

HUSCH BLACKWELL

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January 30, 2026

Via Federal Express and First Class Mail

Elizabeth Phillips
c/o The Phillips Foundation
3000 Pegasus Park Drive, Suite 1010
Dallas, TX 75247

Vigilance Elite LLC
c/o Shawn Ryan
123 SE Parkway Ct., Ste. 150
Franklin, TN 37064

Shawn Ryan
201 N Federal Hwy Suite 108
Deerfield Beach, FL 33441

Re: Demand for Retraction and Public Apology Concerning Your Statements Made During the Podcast “Elizabeth Phillips – Camp Kanakuk: Exposing One of the World’s Largest Summer Camps”

Dear Ms. Phillips and Mr. Ryan:

This office represents Kanakuk Ministries (“Kanakuk”) and unfortunately, this is my second writing identifying defamatory statements made on the “Shawn Ryan Show.” It would be fair to title this interview as “Exposing Kanakuk” if the facts which you claim to rely upon were truthful. Most could not be further from the truth and all you have done is maliciously smear Kanakuk and Joe White and minimize the thousands of persons who have selflessly served so many children who have attended Kanakuk over the years. You have every right to form and discuss your opinions; however, you have no right to publish untruths.

Given the length of the referenced podcast and the breadth and scope of the untruthful statements, I think it best to first summarize the truthful history of the Pete Newman history with Kanakuk. As I write this letter in January 2026, it is not lost on me that I am addressing defamatory published statements concerning matters that occurred over 15 years ago. Most importantly, there is a complete and thorough public record of Pete Newman’s indefensible actions that has existed for more than 15 years. Mr. Newman confessed his inappropriate activity to Kanakuk in 2009 and he was fired immediately. Subsequently, his admission led to criminal prosecution (which was publicly covered by local and regional media), leading to two life sentences plus 30 years of incarceration. No one (neither victim nor prosecutor) claimed

January 30, 2026

Page 2

other people at Kanakuk knew of Mr. Newman's illegal activity prior to 2009. In fact, Mr. Newman spoke publicly at his plea agreement hearing and announced that he concealed his activity from Kanakuk and even his own wife. Mr. Newman's statement can still be found on YouTube. As you are aware, plea agreements are negotiated in advance of the hearing; thus, Mr. Newman was under no compulsion to announce that Kanakuk or his wife lacked knowledge of his activities.

As it specifically relates to Ms. Phillips, I understand that her first knowledge of Pete Newman's inappropriate activity occurred when she learned that her brother was sexually abused by Mr. Newman. Ms. Phillips knows that he did not come forward until after 2009. She knows that her family hired excellent legal counsel to file a Complaint in the United States District Court, Northern District of Texas, Dallas Division in August 2013. The Complaint is still a public record and alleges in paragraphs 4.8, 4.9, and 4.10 that Kanakuk knew about Mr. Newman's inappropriate activity as early as 1999. It alleges Mr. Newman had inappropriate sleepovers, he was playing nude basketball with minor boys, and was swimming nude with minor boys. It should be noted that Kanakuk investigated these complaints about Mr. Newman in 1999 and 2003 (including consulting with the children's parents) and did not find evidence that Mr. Newman engaged in sexual abuse. Kanakuk did not conceal or withhold information regarding these incidents or the investigations when Mr. Newman was prosecuted or in any civil actions concerning Mr. Newman.

You both now claim in this podcast that not only were the investigations not done correctly, they were concealed or covered up. It is obviously not true if the information was available to the Carlock attorneys in 2013.

I will now identify many of the specific defamatory, factual untruths in the podcast that require retraction and apology. I do not concede these examples are exhaustive:

1. **“Pete's one of over 75 perpetrators associated with Kanakuk we know of now... that we have uncovered to date...”** Suggesting there are over 75 known sexual abusers is an outrageous, malicious untruth. Kanakuk is aware of two Kanakuk employees who were accused of sexually abusing campers while employed by a Kanakuk entity: Mr. Newman and Mr. Bradberry. They were both fired and prosecuted for their crimes. Two is too many, but it certainly isn't over 75! In Missouri, the Missouri Department of Social Services (“DSS”) has established a hotline for reporting sexual abuse (800-392-3738). I encourage you to report the other 73 or more sexual abusers. If a report is made, DSS will investigate the claim and, if abuse is discovered, refer the matter for prosecution. There is no statute of limitations in Missouri for prosecution of sexual abuse. We know you have not reported these alleged abusers to date because Kanakuk would have been contacted by DSS to provide information. It has not been contacted. Rather than do the right thing and follow the law, you choose to publish untruths and distort the facts for your

January 30, 2026

Page 3

own agenda. Again, the truth is you made it up; it is defamatory, it must be retracted, and you must apologize.

2. **“Other experts would say thousands, just because he had unfettered access to children year-round for 14 years... hundreds to thousands of victims for Pete Newman alone. Right. Alone.”** Similar to the prior point, this is another outrageous, malicious untruth suggesting Pete Newman had thousands of victims while affiliated with Kanakuk. Again, I refer you to DSS and the hotline number above and the fact that there is no statute of limitations for prosecuting sexual abuse. If DSS is given information about a child that was sexually abused at Kanakuk, at any time, I can state with 100% certainty that Kanakuk will be contacted for information. It has not been contacted.

Ms. Phillips was the source of information for the March, 2025 Dallas Magazine article, “Summer Camp of Horrors” and there is an untruthful statement about the number of victims at page 79: “...child abuse experts who testified at the sentencing estimate that Newman may have had more than 2000 victims.” I assume this is the basis for your untruthful statements in the podcast. I have a copy of the sentencing hearing transcript and read it carefully before writing this letter. There were two defendant’s experts who testified. The first did not identify a number of victims. The second **testified under oath that there were more than 10 victims.** You are willing to extrapolate this hearing testimony into a statement that there are 1000’s of victims? It is outrageous, untruthful, defamatory; it must be retracted, and you must apologize.

3. **“But here we are with 19 suicides affiliated with the Kanakuk situation.”** To suggest there are 19 suicides associated with Pete Newman’s sexual abuse during his employment with Kanakuk is also untruthful, outrageous, and beyond believable. It is difficult to comprehend that someone would suggest this to the public without any factual support. Other than Ms. Phillips’ allegation that Trey Carlock committed suicide as a result of Pete Newman’s inappropriate actions, and an allegation of suicide regarding a Lee Bradberry victim, we are not aware of any facts suggesting another suicide. Two is horrific enough and certainly beyond anyone’s understanding, but to suggest 19 is outrageous. It is also of note that Ms. Phillips was interviewed and provided information to the *Dallas Magazine* referenced above. In the story “Summer Camp of Horrors,” the author attributes his source of information as Ms. Phillips and says “Trey ended his life in August 2019. **To date, there have been 17 suicides tied to Newman’s abuse.**” So, the question is, did you discover two more between March 2025 and January 2026, or did two suicides occur between March 2025 and January 2026? The truth is you made it up; it’s defamatory, must be retracted, and you must apologize.

January 30, 2026

Page 4

4. **“But the fact that Pete Newman’s devices were never investigated for child sexual abuse material, that keeps me up at night , the fact that ... it’s a [REDACTED] cover-up.”** Another outrageous defamatory untruth. In the Taney County Prosecutor’s file (a public record), Mr. Newman’s cell phone, charger, and computer hard drive were seized and searched. The Sheriff reported: “None of the hits were of significant value, generic emails or address book entries.” Your statements are untruthful, defamatory, they must be retracted and you must apologize.
5. **Kanakuk used NDAs to silence victims/children. “And that ended with a restrictive NDA, a settlement agreement that had a restrictive NDA. So, he couldn’t talk about what happened to him. He couldn’t talk about Kanakuk’s role in all this.”**

“Now that I’ve seen Trey’s NDA after September 1st, I know exactly why they’re so scared of Trey and of me. Kanakuk specifically demanded the NDA. Not the insurance company, not the other defendants. They tacked on more money if he would sign the NDA, and his lawyer let him do it. And he called it blood money.”

This is a theme throughout the podcast and has been Ms. Phillips’ mantra for many years. It is shockingly untruthful and defamatory. As stated above, the Carlock family filed a lawsuit in 2013 and identified all the facts Kanakuk is now allegedly suppressing. It further alleged the abuse that Trey Carlock suffered. The Complaint is a public record and remains so today. It has been discussed in the media and in subsequent court cases. The Carlock family settled the case with Kanakuk and both parties agreed to keep the terms of the settlement agreement confidential and not disparage each other in public. Nothing within the settlement agreement prevented the Carlock family from talking about the abuse Mr. Carlock endured. Although the settlement agreement is confidential, the Complaint (with the allegations of abuse) was not removed from the public domain or sealed. The only thing that effectively remains confidential is the amount of money paid to the Carlock family. If you would like to discuss the settlement amount openly, please let me know. Additionally, Joe White stated in his 2022 Open Letter to victims and their families that Kanakuk is opposed to any legal maneuver or action meant to suppress the voice of victims. Regardless, you must stop lying about Kanakuk suppressing victims’ ability to discuss the allegations of their abuse. It isn’t true, it is defamatory, it must be retracted, and you must apologize.

6. **“Trey was ... what we now believe, also trafficked by this mega ministry based out of Southwest Missouri.”** The definition of “trafficked” is: deal or trade in something illegal. Your untruthful, defamatory statement suggests Kanakuk was participating in some kind of human trafficking ring! It is difficult to comprehend

January 30, 2026

Page 5

that someone would suggest this to the public without any factual support. Again, the lawsuit regarding Mr. Carlock is public and says nothing about trafficking. This means it was not part of the lawsuit or the settlement agreement, so claim for trafficking (if it were true) could have been brought after the lawsuit was filed and settled. You have to stop lying, retract this statement, and apologize.

7. **“And Kanakuk had been a for-profit. They restructured to become a non-profit. They’re realizing they have liability.”** You know this is an untruthful, defamatory statement if you looked at the publicly filed corporate records. The truth is the process of donating the Kanakuk Kamp operations to a non-profit entity, Kanakuk Ministries, occurred before Pete Newman confessed to his crimes. Additionally, you should know that the for-profit entity (now called Kanakuk Heritage, Inc.) was a named defendant in Trey’s lawsuit and many others. The statement is untruthful, must be retracted, and you must apologize.
8. **“Some of these guys were abused twice, once by Pete Newman and then again by another one.”** This untruthful, defamatory statement is so outlandish it’s difficult to comprehend why someone would say it. Kanakuk has not seen, and you have not offered any evidence of this occurring, and I assume you used the phrase “another one” because you know it’s untrue and you cannot name the other person. The statement is untruthful, defamatory, and you must retract it and apologize.
9. **Referring to Newman’s abuse: “It was on a mission trip to China where he would film them getting massages. So, we’re talking child sexual abuse material being created. That never got investigated... When we have witnesses who were on those trips, and we saw Pete Newman filming these boys getting massages, and having the massage therapists activate their groin areas so he could film it.”** This untruthful, defamatory statement suggests two things: Kanakuk acquiesced or consented to this activity and/or knew about it and covered it up. This alleged filming never occurred, you have no evidence to support it, and you fabricated the story. Again, I refer you to the DSS hotline number. If you have the video or the witnesses, or anything remotely similar to what you said, I encourage you to report it. I know you don’t. Retract the defamatory, untruthful statement and apologize.
10. **“We were able to trace \$380 million in gross revenue to this camp in Southwest Missouri. And then we calculated that, net that out, 25% was leaving the country and going to failed states like Haiti... 25% was leaving the country.”**

“Follow the money to Haiti. And they were funneling money, and this is, I’m telling the FBI this, you know, the IRS has brought them in... There’s an active investigation, right?”

“So, that’s questions how those trafficking rings get busted up.”

HUSCH BLACKWELL

January 30, 2026

Page 6

“Then we got into Kanakuk, Haiti. And this is really disturbing. But they’re like, yeah, this is, they’re like, this looks like an organized crime ring.”

There are more colorful, defamatory comments concerning money laundering, trafficking, and Haiti, but the above fairly sums up the Haiti defamation you published. The truth is, in the late ‘90s, Kanakuk became aware of 18 schools and one orphanage in Haiti that were in dire need of help. These schools and orphanage were serving approximately 5,000 schoolchildren, yet they were unable to consistently provide school lunches, teachers’ pay, or maintain their facilities. Kanakuk stepped in to help feed the children, supplement teachers’ salaries, and, in some instances, provide construction assistance for the schools.

In 2001, Cross International was formed and it assumed the primary responsibility of providing oversight for financial aid to these Haiti schools and orphanage. After Cross International became the primary supporter, Kanakuk began donating to Cross International to continue its financial support. Before civil unrest occurred, Kanakuk also made trips to Haiti to deliver Christmas gifts to the Haitian schoolchildren, teachers, and other supporters of the schools and orphanage.

If you reviewed Kanakuk’s public Form 990 filings as part of your “investigations”, you would see that less than 2% of total revenue was used to support Haiti.

How you can turn this nearly three-decade commitment to helping impoverished kids into an ugly, distorted, untruthful allegation of human trafficking, money laundering, and organized crime ring activity is astonishing. You must stop fabricating facts, retract these statements, and apologize.

As stated above, the above list isn’t exhaustive, and it also doesn’t address the uncivil, disrespectful, profanity-laced way in which you discussed Kanakuk (“Kanacult”), Joe White, other employees, and our ministry partners. This manner of speaking only makes you look small-minded and frankly, not worthy of response. What stood out in this podcast were the untruths.

Your callous and malicious disregard for the truth as it relates to Kanakuk is inexcusable. Kanakuk has stood by silently the past few years while you and others perpetuate a false narrative. **That ends now.** Kanakuk will continue to endure the suffering Pete Newman has caused but they do not have to endure untruthfulness and blatant attempts to disrupt a ministry that has a positive impact on thousands of people. You have ten (10) days from the date of this correspondence to take down those portions of the podcast I have identified and publicly apologize for your defamatory statements. If you fail to do so, legal action will be taken.

To that end, please preserve and retain all documents related to this podcast, including placing legal holds concerning e-mails, text messages, visual recordings, voicemails, drafts, notes,

HUSCH BLACKWELL

January 30, 2026

Page 7

communications, interview notes, and electronically stored information that touch upon or concern this publication.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bryan O. Wade". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Bryan O. Wade

BOW/dl