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UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
WESTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON

EDWARD WILLIAMS,

Plaintiff,

vs.

THE CITY OF BELLEVUE, a municipal
corporation, STEPHEN MYLETT and the
marital community comprised thereof, an
individual;

Defendants.

NO.

COMPLAINT FOR DAMAGES

DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Bellevue Police Department fired an African-American Police Officer
twenty-eight days after he raised concerns about racism in the Department.

1.2 Edward Williams is an African-American Police Officer hired as a lateral
officer by the Bellevue Police Department in 2014. After being shown racist text messages
written by his field training officer calling Officer Williams “*chocolate face*,” Officer
Williams raised concerns to Internal Affairs and the Chief of Police about racism in BPD.

1 1.3 In response, Chief Stephen Mylett called Officer Williams into his office
2 and told him he does not fit in “*culturally*” and urged him to resign.

3 1.4 The next day, Officer Williams was fired based on contrived and
4 manufactured “performance issues.”

5 1.5 The termination was carried out by Chief Mylett who believes that
6 minorities are favored over Caucasian police officers, and who has even filed a legal action
7 alleging race discrimination against Caucasians.

8 1.6 Mylett sued his former employer for race discrimination alleging that as a
9 white male he had been a victim of discrimination. Mylett contended that minority officers
10 were given preferential treatment over white males.

11 1.7 Chief Mylett has made sure that minority officers are not given preferential
12 treatment in Bellevue.

13 1.8 The Bellevue Police Department has a long history of racism among its
14 officers including racial slurs and derogatory comments directed at minorities.

15 1.9 Comments that have come to public light include off-duty Bellevue Police
16 Officers asking a Seattle Police Officer after being stopped at a football game, “Are you
17 picking on my wife because she’s white?” And “these blacks. They think they run the
18 show.”
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22 1.10 There is not a single profession in which institutional racism,
23 discrimination, and racial bias can have a more drastic and profound impact on society
24 than in law enforcement.

25 1.11 Officer Edward Williams (“Plaintiff”) hereby sets forth his complaint
26 against Defendants, City of Bellevue (the “City”) and Chief Stephen Mylett (“Mylett”) for
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1 race discrimination, retaliation, harassment, §1981 and §1983 violations, and wrongful
2 termination in violation of public policy.

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4 **II. PARTIES**

5 2.1 Plaintiff Edward Williams is an individual residing in Redmond,
6 Washington. At all times relevant hereto, he worked for the City of Bellevue Police
7 Department in Bellevue, Washington. Mr. Williams is an African-American male.

8 2.2 Defendant City of Bellevue is a municipal corporation operating and
9 existing under the laws of the State of Washington, located in King County Washington.

10 2.3 Defendant Mylett is an individual who, upon information and belief, resides
11 in Bellevue, Washington. At all times relevant hereto, he was the Chief of the Bellevue
12 Police Department. After a nation-wide search, Mylett was selected from the Southlake
13 Texas Police Department by the City of Bellevue as the next Police Chief and took over
14 control of the Bellevue Police Department in April, 2015.

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16 **III. JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

17 3.1 All or a substantial portion of the acts complained of herein occurred in
18 King County, Washington.

19 3.2 At all times material to this action, Defendants conducted business in King
20 County, Washington. City of Bellevue is an “employer” subject to state and federal
21 statutes governing employment, including Ch. 49.60 RCW and 42 U.S.C. §12111. At all
22 times relevant herein, City of Bellevue employed Plaintiff.

23 3.3 Plaintiff exhausted his administrative remedies by filing a claim of
24 discrimination with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Plaintiff was issued
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1 a Notice of Right to Sue letter dated June 6, 2016. Plaintiff submitted his Claim for
2 Damages to the City of Bellevue on February 18, 2016.

3 3.4 This action has been filed within the applicable statutory time periods.

4 3.5 This Court has jurisdiction over the subject matter of the Complaint under
5 28 U.S.C. § 1331.
6

7 3.6 Venue is proper in this Court under 28 U.S.C. §1391 because: (1) all of the
8 facts and circumstances giving rise to this Complaint or a substantial part thereof arose in
9 King County, Washington; (2) Defendants to this action transact business and reside in
10 King County, Washington; and (3) Plaintiff seeks a penalty or forfeiture imposed by
11 federal statute.

12 3.7 Jurisdiction and venue are proper.
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14 **IV. FACTS**

15 4.1 Officer Edward Williams is a decorated police officer with more than 6-
16 years of law enforcement experience.

17 4.2 The majority of his law enforcement experience was earned in the Macon
18 Georgia Sheriff's Department where he was awarded commendations for his performance
19 as a police officer including "Officer of the Month," advancement to the position of Field
20 Training Officer, and a promotion to Detective in property crimes.
21

22 4.3 In 2014, Officer Williams and his wife decided to relocate their family to
23 the Pacific Northwest.

24 4.4 As Officer Williams began to search for employment, he was heavily
25 sought after by multiple police departments in King County and received multiple offers of
26 employment.
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1 4.5 One of those offers was to join the Bellevue Police Department under long-
2 time Chief Jim Montgomery. Following his retirement, Chief Montgomery had been
3 brought back in an interim role while the City of Bellevue searched for a new police Chief
4 after turmoil in the department led to the retirement of the previous Chief.
5

6 4.6 Officer Williams turned down other employment opportunities and
7 accepted the Bellevue Police Department's offer of employment to join the police force as
8 a lateral patrol officer. His employment began on December 30, 2014.

9 4.7 As a condition of his employment, Officer Williams was required to attend
10 and graduate from the lateral police academy, pass the field training program, and
11 successfully complete a 12-month probationary period.
12

13 4.8 Officer Williams attended and graduated from the lateral police academy
14 shortly after he began his employment.

15 4.9 In July 2015, Officer Williams timely passed the field training program
16 earning "4s" in all categories of performance, meeting or exceeding expectations, and he
17 graduated to the role of regular patrol officer in the Bellevue Police Department.
18

19 4.10 The last remaining condition on his employment was to complete his 12-
20 month probationary period.

21 **Racist Text Messages from Officer Williams' Field Training Officer**

22 4.11 On August 17, 2015, Officer Williams received a memorandum from
23 Bellevue Police Department Internal Affairs advising him that he was a witness in
24 connection with a Formal Standards Investigation that had been authorized by newly hired
25 Chief of Police Stephen Mylett.
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1 4.12 The memo sent to Officer Williams informed him, “It is alleged that Officer
2 Quayle made disparaging/racists comments via text messaging about fellow employees,”
3 and that the investigation would be concluded by August 24, 2015.

4 4.13 Beyond that description, Officer Williams had no idea what the Internal
5 Affairs investigation was about or why he was considered a witness.

6 4.14 Officer Kevin Quayle was a Field Training Officer for the Bellevue Police
7 Department and acted as one of Officer Williams’ supervisors during Officer Williams’
8 field training program. FTO Quayle is a Caucasian male.

9 4.15 The following day, on August 18, 2015, Officer Williams met with
10 Lieutenant Ingram from the Internal Affairs Department and Lieutenant Harnden, who was
11 acting as Officer Williams’ Police Guild Representative, about the investigation.

12 4.16 During the meeting, Officer Williams learned that his supervisor, FTO
13 Quayle had sent text messages to Bellevue Police Department Lieutenant Gary Cook’s
14 daughter. FTO Quayle and Lieutenant Cook’s daughter were in a relationship.

15 4.17 One of those text messages was shown to Officer Williams during the
16 meeting with Internal Affairs.

17 4.18 The message, sent to Lieutenant Cook’s daughter by FTO Quayle, said that
18 he would have called in sick for his shift in order to engage in some type of sexual act with
19 her if he did not have to go supervise “*chocolate face*” referring to Officer Williams.

20 4.19 In showing Officer Williams a print out of the text message, Internal Affairs
21 Lieutenant Ingram asked Officer Williams if he found the text message offensive.

22 4.20 Officer Williams was completely shocked and extremely offended. He had
23 serious concern that an officer in the Department, who was his supervisor and to whom he
24

1 trusted his life, viewed him in such a derogatory and racist manner. Moreover, he was
2 insulted by the Internal Affairs question of whether Officer Williams found a racial slur
3 offensive because of the painfully obvious answer.
4

5 4.21 He told Internal Affairs that he found the comment very offensive and that
6 he was concerned with his Field Training Officer's conduct.

7 **The Chief's Response**

8 4.22 Later that same day, Chief Mylett called Officer Williams. Officer
9 Williams had never before spoken to the new Chief. The call lasted only about five
10 minutes. Chief Mylett called about the Internal Affairs investigation and asked Officer
11 Williams what he thought of the situation.
12

13 4.23 Officer Williams told Chief Mylett that the comment was highly offensive
14 and very inappropriate especially because FTO Quayle is a police officer. He expressed
15 concern about working with FTO Quayle and told Chief Mylett that this could be very
16 harmful to the department, especially if FTO Quayle was involved in an incident or
17 altercation with an individual from another race or ethnic group. Officer Williams then
18 told the Chief that he was particularly alarmed by FTO Quayle's racist message because of
19 the alarming number of incidents of minorities being shot and killed by police officers
20 around the country. He stressed the importance that police officers not hold any racist
21 beliefs or attitudes.
22

23 4.24 Chief Mylett ended the call by indicating that he would like to meet with
24 Officer Williams to further discuss this incident. The Chief never followed up or met with
25 Officer Williams again about the racist text messages sent by his supervising officer.
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1 4.25 Instead, Officer Williams received a phone call from Captain Hershey, the
2 only African-American police officer in the Bellevue Police Department with the rank of
3 Captain or higher. It was apparent to Officer Williams that Captain Hershey, a black man,
4 was called upon by his superiors to appease Officer Williams.
5

6 4.26 At the time of the call, Captain Hershey was on vacation in Nevada. He
7 told Officer Williams that he had heard about the racist comments, and Officer Williams
8 shared the same concerns that he had conveyed to Chief Mylett. Captain Hershey said he
9 could not talk about the situation now but wanted to meet with Officer Williams when he
10 returned from vacation. Captain Hershey never met with Officer Williams.
11

12 **Internal Affairs Closed the Investigation and Retained FTO Quayle**

13 4.27 On August 24, 2015, one-week after speaking with the Chief and on the day
14 the Internal Affairs investigation was to be closed, Lieutenant Benjamin Buck from the
15 Patrol Division in the Bellevue Police Department scheduled a meeting between FTO
16 Quayle, Officer Williams, and himself.

17 4.28 Lieutenant Buck took Officer Williams and FTO Quayle to a private room
18 and instructed FTO Quayle to read a pre-typed apology letter to Officer Williams while
19 Lieutenant Buck sat on the other side of the table.
20

21 4.29 The scripted letter read, "I have never been racist, or held any negative
22 views of anyone of color, religion, sexual preference, etc." After reading the letter to
23 Officer Williams, FTO Quayle handed a signed copy of the letter to him and Lieutenant
24 Buck ended the meeting. The apology was insincere at best and was a complete charade to
25 Officer Williams.
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Bellevue Police Department Sabotaged Officer Williams' Career

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2 4.30 When Officer Williams went to work that same evening, he immediately
3 noticed a change in his shift supervisor, Lieutenant Buck's, demeanor toward him and how
4 he treated Officer Williams.
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6 4.31 That night, when Officer Williams submitted an incident report for
7 Lieutenant Buck's approval he rejected it. In fact, he rejected the same report three times.

8 4.32 Before submitting the report for the fourth time for Lieutenant Buck's
9 approval, Officer Williams met with Training Officer Alex Slusser, who read the report
10 and said it looked good and he would submit the report as is.
11

12 4.33 Lieutenant Buck again rejected it. This time he returned the report with a
13 note instructing Officer Williams to ask Officer Slusser about what was wrong with the
14 report.

15 4.34 Officer Williams informed Lieutenant Buck that he had already sought
16 Officer Slusser's review and that he had approved of the report.

17 4.35 After meeting with FTO Quayle and Lieutenant Buck, from that point
18 forward, Lieutenant Buck rejected every single report that Officer Williams wrote.
19

20 4.36 Unbeknownst to Officer Williams, the next day, on August 25, 2015,
21 Lieutenant Buck began to draft a scathing report of Officer Williams' performance. He
22 referred to it as "Williams Eval" and submitted it to FTO Lieutenant Andrew Popochock
23 and then Captain Dan Mathieu calling the draft a "work in progress."

24 4.37 The evaluation was drafted one week after Officer Williams raised concerns
25 to Chief Mylett about racism from his field training officer. It was drafted the day after the
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1 Internal Affairs investigation was closed and Lieutenant Buck instructed FTO Quayle to
2 hand a scripted apology to Officer Williams.

3 4.38 When the “Williams Eval” made it to Captain Mathieu he responded that,
4 “Even with the issues; he still earned ‘4s’ in all categories?” recognizing that Officer
5 Williams passed his field training program a few short weeks ago in July and raising
6 confusion as to why Officer Williams’ performance was suddenly in question.
7

8 **Termination of Officer Williams**

9 4.39 On September 9, 2015, less than a month after being confronted with
10 internal racism in the Department and voicing his concerns, Officer Williams was
11 contacted by Captain Mathieu and told that Chief Mylett wanted to see him the following
12 day in his office.
13

14 4.40 Officer Williams met with Chief Mylett in-person for the first time. The
15 Chief never addressed FTO Quayle’s racist comments or Officer Williams’ concern with
16 racism in the Bellevue Police Department. Instead, the Chief criticized Officer Williams’
17 performance during his field training program, which Officer Williams had passed in July.
18

19 4.41 The Chief had a copy of Officer Williams’ FTO file on his desk and
20 instructed Officer Williams to put on his “FTO cap,” referring to Officer Williams’
21 experience as a field training officer in Georgia, and to think critically about his own
22 performance during his field training program. Chief Mylett pointed to the file and said he
23 was going to review Officer Williams’ performance over the weekend.

24 4.42 That weekend, Officer Williams received a call from Guild Representative
25 Barack Carter who told him that the Guild could not help Officer Williams because he was
26 still on probation. He told Officer Williams that he should just resign instead of facing
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1 termination. Officer Williams inquired why that would be beneficial and Carter agreed to
2 ask Chief Mylett.

3 4.43 On Sunday, another Guild Representative, Lieutenant Harnden, called
4 Officer Williams and told him that Chief Mylett was going to fire him on Monday morning
5 and that the Chief had asked Lieutenant Harden to ask Officer Williams to resign.
6

7 4.44 On principle, Officer Williams chose not to resign.

8 4.45 That Monday, September 14, 2015, Officer Williams was called to Chief
9 Mylett's office and instructed to wait for the Chief. Guild Representative Barack Carter
10 attended the meeting with Officer Williams.

11 4.46 When the Chief appeared for the meeting, he handed Officer Williams a
12 letter placing him on administrative leave and instructed him to turn in his badge, firearm,
13 and all department equipment.
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15 4.47 Chief Mylett then told Officer Williams that he just doesn't fit in
16 "culturally" with the Bellevue Police Department.

17 4.48 The Chief instructed Officer Williams that if he chose to resign instead of
18 being fired, he would provide a good reference and would tell potential future departments
19 that Officer Williams was a good, hard-working police officer. If Officer Williams did not
20 resign, then Chief Mylett was "not sure" what he would say about Officer Williams'
21 performance as a police officer to future employers.
22

23 4.49 The following day, Officer Williams received a letter from Chief Mylett
24 terminating his employment for "failure to perform at adequate standards during your
25 probationary period."
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1 5.3 The above facts state claims against Defendants for race discrimination in
2 violation of RCW 49.60 *et seq.*, the Washington Law Against Discrimination, Title VII of
3 the 1964 Civil Rights Act, 42 U.S.C. 2000e *et seq.*, 42 U.S.C. § 1981, and 42 U.S.C. §
4 1983.
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6 **B. SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION – RETALIATION IN VIOLATION OF RCW**
7 **49.60 *et seq.*, TITLE VII OF THE 1964 CIVIL RIGHTS ACT, 42 U.S.C. 2000e**
8 ***et seq.*, 42 U.S.C. § 1981, AND 42 U.S.C. § 1983**

9 6.1 Plaintiff realleges paragraphs 1.1 through 5.3 of the Complaint and hereby
10 incorporates the same by reference.

11 6.2 Plaintiff alleges that he was retaliated against for reporting illegal conduct
12 on the part of his field training officer thereby entitling him to damages including damages
13 for past and future wage and benefits loss, emotional distress, punitive and statutory
14 damages, and attorneys' fees and costs.

15 6.3 The above facts state claims against Defendants for retaliation in violation
16 of RCW 49.60 *et seq.*, the Washington Law Against Discrimination, Title VII of the 1964
17 Civil Rights Act, 42 U.S.C. 2000e *et seq.*, 42 U.S.C. § 1981, and 42 U.S.C. § 1983.
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19 **C. THIRD CAUSE OF ACTION - HARASSMENT IN VIOLATION OF RCW**
20 **49.60 *et seq.*, TITLE VII OF THE 1964 CIVIL RIGHTS ACT, 42 U.S.C. 2000e**
21 ***et seq.*, 42 U.S.C. § 1981, AND 42 U.S.C. § 1983**

22 7.1 Plaintiff realleges paragraphs 1.1 through 6.3 of the Complaint and hereby
23 incorporates the same by reference.

24 7.2 Plaintiff alleges that he suffered harassment on the basis of his race thereby
25 creating a hostile work environment entitling him to damages including damages for past
26 and future wage and benefits loss, emotional distress, punitive and statutory damages, and
27 attorneys' fees and costs.
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1 7.3 The above facts state claims against Defendants for harassment in violation
2 of RCW 49.60 *et seq.*, the Washington Law Against Discrimination, Title VII of the 1964
3 Civil Rights Act, 42 U.S.C. 2000e *et seq.*, 42 U.S.C. § 1981, and 42 U.S.C. § 1983.

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5 **D. FOURTH CAUSE OF ACTION – WRONGFUL DISCHARGE IN**
6 **VIOLATION OF PUBLIC POLICY**

7 8.1 Plaintiff realleges paragraphs 1.1 through 7.3 of the Complaint and hereby
8 incorporates the same by reference.

9 8.2 The above facts state claims against Defendants for wrongful discharge in
10 violation of public policy.

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12 **VI. JURY DEMAND**

13 9.1 Plaintiff hereby demands a trial by jury.

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15 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

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17 **WHEREFORE**, Plaintiff prays for relief as follows:

- 18 A. Damages for wages lost including back pay, front pay, lost benefits,
19 and medical expenses in an amount to be proved at trial;
20 B. Damages for loss of enjoyment of life, pain and suffering, mental
21 anguish, emotional distress, and humiliation in an amount to be
22 proved at trial;
23 C. Punitive and statutory damages;
24 D. Prejudgment interest in an amount to be proved at trial;
25 E. Compensation for any tax penalty associated with recovery;
26 F. Reasonable attorneys' fees and costs; and
27 G. Whatever further and additional relief the court shall deem just and
28 equitable.

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Respectfully submitted this 1st day of July, 2016.

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