

The Mid-South Tribune

“Where there is no vision, the people will perish.”

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EDITORIAL ENDORSEMENT: TATE REEVES FOR MISSISSIPPI GOVERNOR

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By Arelya J. Mitchell, Publisher/Editor-in-Chief

Many of our readers know that we do not take to a front page editorial unless the matter is serious. This is such a matter and it concerns the ongoing Kerr McGee/Tronox controversial attorney fees. Already, Kerr McGee/Tronox claimants have taken to the street in marches to protest high attorney fees. It is obvious the judicial system has given them nil recourse.

This is a matter I, as the publisher/editor-in chief of this newspaper, find both personal *and* business. Many are familiar with Kerr McGee/Tronox case in which the company is accused of contamination of soil which over decades caused cancer, multi-miscarriages, and other ailments. If you are familiar with the Erin Brockovich movie, then you are familiar with this case, and if you are a victim or representative of a deceased victim then you more than likely know of the matter firsthand. Long story short: A federal court ruled several years back that claimants were entitled to monetary relief. Some have received their Kerr McGee/Tronox Award; others have not. Many of those have seen what would have been a comfortable award have also seen their award reduced to little or nothing because of exorbitant attorney fees. Things have escalated among claimants over the attorney fees that they are continuing marches and they have attended mass meetings and other meaningless meetings here and there to complain, which fell on deaf ears. The attorneys didn't care, and there seemingly is a judicial system which has no problem in letting attorneys go wild in negligence and operating Under the Color of the Law to advance and protect their fees.

As representative of my late mother's estate, I inquired as a private citizen, "Why are the attorney fees so high?" As I dug deeper, I saw that Attorney W. Howard Gunn who had represented my mother had gotten with Tollison Law Firm which became the main law firm. Long story short again: As I began to put my journalistic skills into the mix, it seemed that law firms were begetting other law firms. It seemed at that point at least 10 law firms and individual lawyers were involved in collecting law fees from Kerr McGee/Tronox claimants and from my late mother's Kerr McGee/Tronox award. These awards were being distributed by Garretson Resolution Group which worked in conjunction with Tollison Law Firm., et al. My mother along with so many others who are deceased cannot fight for themselves. As her daughter and member of my family, I felt it incumbent on myself to do so.

Somewhere, somehow I made what these attorneys seemingly took as some type of arrogance that I had the audacity to ask, "Why are the attorney fees so high?" The matter escalated when Tollison Law Firm, et al decided I should be punished and proceeded to set in motion a plan where I would miss my court date, and the attorneys then could immediately take full control of my mother's Kerr McGee/Tronox award. Being a veteran journalist, my sixth sense kicked in and I knew I'd better check the court date myself even after the attorney Brandi Soper promised in writing to let me know of any court date. She never did, and she and another slew of attorneys were surprised when I showed up. Long story short yet again: These attorneys along with the Judge eventually set up a backdoor to my mother's Kerr McGee/Tronox award whereby ONLY and Exclusively the attorneys could get whatever fees and can even bill for more fees if they so choose at "future" dates. Thus, I sued the attorneys and this Judge-Gone-Wild. The word "future" is relevant here, because this is part of an illegal scheme these attorneys use Under the Color of the Law to make this backdoor look legal so that attorneys can continue to collect their fees from claimant monetary awards 'forever'. It was initiated in my mother's case as a retaliation against me for having asked the simple question of "Why are attorney fees so high?" To reiterate, at this time I was asking as a private citizen, and they had no idea that I was a veteran journalist and had worked in practically every aspect of journalism one can, including in the capacity of editor-in-chief of two newspapers (and I have won awards. I say this not to brag but to assert my credentials as an investigative journalist).

I sued after a Kangaroo Court was held in West Point, Mississippi. This Judge-Gone-Wild who had worked with these attorneys did not recuse himself, and after I initiated the suit on behalf of my mother's Kerr McGee/Tronox Award estate, this Judge-Gone-Wild enlisted Mississippi State Attorney General Jim Hood to get me off his back under Hood's duties to protect judges from troublemakers like me.

Mississippi State Attorney General Jim Hood gladly joined in on this lawsuit to support his attorney BFFs and this unethical Judge and even tried to get this unethical judge and his attorneys BFFs off the hook **two days** before the Mississippi primary election by asking yet again for an immediate dismissal of my lawsuit. Hood went so far as to advocate and seek for the Judge to have immunity, a matter I chose not to go along with and fought, as my argument was that this Judge allegedly committed a fraudulent conveyance by aiding and abetting in creating a backdoor to my late mother's Kerr McGee/Tronox Award for the attorneys to have complete carte blanche to Kerr McGee/Tronox funds they were not entitled to. This backdoor was created for "in the Future." This Judge Under the Color of the Law, in essence, placed these funds and illegally created a blind trust under the guise of interpleading and

placing it in a court trust. This Judge Under the Color of the Law had no problem in giving the Tollison Law Firm, et al their fees yet blocked completely the family's access to all of it. To expound: These attorneys will have access to these funds for "in the Future". Court transcript will show this phrase being used repeatedly during what was no more than a Kangaroo court hearing. One has to ask oneself (as I did) how many other Kerr McGee/Tronox funds have been placed in court trust under the guise of an unlawful interpleading, or because claimants and/or their representatives did not show up for court hearings either because they never knew they had a hearing because the Kerr McGee/Tronox attorneys deliberately failed to tell them and/or they relied on their attorneys to do right by them. How many were simply retaliated against because they asked the question about the high attorney fees?

If anything, Attorney General Hood's office should have been investigating these serious charges. Instead, he made the reckless decision of joining in with his attorney colleagues and an unethical Judge without looking into the matter before he jumped the gun and made himself a party to their motions and other legal maneuvers, including using the prestige of his office to further intimidate me.

This matter escalated to a point where these cadre of attorneys put in a motion to block me from all any court in Lowndes County. Of course, I knew this was illegal and against my right as a citizen of the United States of America. But the question begs: How many other Kerr McGee/Tronox claimants have they threatened to bar from court—from the entire judicial system in Lowndes County? It is safe to say that many of the Kerr McGee/Tronox claimants and/or representatives of their deceased loved ones do not know the law or their rights to Due Process. As an investigative journalist, my curiosity was generously peaked as to WHY would the attorneys go this far to put in a motion to block me from every court in the county? For the record, I am Pro Se, because I have every reason NOT to trust this judicial system plagued with a pus of good-ole-boy-girl network. I was especially convinced of my decision when these Kerr McGee/Tronox attorneys put in yet another motion to force me to use an attorney from the Mississippi Bar Association and placed fines on me. Of course, I put in a motion to place fines back on them. Let it be known that Attorney General Hood joined in with the attorneys to bar me from all and any court in Lowndes County. Of course, I can see my late father, who was a college professor and founded a voting rights league and worked with such civil rights proponents as the late Medgar Evers, Aaron Henry, served as NAACP treasurer, one of those to bring in the Head Start Program, founder of the Mercury Business League, and helped to bring Freedom Riders in the state—yes, I can see him turning over in his grave to know that a cadre of attorneys and an attorney general formally introduce to the court a motion to bar a citizen of the United States of America from an entire court system because she merely asked "Why are attorney fees so high?" Exactly, I asked myself, would these attorneys go this far? What are they hiding? Why this overkill? And why would the state's Attorney General join in them on such a motion? Why would this Judge-Gone-Wild join in with them as well in barring me from the entire court system? What type of Judge is this to support the barring of a citizen from a court system if he himself had nothing to hide? Of course, I was neither frightened nor deterred by this behavior. Of course, I made it clear to them that before I give up, I would drag them through the backdoor of hell; thus, here I am. I see now this matter is more than about my late mother, it is also about so many other Kerr McGee/Tronox claimants who have been simply hung out to dry by the Garretson Resolution Group who has sought refuge by selling itself to another entity to get from under this legal rock of others who

want answers from them, as it was they—Garretson Resolution Group—which served as trustee of the Kerr McGee/Tronox case.

No judge or attorney should be above the law, let alone use the law to benefit and enrich themselves over years from accumulated interest rates, illegal use of court trusts and fake interpleading maneuvers, making their clients miss court dates, acts of barratry—you get my drift. No Attorney General should jump on their side against The People without investigating FIRST. Furthermore, no rational claimant would ever agree that firms and attorneys should hire more firms and attorneys to take out additional fees from of their individual Kerr McGee/Tronox awards without their knowledge. If a claimant hires one firm and/or one attorney why should he or she expect for said law firm and/or attorney to hire ten or more law firms (among their buddies) to be paid out of their Kerr McGee/Tronox award? This is irrational and ludicrous.

Of course, there is a method to these attorneys' madness in their perpetual collection of attorney fees. Again, note that the terms "In the future" and the term "future" play a key maneuver in their putting these phrases on paper and why attorneys are as of this date continuing to recruit Kerr McGee/Tronox claimants utilizing contingent fees. There seemingly is no end date to recruiting new Kerr McGee/Tronox claimants and having them sign contracts for contingent fees.

There is now a book out entitled "The Friendly City—Toxic Terrain" by Antonio Richardson (We are running an excerpt of it in this special edition) in which Richardson states what I, too, believe is the WHY for exorbitant fees and the reason for a Judge-Gone-Wild creating a backdoor for his attorney colleagues to collect perpetual fees in what is seemingly amounting to no more than an elaborate Ponzi scheme Under the Color of the Law.

Richardson writes: "When you call and ask the Garretson Resolution Group when the settlement checks might start up again, they will likely tell you as they told me, 'Once everyone is accounted for the settlement checks will start up again.' How will they determine when everyone has been accounted for? This is a work in progress that just keeps growing and growing so it could take a decade or more before the remainder of the settlement checks are mailed..."

Even though, Richardson thinks maybe there might be little to nothing left in the Kerr McGee/Tronox purse, I dare think this is not true and if it were true, why are attorneys still recruiting new claimants when those claimants they have are not being compensated or being compensated very little? There are those whose Kerr McGee/Tronox claims should have automatically kicked in even if they did not sign the papers after 30 days whereby, they would automatically be a claimant and part of the class action because they live in the designated contaminated areas. This 30-day automation is clearly stated in the Garretson Resolution Group paperwork. Yet, who is to say where their awards are going? For years, many have asked about the status of their claims to no avail. Also, we have met some who said that attorneys allegedly were settling with them to get as little as \$400 (FOUR HUNDRED DOLLARS) in cash to walk away from settlements which could have conceivably been in the thousands. Many of these Kerr McGee/Tronox claimants do not know any better; therefore, it is immoral for these attorneys to take advantage of them. I was told by one attorney that they could make this all go away if I would sign off on my mother's rights and take essentially nothing. I refused, and yes this was before they discovered I was a journalist and not as unknowingly as their other many victims.

In addition, we have heard reports where Kerr McGee/Tronox claimants had turned in their medical records only to call back to attorney offices and discover that these medical records cannot be found or have been lost. These claimants are constantly being hung up on or threatened repeatedly. In fact,

Antonio Richardson writes: “The trust [Garretson Resolution Group as trustee] was now creating its own defense to hold on to as much of the funding as possible...I can’t help but wonder where the Garretson Resolution Group attorneys were when they changed the subcategory names simply to prevent qualified future tort claims from being filed and processed.”

There’s the word again— “Future.” It is also a word, the Judge-Gone-Wild kept spoon-feeding to the attorneys for them to keep repeating to put in place a quasi-legal maneuver for this backdoor. This was in the Kangaroo court setting in West Point to cover their asses for creating a backdoor to eventually confiscate (steal) my mother’s entire Kerr McGee/Tronox award. This Judge-Gone-Wild certainly had no problem signing off for the attorneys to immediately get their fees while he immediately tied up my late mother’s funds indefinitely. How many others have they used this Ponzi tactic on? And why wouldn’t they when they seem to think they have a God-given and judicial right to ban anyone they don’t like from an entire court system simply because they are attorneys and an unethical judge?

A new Special Judge who came into this matter in May of 2019 ruled immediately that these attorneys had no right to violate my constitutional right to have access to the court system. As a veteran investigative journalist, I knew something was rotten in Denmark when a cadre of attorneys seek to 1. Conspire, collude, and deliberate put in place a plan to make the representative of a deceased Kerr McGee/Tronox claimant miss her court date. 2. When attorneys put a motion in to ban me from all courts in Lowndes County, Mississippi. 3. When attorneys attempt to block motions to compel to obtain information a Medicaid payment made in conjunction with Garretson Resolution Group which still refused to produce a bona-fide receipt for said Medicaid payment regarding the Deceased and 4. When they run to their buddy/colleague, the State Attorney General to reinforce their behavior and their maneuver of illegal creating a backdoor under guise of a court trust and interpleading. This case is continuing.

Bottom line: You can bet your bottom dollar, attorneys are getting paid immediately if not sooner!

Mississippi Attorney General Jim Hood is quite aware of the issues regarding exorbitant attorney fees which are being taken from Kerr McGee/Tronox victims.

Bottom line: Many of these Kerr McGee/Tronox victims simply do not know the law and are prone to be intimidated by these attorneys or they naively believe these attorneys have their best interest at heart; therefore, they sign off on bogus settlement papers to get pennies while attorneys get thousands which have now amounted to millions. These, readers, are attorneys who give other attorneys a bad name.

To reiterate: One also has to ask oneself (1) How many other Kerr McGee/Tronox claimants are unaware that they’ve even had a court date set and are still waiting to hear back from attorneys? (2) How many other Kerr McGee/Tronox Accounts have been placed under the court’s jurisdiction without claimants’ and representatives’ knowledge and/or feeling they have no recourse against a legal system which favors Kerr McGee/Tronox attorneys? (3) How many Kerr McGee/Tronox cases did this Judge-Gone-Wild handle for the Tollison Law Firm, et al.? I have put in Motions to Compel to get answers to these legitimate questions. Naturally, the Judge-Gone-Wild ignored these Motions to Compel.

In our investigation and my subsequent lawsuits, we have met and talked to many who have been and felt that they have been revictimized—not only by Kerr McGee/Tronox but by an cadre of attorneys who have taken it upon themselves to punish anyone who dares to ask why their attorney fees are sky high.

This cadre of attorneys led by the Tollison Law Firm continues as of to date to recruit more Kerr McGee/Tronox claimants and sign them to contingency law fees as. This practice also gets into barratry practices.

Can you imagine a group such as the Garretson Resolution Group aiding and abetting this cadre of lawyers—and a State Attorney General who was elected by The People overriding the general good of the People to attach himself with these Kerr McGee/Tronox attorneys—most of whom he has employed as an extension of the state Attorney General's office? Hood has come to their defense and, obviously, does not give a damn about The People who elected him.

Hood immediately went to bat for his attorney BFFs, Garretson Resolution Group, and his Judge-Gone-Wild colleague at the expense of Kerr McGee/Tronox victims and the Deceased victims. He immediately joined in with his attorney buddies to ban me from all and every court in Lowndes County. On what basis? Merely on the basis that these are his friends and cohorts.

To reiterate, even two days before the primary election in August, Hood yet again attempted to gain immunity for his Judge-Gone-Wild buddy and to join them in getting this case dismissed so they could go scot free and never have to answer my legal questions of 1. Where exactly was my mother's Kerr McGee/Tronox funds being held? 2. How much interest was being collected while it was under this alleged Court Trust (backdoor/blind trust)? 3 and exactly what time could be determined by Judge's use of "in the Future"? Hood has simply pulled the 'hood' over the eyes of Kerr McGee/Tronox victims and over The People.

This is a shame.

Ramifications from the Kerr McGee/Tronox case are continuing in the State of Mississippi. Unfortunately, it is being aided and abetted by an Attorney General who is now running for governor. And if he wins, we shall continue to fight his level of favoritism which has boiled down to a cadre of lawyers allegedly practicing barratry Under the Color of the Law to indefinitely enrich themselves as individuals and their respective law firms at the expense of Kerr McGee/Tronox victims and The People.

They continue to prey off victims whom they know do not know the law and are not aware of what is going on and/or feel helpless. They continue to recruit new claimants knowing that it is solely to benefit their own coffers. They have re-victimized all Kerr McGee/Tronox/Garretson Resolution Group claimants. This is not about race, color, or creed, but rather about what is right and what is wrong.

If you are a Democrat and a Kerr McGee claimant, remember you DO NOT have to mark this slot on your ballot. To clear your conscience, keep it blank. Mississippi State Attorney General Hood has shown himself to be more loyal to his attorney buddies and to a Judge-Gone-Wild than he has to the People, and lest, we forget it was The People who voted and put his butt in office in the first place—not this cadre of Kerr McGee/Tronox attorneys led by the Tollison Law Firm et al, an unethical judge, or Garretson Resolution Group.

If perchance Jim Hood wins the office of Governor, we shall continue to be on him like a duck on a June bug – as we southerners like to put it. It remains our resolve not to back down or back up. Kerr McGee/Tronox victims do not deserve to be revictimized by its State Attorney General who will more than likely continue to cater to a privileged few ‘hoods’.

We endorse LT. GOVERNOR TATE REEVES for GOVERNOR of MISSISSIPPI with the belief that he will address these ongoing Kerr McGee/Tronox/Garretson Resolution Group issues.

End

Note: For those who feel they have been wronged by these Kerr McGee/Tronox attorneys, let us know and email to MSTnews@prodigy.net or MSTbusiness@prodigy.net or mail to The Mid-South Tribune, P. O. Box 2272, Memphis, TN 38101-2272. This editorial is on The Mid-South Tribune and Black Information Highway web at www.blackinformationhighway.com This Editorial Endorsement can be downloaded in PDF which is in its broadsheet format (regular newspaper size) but can be adjusted for your reading comfort in PDF in your phone, computer, or any other mode.