



Seven More Women Join Uber Sexual-Assault Lawsuit

“I thought this is what you wanted,” an Uber driver—while masturbating—allegedly told one of the seven new plaintiffs in a class-action lawsuit against the ride-hail giant on Thursday.

The women each say they were harassed, assaulted, kidnapped or raped by their Uber driver.

The suit, filed in U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California, first alleged in November 2017 that—because of its lax driver screening—the company is operating a system in which perpetrators maintain access to thousands of women to kidnap, sexually assault, and harass.

The initial suit included two plaintiffs, and the amended complaint was filed on Thursday, adding seven new plaintiffs to the case.

“Uber has done everything possible to continue using low-cost, woefully inadequate background checks on drivers and has failed to monitor drivers for any violent or inappropriate conduct after they are hired,” the lawsuit says. “Uber has created a system for bad actors to gain access to vulnerable victims.”

Attorney Jeanne Christensen, who represents the plaintiffs, claims that Uber filed a motion after that suit to “force these women into confidential arbitration.”

“Today, in response, we have amended the complaint to address the arbitration issue and include the claims of another seven women that have dared to participate as named plaintiffs and speak out against Uber,” Christensen said. “Uber’s goal is to stop women from getting the justice they deserve through our court system.”

The complaint claims that “Uber is frantic to deny Jane Does and thousands of female victims their right to access our judicial system, as demonstrated by Uber’s recent shameful attempt to force this action into arbitration immediately.”

Christensen claims that arbitration “would prevent the public from learning about the frequency and severity of rapes and sexual assaults by Uber drivers against innocent women.”

“As she told her driver to stop, he responded: ‘I thought this is what you wanted.’”

The class action suit seeks to include plaintiffs “who were transported by Uber drivers and were subject to rape, sexual assault, sexual battery, kidnapping, or other gender-motivated violence or harassment by their Uber driver in the last four years.”

The lawsuit alleges that Uber “has engaged in and continues to engage in unlawful, fraudulent and unfair practices that are substantially likely to mislead the public.”

Plaintiffs are seeking damages to be determined at jury trial and a permanent injunction to prevent repeated alleged irresponsibility in the future.

Thousands of women have been attacked by Uber drivers since the company was first launched in 2010, according to the lawsuit, including cases of “rape, sexual assault, physical violence and gender-motivated harassment.”

“As she fought her driver, he kept saying ‘I need one minute, I need to kiss you.’”

Jane Doe 1 says she was raped one October 2016 night in Miami by her Uber driver, who noticed she was “barely conscious” while riding home from a restaurant with her friend.

The driver, who was charged with a felony in Miami before that night, allegedly threw Doe 1 over his shoulder and carried her upstairs and into her bedroom. Her friend, who was upset and afraid, hid in the bathroom while the man raped Doe 1, the lawsuit claims.

The man was later charged and allegedly admitted to police that “he was wrong for what he did.” That case is still pending, according to the lawsuit. Uber refunded Doe’s receipt from the ride but never confirmed that the man was deactivated as a driver.

Jane Doe 2, who lives in Los Angeles, was drinking at a dinner with friends when she called a car. She fell asleep in the backseat of her Uber and awoke to her driver’s mouth on her vulva, the lawsuit claims.

He drove her home and raped her while she was “in and out of consciousness,” according to the complaint.

Jane Doe 3, a 26-year-old who lives in San Francisco, requested an Uber after a holiday party in December 2017. When she got home, the driver offered to help her into her apartment. Even though she said no, he followed her inside, pushing himself into the foyer, the lawsuit claims.

He “held her in a bear hug as he groped her and attempted to force himself on her,” the complaint states. As she fled, he followed her to her apartment door, where he groped her and put his hands up her dress, according to the suit.

“Doe 3 managed to punch him in the stomach hard enough that she was able to get into her apartment,” the lawsuit states.

The man’s name, date of birth and personal address match the name, date of birth and personal address of a man who is listed as a registered sex offender in Berkeley, California, according to the lawsuit.

Jane Doe 4, a 42-year-old woman in Des Moines, Iowa was in a ride home from a bar when the driver began “asking her strange questions.”

She looked away and then realized “he had his penis out.”

Doe 4 told him to stop, but he responded: “I thought this is what you wanted,” the lawsuit claims.

He then allegedly grabbed Doe 4’s knee and tried to kiss her. Doe 4 asked him to take her back to the bar because it was a “public area rather than her home,” the lawsuit states.

“At this, Howard removed his penis from his pants again, and began masturbating, even though Ms. Doe 4 kept protesting and threatened to call the police,” the lawsuit claims.

“Doe 4 was furious at the possibility [the driver] could do this again to more unsuspecting women, so she grabbed his phone, threw it on the ground away from him, and took the broken pieces into the bar,” the document alleges.

“She gave the broken phone pieces to the bartender, who called police,” according to the lawsuit.

The case is under investigation, and the driver was allegedly deactivated from the app.

Jane Doe 5, a 33-year-old, was out drinking with a friend in October 2016 in New Brunswick, New Jersey. When she got into the Uber, which should have been a 40-minute ride, she blacked out.

More than two hours later, the driver was trying to carry her unconscious body from the backseat of the vehicle, the suit says. When the woman’s boyfriend approached the odd scene, the driver pushed Doe 5 back into the car and drove off with her, according to the complaint.

The driver allegedly dropped her off one block away from her home—in an apparent attempt to avoid the woman’s boyfriend. Doe 5’s boyfriend took her home, and “she awoke the next morning with no recollection of the previous night,” the lawsuit states.

Uber allegedly responded to her complaints by telling her she would no longer be paired with this driver anymore but still hasn’t refunded her ride. That driver is still working for Uber, according to the lawsuit.

Doe 5 filed a police report, but the lawsuit claims “Uber has refused to cooperate with the investigation.”

In December 2017, 31-year-old Jane Doe 6 was trying to get home from a holiday party about 1 a.m. in West Hollywood, California.

She took an Uber, drifting in and out of consciousness during the course of the ride, at one point vomiting on the side of the road. She awoke and found the Uber driver sexually assaulting her, the lawsuit claims.

The driver dropped her off one block away from her house, according to the complaint. She filed a police report one week later. The driver was arrested on December 23, 2017 and charged with digital penetration and oral copulation, according to the lawsuit.

Jane Doe 7, a 21-year-old New Yorker, ordered an Uber Pool to take her home from dinner at about 1 a.m. When the car arrived at her home in Brooklyn, she tried to get out.

The driver allegedly said, “I need one minute,” got into the backseat, groped her and forcibly tried to kiss her, according to the lawsuit. As she fought him, he kept saying, “I need one minute, I need to kiss you.”

Doe 7 eventually grabbed her purse, hit him in the face, and fled the vehicle.

He allegedly yelled at her while she fumbled for her keys to get inside. Doe 7 filed a police report. Uber has not terminated its relationship with the driver, and he still drives for the company, according to the lawsuit.

Jane Doe 8, a 19-year-old in Ann Arbor, Michigan, said her Uber driver in August 2016 began asking her personal and inappropriate questions as soon as she got into the car.

Her bicycle was in the backseat, so she sat in the front.

“I heard private school girls are wild,” he allegedly said, asking if she had a boyfriend or had ever had sex.

Then, he “began rubbing Ms. Doe 8’s leg, beginning at her knee and reaching up her thigh,” according to the suit. She moved closer to the window, but the driver kept rubbing her arms and shoulders, the complaint alleges.

“She asked the driver to stop the vehicle so that she could get out and walk back to campus,” but he refused, according to the complaint.

He allegedly asked if he could kiss her, but she said “no.”

When they arrived at campus, he allegedly said, “I have to kiss you,” and forcibly grabbed and kissed her.

The driver was convicted of sexual assault in the woman’s case, according to the lawsuit.

Jane Doe 9, who lives in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, ordered an Uber home from a bar about 2 a.m. in October 2017.

Her phone died before the car got there.

“The Uber driver began driving on the highway in the wrong direction,” according to the lawsuit, at which point Doe 9 began panicking.

But the driver allegedly told her “not to panic” and “began touching her legs, putting his hand down her shirt and feeling her breasts,” the complaint states. Though she was begging the man to take her home, he instead pulled off the highway and parked in his own apartment complex, according to the lawsuit.

When she refused to get out of the vehicle, she said the driver tried to pull her out. Doe 9 screamed, and a neighbor came out to see what was going on.

“Doe 9 shook her head to indicate that everything was not alright,” according to the complaint.

The neighbor helped her, and Doe 9, who was “hysterical and continued to feel unsafe,” called police, and the driver was arrested, the lawsuit claims. He was allegedly charged with kidnapping, indecent assault, false imprisonment, and harassment.

He allegedly told police that he wasn’t actually logged in on the app as a driver, but “that she looked intoxicated, so he picked her up,” according to the complaint.

The driver was terminated from the company after a report, according to the lawsuit.

An Uber spokesperson said in a statement Thursday that the company takes the allegations “very seriously.”

“Arbitration is the appropriate venue for this case because it allows the plaintiffs to publicly speak out as much as they want and have control over their individual privacy at the same time,” it said.

Uber fired at least 20 employees last year in the aftermath of an investigation into its workplace culture after former employee Susan Fowler published a detailed account online of the sexual harassment she experienced at the company.

