*Id.* at pp. 1217–1218.) These standards are now embodied in our Rules of Court. (Rule 2.550(d), formerly rule 243.1(d), adopted eff. Jan. 1, 2001, & amended eff. Jan. 1, 2004.)

With the passage of Proposition 59 effective November 3, 2004, the people's right of access to information in public settings now has state constitutional stature, grounding the presumption of openness in civil court proceedings with state constitutional roots. (Cal. Const., art. I, § 3, subd. (b)(1)): "The people have the right of access to information concerning the conduct of the people's business, and, therefore, the meetings of public bodies and the writings of public officials and agencies shall be open to public scrutiny."

The procedures for filing records under seal are set forth in rule 2.551. Court approval is explicit: "A record must not be filed under seal without a court order. The court must not permit a record to be filed under seal based solely on the agreement or stipulation of the parties." (Rule 2.551(a).) The party requesting a sealing order must notice a motion or application, supported by a memorandum and a declaration of facts sufficient to justify sealing. (Rule 2.551(b)(1).) The pertinent documents must be lodged with the court in a sealed envelope labeled "CONDITIONALLY UNDER SEAL."" (Rule 2.551(d)(2).) If the motion is granted, the clerk must affix a label prominently saying "SEALED BY ORDER OF THE COURT ON (DATE)." (Rule 2.551(e)(1).) Records remain sealed except by further order of the court. (Rule 2.551(h)(1).) Where the motion is denied, the clerk must return the lodged documents unless the moving party notifies the clerk within 10 days after the denial that the documents are to be filed. (Rule 2.551(b)(6).)

Savaglio v. Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., 149 Cal. App. 4th 588, 596-97, 57 Cal. Rptr. 3d 215, 221 (Cal.

Ct. App. 2007).

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1	In fact, notwithstanding Plaintiffs' arguments as set out in the <i>ex parte</i> application seeking		
2	a protective order of anonymity out of fear for their safety, Plaintiffs have provided no actual		
3	facts to suggest that they have any privacy or safety interest overriding the public's interest in		
4	open and transparent court proceedings as guaranteed by the federal and state constitutions.		
5	Plaintiffs/Cross-Defendants have steadfastly ignored the fact that they sought to make this a		
6	public dispute with social media allegations of bigotry directed against Muslims. Based upon		
7	Plaintiffs' own discovery responses, five of the Plaintiffs, which include three of the four		
8	"anonymous" Plaintiffs claiming to fear for their safety, have publicly criticized Defendants and		
9	accused them of bigotry and permitted their pictures to be taken by news outlets. (Yerushalmi		
-	Decl. ¶¶ 4-7; see CBS NEWS, "Women accuse café of kicking them out for being Muslim," May		
10	4, 2016, <u>http://www.cbsnews.com/news/california-muslim-women-sue-laguna-beach-cafe-</u>		
11	discrimination-police/ [last visited Aug. 10, 2017] [including in the lead picture of the CBS story		
12	three of the four "anonymous" Plaintiffs Yumna H. Hameed, Safa Rawag, and Marwa Rawag]).		
13	Indeed, while withheld from Plaintiffs' discovery responses, Urth Caffe located an online		
14	article from a heavily-trafficked website that included Facebook quotes from the fourth		
15	"anonymous" Plaintiff, Sara Soumaya Chamma:		
16	Sara Soumaya Chamma, who was with Farsakh on Saturday		
17	evening, offered her own review of the establishment Sunday on Facebook.		
18	"Beautiful location, mediocre boba, all served with a heaping dose		
19	of racism and sexism," she wrote.		
20	"All in all the mint coffee was good but not worth the humiliation and embarrassment dished out upon its arrival," Chamma added.		
21	"Save yourself a decent amount of cash and dine elsewhere."		
22	HUFFINGTON POST, "Women claim they were kicked out of a café for being Muslim," April 26,		
23	2016, <u>https://tinyurl.com/yc66dg4m</u> [last visited Sept. 9, 2017]). In other words, each of the four		
24	"anonymous" Plaintiffs/Cross-Defendants have either appeared at press conferences and posed		
25	for pictures or spoke out publicly on social media platforms only to be quoted by other online		

media outlets.

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It is an odd, if not untenable position, to claim a fear of public exposure while exploiting public exposure to generate a social media firestorm by accusing Defendants of being bigots engaging in illegal discrimination.

Indeed, as noted earlier in the *ex parte* application, only Urth Caffe employees have been the subject of direct criminal threats, which necessitated the filing of a criminal report by Urth Caffe management with the FBI and local police and employing armed security to escort employees to their automobiles at night. (Yerushalmi Decl. ¶ 10.) And, to that point, the specific criminal threat against the Urth Caffe employee who enforced the 45-minute seating policy was only possible because Plaintiffs identified him by name in their orchestrated public outrage campaign. (*See* Ex. 1 to Yerushalmi Decl.).

More to the point, the public has a legitimate interest in knowing who has made these quite public accusations of bigotry against a very popular California business that employs more than 350 Californians, pays taxes, and materially contributes to the well-being of all Californians. And, quite frankly, the public has a right to know who these Plaintiffs are who have called for punitive damages of this California business based upon entirely unsubstantiated claims of anti-Muslim bigotry.

### CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, Cross-Complainants respectfully asks this Court to grant this motion for leave to file the First Amended Verified Cross-Complaint.

DATED: September 6, 2017

AMERICAN FREEDOM LAW CENTER, INC.

By:

DAVID YERUSHALMI Attorneys for Defendants/Cross-Complainants

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# APPENDIX OF PROPOSED CHANGES TO VERIFIED CROSS-COMPLAINT

Pursuant to California Rules of Court, Rule 3.1324(a)(2)-(3), Cross-Complainants propose the following amendments to the verified Cross-Complaint.

A. Revise counsel designation on line 4, page 1 to include representation of CrossComplainants.

B. Lines 1-5, page 2, in prefatory sentence: add legal names of the four "anonymous"Plaintiffs.

C. Line 24, page 2, made grammatical edit changing "these" to "this".

D. Line 12, page 4, make diction edit changing "another" to "a".

E. Paragraphs 23-29, at pages 6-7, to the allegations describing Cross-Complainants,

add birth dates for all Cross-Complainants, add full names for the four "anonymous" CrossComplainants, and add street and city of residence to five of the Cross-Complainants.

F. Change dates on attorney signature and on verification.