

Title VII Prima Facie Cases Explained: An Employment Law Series

Employment law is a vast and complex field that encompasses various regulations and statutes aimed at protecting the rights of workers. One of the most crucial components of employment law is Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, and national origin. Understanding Title VII and its application in the workplace is essential for both employers and employees.

What are Prima Facie Cases?

In the context of employment law, a prima facie case refers to the initial burden of proof required to establish a case of discrimination under Title VII. Prima facie means "at first glance" or "on the face of it." These cases help determine whether the alleged discrimination is plausible and warrants further investigation.

Elements of a Prima Facie Case

To establish a prima facie case under Title VII, the party bringing the claim (the plaintiff) must show:

 Title VII -
Prima Facie
Cases
(Employment
Law Series)

Title VII - Prima Facie Cases (Employment Law Series) by LandMark Publications (Kindle Edition)

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

Language : English
File size : 5485 KB
Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Word Wise : Enabled
Print length : 562 pages
Lending : Enabled



1. The plaintiff is a member of a protected class (race, color, religion, sex, or national origin).
2. The plaintiff was qualified for the position or benefit sought.
3. The plaintiff was subjected to an adverse employment action.
4. There is evidence of circumstances that raise an inference of discrimination.

These elements may vary slightly depending on the specific circumstances of the case, but they generally provide a framework for evaluating discrimination claims.

Examples of Prima Facie Cases

To better understand how prima facie cases work, let's take a look at a few hypothetical examples:

Example 1:

Emily, an African-American woman, applies for a management position at a company. Despite having the necessary qualifications and experience, she is denied the position. The company then hires a less qualified Caucasian candidate. In this case, Emily may have a prima facie case of racial discrimination as she is a member of a protected class, was qualified for the position, and was subjected to an adverse employment action (being denied the job).

Example 2:

John, a Filipino employee, is consistently overlooked for promotions despite his excellent track record and performance evaluations. His colleagues, who are predominantly of a different race, have been regularly promoted. In this scenario,

John may have a prima facie case of racial discrimination as he belongs to a protected class, is qualified for promotion, and there is evidence of circumstances that raise an inference of discrimination (his colleagues of a different race being preferred for promotions).

The Importance of Prima Facie Cases

Prima facie cases play a crucial role in ensuring that discrimination claims under Title VII are properly evaluated. These cases help shift the burden of proof to the employer, requiring them to provide a legitimate nondiscriminatory reason for the adverse employment action. They contribute to a fairer and more equitable workplace environment, promoting diversity and equal opportunities for all employees.

The Burden of Proof

Once the plaintiff establishes a prima facie case, the burden of proof shifts to the employer, who must provide a justifiable reason for the alleged discrimination. If the employer presents a legitimate nondiscriminatory reason, the burden then shifts back to the plaintiff to prove that the reason provided was a mere pretext for discrimination.


Title VII Prima Facie Cases are a fundamental aspect of employment law, providing a framework for evaluating discrimination claims. Understanding these cases and their elements is essential for both employers and employees to ensure a fair and equitable workplace. By recognizing and addressing discrimination, we can strive towards a more inclusive society.

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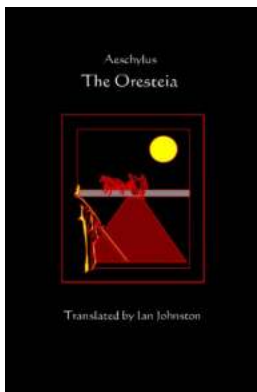


THIS CASEBOOK contains a selection of 216 U. S. Court of Appeals decisions that analyze and discuss the elements of a prima facie claim brought under Title VII. The selection of decisions spans from 2009 to the date of publication.

The elements for establishing an Equal Protection claim under § 1983 and the elements for establishing a violation of Title VII disparate treatment claim are the same. *Lautermilch v. Findlay City Schs.*, 314 F.3d 271, 275 (6th Cir.2003); *Gutzwiller v. Fenik*, 860 F.2d 1317, 1325 (6th Cir.1988). Similarly, "[t]o state a claim under the Equal Protection Clause, a § 1983 plaintiff must allege that a state actor intentionally discriminated against the plaintiff because of membership in a protected class." *Henry v. Metro. Sewer Dist.*, 922 F.2d 332, 341 (6th Cir.1990) (internal quotations omitted). Title VII prohibits employers from discriminating against individuals on the basis of both race and national origin. 42 U.S.C. § 2000e-2(a)(1); *Davis v. Cintas Corp.*, 717 F.3d 476 495 (6th Cir.2013). To establish a prima facie case of intentional discrimination, a plaintiff must show that (1) he was a member of a protected class, (2) he suffered an adverse employment action, (3) he was otherwise qualified for the position, and (4) he was replaced by someone outside the protected class or treated differently than a similarly situated, non-protected employee. *Wright v. Murray Guard, Inc.*, 455 F.3d

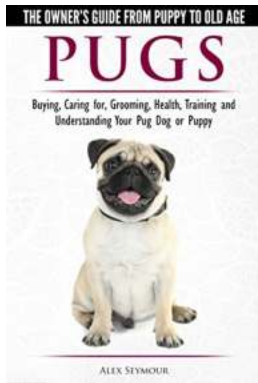
702, 707 (6th Cir. 2006) (citation omitted). *Deleon v. Kalamazoo County Road Commission*, 739 F. 3d 914 (6th Cir. 2014)

The ADEA generally prohibits employers from discriminating by failing or refusing to hire, discharging, or discriminating against an individual "with respect to his compensation, terms, conditions, or privileges of employment, because of such individual's age." *Provenzano v. LCI Holdings, Inc.*, 663 F.3d 806, 811 (6th Cir. 2011) (quoting 29 U.S.C. § 623(a)(1)). Generally, discrimination claims brought under Title VII and the ADEA are analyzed under the same framework. See *Policastro v. Northwest Airlines, Inc.*, 297 F.3d 535, 538 (6th Cir.2002). To establish a prima facie case for age discrimination under the ADEA, a plaintiff must show that (1) he was a member of the projected class, i.e., 40 years old or older, (2) he suffered an adverse employment action, (3) he was otherwise qualified for the position, and (4) he was replaced by a substantially younger employee, or additional evidence shows that the employer was motivated by age. *Bush v. Dictaphone Corp.*, 161 F.3d 363, 368 (6th Cir.1998). *Deleon v. Kalamazoo County Road Commission*, 739 F. 3d 914 (6th Cir. 2014)



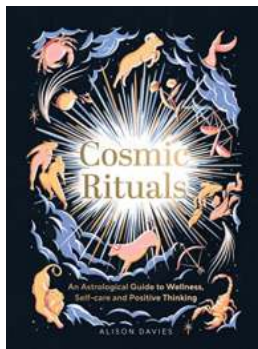
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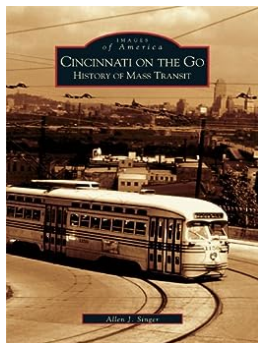
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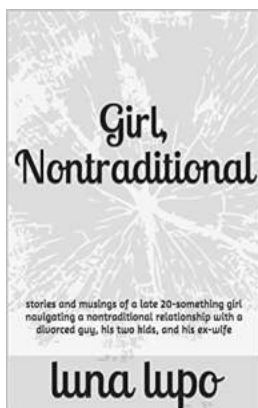
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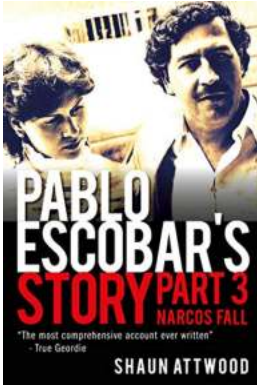
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