

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF MADISON COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI

PHIL BRYANT

PLAINTIFF

VS.

Civil Action File No. 23-cv-238 JM

MARY MARGARET WHITE &  
DEEP SOUTH TODAY d/b/a MISSISSIPPI TODAY

DEFENDANT

JACOB BLACK'S RESPONSE TO SUBPOENA TO PRODUCE DOCUMENTS,  
MATERIALS OR TO PERMIT INSPECTION OF A PREMISES IN A CIVIL ACTION.

Jacob Black, through his undersigned counsel, responds as follows to the above referenced subpoena issued in this cause requesting:

1. All *documents* provided to or received from Anna Wolfe or any other person employed by or affiliated with *Mississippi Today*:

Response: I have attached as exhibit "A" ten (10) pages of text messages and or face book communications between myself and Anna Wolfe. All documents attached to any text or Facebook communication, other than my text response or replies to Anna Wolfe's messages to me, were sent to me by Anna Wolfe. I never attached or sent any separate attachments to Anna Wolfe in my communications with her.

2. All communications sent to or received from Anna Wolfe or any other person employed by or affiliated with *Mississippi Today*

Response: Other than the ten (10) pages referred to in my response to "1" above, I have not received or sent anything to Anna Wolfe or any other person affiliated with *Mississippi Today*.

3. All *documents related to* documents provided to or received from Anna Wolfe or any other person employed by or affiliated with *Mississippi Today*.

Response: None other than those provided in prior responses to this Subpoena.

4. All *communications* with any *person* employed by or affiliated with *Mississippi Today*.

Response: None other than those provided in prior responses to this Subpoena.

Responses made this the 23rd day of August, 2023.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jacob Black

**EXHIBIT 2**

Response Prepared by:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "James H. Powell III", is written over a horizontal line.

James H. Powell, III  
Attorney for Jacob Black  
Horan & Horan, PLLC  
1500 Gateway  
Grenada, MS 38901  
Phone: (662) 226-2185  
Fax: (662) 226-2127  
[jampw@aol.com](mailto:jampw@aol.com)



6:40 PM

93%



Anna Wolfe



Lives in Jackson, Mississippi

View profile

Hey Jacob! Anna Wolfe, reporter with [MississippiToday.org](https://www.MississippiToday.org), here. I just took over this new beat focused on poverty and economic justice and I'm working to familiarize myself on what all MDHS does to help disadvantage folk across the state. Would you be willing to talk with me and give me some guidance? Feel free to call me at [REDACTED] Thanks!



Hey Jacob! Lc ↓ .me no talk. I still think about the



Aa





Anna Wolfe



Hey Jacob! Long time no talk. I still think about the conversation we had after a 2019 SECAC meeting about the efficacy of the state's approach to helping people out of poverty. I

I'd still like to talk when you have the chance, especially if you're no longer with the agency. Call me at



[Redacted] Thanks!

Hey Jacob! I saw that you moved to Medicaid; would love to catch up with you about that. I had a good sit-down with Bob Ande on Friday and plan to run ou. ↓ review next week I wanted to touch in with



Aa





Anna Wolfe



2019 SECAC meeting about the efficacy of the state's approach to helping people out of poverty. I

I'd still like to talk when you have the chance, especially if you're no longer with the agency. Call me at



[Redacted] Thanks!

Hey Jacob! I saw that you moved to Medicaid; would love to catch up with you about that. I had a good sit-down with Bob Anderson Friday and plan to run our interview next week. I wanted to touch in with you before publication. My number is [Redacted]



Thank you!

Tap and hold to pe...



Aa





8:02 PM

40%



Anna



Messages  
Apr 9, 2022 at 10:03 AM

If you still have that "root canal" conference packet I'd love to see it. Nothing came up on a search

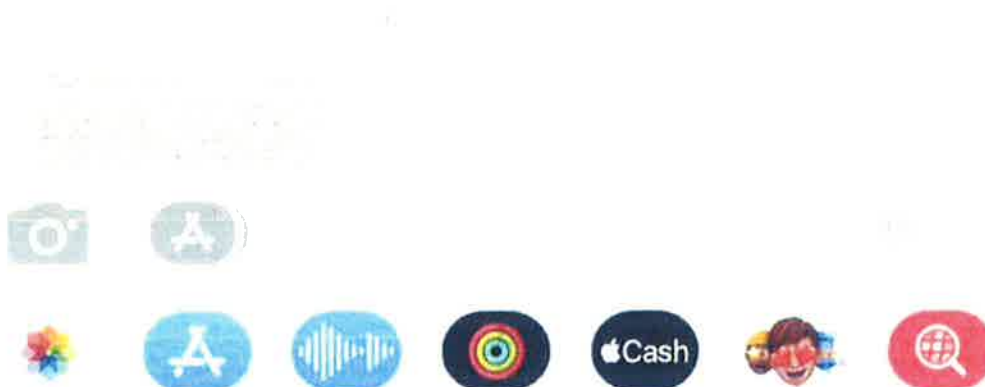
Apr 9, 2022 at 10:13 AM

For an off-record conversation, I'd like to do it in person. Can you meet Monday morning?

Apr 10, 2022 at 10:01 AM

Can you meet in the morning?

Apr 11, 2022 at 12:01 PM





Anna

Apr 12, 2022 at 10:41 PM



**Governing by text: Phil Bryant's hidden hand picked welfare winners**

mississippitoday.org

Apr 14, 2022 at 1:52 PM



AT&T

8:03 PM

40%



Anna

Jun 7, 2022 at 10:25 AM

Sorry. I am in meetings all day today and tomorrow. Can I call you on my way home this afternoon?

Yeah no problem

Okay.

Delivered

Aug 11, 2022 at 5:29 PM

Working on another story. Reiterates the \$2.5m to MCEC issue we discussed before and that I've reported, but in more detail. Call when you can

Aug 11, 2022 at 5:34 PM

Publishing tomorrow. Call me





- Law of 16 LLC was formed with the Mississippi Secretary of State Office effective 24 May 2019 with one member listed: Ted DiBiase, Jr, 115 Rosedowne Bend, Madison, MS

Law of 16 was first conducted in October 2018 at the Westin in Downtown Jackson. There have been several sessions since then with the majority of MDHS staff having attended. Additional sessions have been conducted for Families First Staff and at least two sessions for Department of Public Safety. The class is done by John Davis and Ted DiBiase, Jr. I have not attended the actual training but understand from conversations with some who have attended that it is basically a revival type atmosphere complete with gospel music and interactive praise / preaching type environment. Active participation in the praise atmosphere has been awarded with days off in some cases as many as 5 Fridays off for participating. Days off were also given to those who said they had watched Marine 2 (which DiBiase, Jr starred in). There was an email sent to those that attended that particular session from the MDHS EDQ email asking for the people who viewed the movie to contact one of the Communications division employees as soon as possible. The awarding of days off is not allowed under state rules. This was brought to the attention of Mr. Earl Scales (Assistant AG who is assigned to MDHS) and it is my understanding that he discussed with John and told him that he could not award days as part of the program.

There were multiple professional videos that were done via a contact from MCEC with Cirlot Agency that are used in the law of 16 training. It is believed that this contract was funded from the TANF subgrant to MCEC. If so, then that is potentially a fiscal issue.

At the sessions most meals were provided, meeting space, A/V, etc paid for by MDHS. There was entertainment at the evening meal/social for many of the events also paid for by MDHS. In addition, there are printed materials and give away items that were purchased by MDHS with the Law of 16 logo (which was designed by an MDHS employee), some after the date the LLC was formed. It is unknown how Ted, Jr is being paid for the services of presenting the training, but it is not directly from MDHS. It is believed that it is being pushed to MCEC and then being paid through a subgrant or contract at that level which makes it more difficult to track and not as likely to be questioned.

The included spreadsheets were what I was able to get pulled from MAGIC of purchases that were noted to be for Law of 16. There is over 380k of purchases and again these are the ones that at least had a remark that it was for Law of 16. Some of the items can be used for other MDHS functions as well. Many of the items are personalized to just Law of 16 including polo shirts and Patagonia jackets. The spreadsheets do not include any travel for employees or hotel rooms for those attending.

Also related to Law of 16, Ted, Jr does weekly videos sent to all employees at MDHS called Turnaround Tuesday in which he does a word of the week/month.

It is also my understanding that Ms. Holly Spivey with the Governor's Office met with John and asked for any amount up to \$10k to pay for the key note speaker for the Early Headstart Conference. This is an expense that would fit within our funding streams, so no issue with funding the speaker. It is my understanding that John sent her word back that he would give her \$30k with \$10k being for the key note and \$20k for Ted, Jr to present Law of 16 at the conference.

subgrant could have easily paid for this from administrative cost but instead it was done in house. No arm's length relationship with the subgrant holder.

- Ted DiBiase, Jr has a corner office on the executive director floor, state equipment including computer and cellphone, and a state email account but is not a state employee or direct contractor with the agency to provide services to the agency. It is believed he is funded through a subgrant or contract from MCEC (Families First) but that is unknown at this point. It is known that he is not paid directly from the agency. The fact that he has state equipment and is doing tasks that seem to provide services to the agency that puts in question the procurement vehicle used for his services. Subgrants are meant to fund an entity to assist in implementing a federal program that the agency does not have the capability/people to do on their own. It cannot be used to provide a service back to the agency. If he is a contractor of a subgrantee, then it should be to provide a service to that subgrantee, again not back to the agency.

- Ted DiBiase, Jr travels with John the majority of the time including meetings at all levels within and external to the agency. Much of the travel is Ted driving John to events/meetings in Ted's personal vehicle. Ted, Jr is even introduced at times as Director of Transformational Change for the agency. Again, he is not a state employee and is not a direct contractor providing a paid service to the agency. This access and information that is discussed/presented in various meetings gives him access to information that other subgrantees/contractors do not have access to and could be considered showing favoritism to potential/actual vendors or lower tier subgrantee.

Ted DiBiase, Jr Credit Card. Much of John Davis' travel has been out on Ted's Credit Card. Sometime

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2 of 2

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Ted DiBiase, Jr Credit Card. Much of John Davis' travel has been put on Ted's Credit Card. Sometime the week of 6/24, Davis' admin assistant, Zola Harrelson, told the agency travel coordinator Andrea Patrick that John's room for Trump International was charged to Ted's Credit Card (American Express). Zola told Andrea that she had a copy of the card and took care of that part as she was getting Andrea to change flights for the party that was traveling. It is the belief that Ted has paid for John's travel or parts thereof on several occasions. The issue with this is that Ted is a lower tier subgrantee or contractor of Families First which receives most of their funds from DHS through federal subgrants. This would seem could be considered a gift in return for funds given through that subgrant.

June 2019 trip to Washington, D.C. - On this trip John carried Ted, Jr, Dr. Nancy New (MCEC), Lynne Myers (MDHS communications), Dana Kidd (MDHS Deputy Administrator), and Kevin Myers (possibly MCEC employee/husband of Lynne Myers). The entire party stayed at Trump International Hotel for anywhere from 3-4 nights. It is my understanding that the cost of the rooms were \$800/night per room. The agency has requested the invoices from the hotel as the travelers have not submitted the receipts yet. At some point during the trip, John called the agency travel coordinator and had her extend Lynne Myers another night and to change her airline tickets as well and make sure that she and her husband were seated together. That change resulted in approx. \$600 additional cost due to having to rebook the flight multiple times to get the seat arrangements. On Sunday 6/23 John text the travel coordinator asking her to come see him first thing on Monday. On Monday, 6/24 John called the travel coordinator (Andrea Patrick) and told her he was not going to be in but that he had left two checks on his admin assistant's desk because he had decided that the costs were too much and he was personally paying for the hotel rooms for the two employees (Kidd and Myers). John's room was paid by Ted, Jr. The hotel was picked by John and directed travel that was where the party would be staying.



Anna

Thu, Dec 15 at 7:59 AM

I'm hoping to publish today

7:58



Ellis deposition.pdf

Done

Case 3:21-cv-00234-DPJ-FKB Document 4

13

1 present amongst all of their lunches when  
 2 Mr. Davis was in position.  
 3 Q: So it all changed whenever Mr. Davis  
 4 A: Oh, yeah. Everything changed when  
 5 Mr. Davis left. I mean, immediately Jacob went  
 6 on, in my personal opinion, an attack, like  
 7 he everything was done deliberately, and he  
 8 was not ashamed about anything. He even  
 9 mentioned himself being the whistleblower and  
 10 all that. He was just outright just flamboyant  
 11 with his stuff.  
 12 Q: From your observation, did he have Dana  
 13 Kidd in his sights?  
 14 A: Yes. He was she was the most  
 15 knowledgeable she had a long-standing career  
 16 with the agency. She was very reputable with  
 17 Q: unblemished record?  
 18 A: Yes, well, I didn't know about  
 19 unblemished record, but I do know while I was  
 20 there that nobody had any issues with her.  
 21 Q: In 29 years she had no disciplinary  
 22 actions.  
 23 A: well, that speaks high volumes.  
 24 so he would deliberately do things and  
 25 tell us, as regional directors -- like, for



15

1 complicated, who reports to who and whatever  
 2 But when she was put as a county director, a  
 3 county director is about the lowest ranking



Do you have an attorney I can reach out to?



AT&T

8:03 PM

40%



Anna

26: there's that... probably...  
 27: ...  
 28: ...  
 29: ...  
 30: ...

31: ...  
 32: ...  
 33: ...



Do you have an attorney I can reach out to?

Thu, Dec 15 at 1:01 PM



**Welfare fraud tipster turns alleged perpetrator**

mississippitoday.org



*Jacob Black*