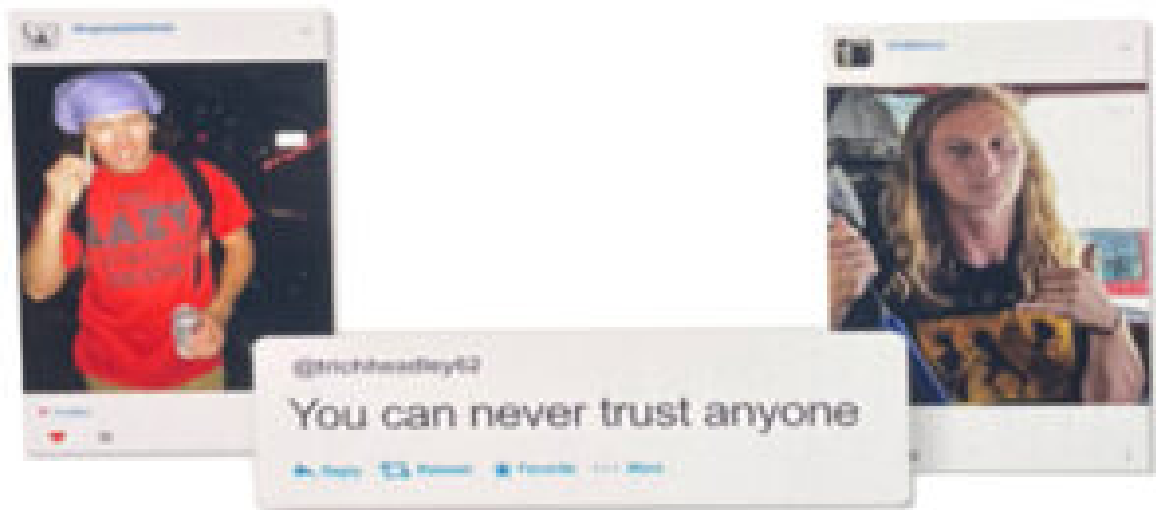


Phillips Murrah Attorney Takes on Netflix in “Hatchet Wielding Hitchhiker” Defamation Suit

Attorney [Angela M. Buchanan](#), who practices in Phillips Murrah’s [Dallas office](#), is referenced in today’s (Apr. 17) edition of the [Washington Post](#) and the [Dallas Morning News](#) newspapers, among other news outlets across the country. The coverage is related to a lawsuit she filed on behalf of Taylor Hazlewood, a man whose Instagram photo was inappropriately and erroneously featured in a docu-drama film about a convicted murderer, called “The Hatchet Wielding Hitchhiker,” released on Netflix on Jan. 12, 2023.

According to the lawsuit, the film’s use of Hazlewood’s photograph depicts him in a sinister and defamatory light. It also claims that Netflix misappropriated Hazelwood’s photograph and used it in two separate parts of the Film without any reason, other than pure recklessness.

“Companies like Netflix must be held accountable when they are negligent and cause this sort of reputational harm,” said Buchanan, whose litigation practice primarily focuses on complex commercial litigation and disputes. “Mr. Hazelwood will be living with the impact of Netflix’s negligent decision to include his picture in the film for the rest of his life – never knowing who has seen the film and formed incorrect opinions about his character.”



From the lawsuit: Here, the use of Hazelwood's photograph, in the Film, with the caption "you can never trust anyone," the audio "stone-cold killer," and alongside photographs of Mr. McGillvary when he was being convicted of murder, clearly has the defamatory meaning of stating that Hazelwood is untrustworthy and somehow like the convicted murder—Mr. McGillvary.

The lawsuit includes a sampling of text messages Hazlewood received in which friends and former co-workers expressing shock and befuddlement upon seeing the film on Netflix, including, "Bro wtf, your picture is on a Netflix documentary," "So something not so chill happens later in the documentary. Youre picture shows up again after hes charged with murder and its just bad vibes," and "They put your picture up with a murderer lol."

The filing also clarifies that "Hazelwood is not a public figure. He is also not a social media influencer. Indeed, Hazelwood has less than 900 followers on Instagram, and he has only made 231 posts in his lifetime. At all times relevant to this lawsuit, Hazelwood has been a well-respected member of his community and works as a respiratory therapist in the neonatal ICU."

According to the [Washington Post article](#), "Hazlewood sued Netflix in Texas state court, accusing the company of

defamation and misappropriating his likeness by including the photo in the 1½-hour film that traces the path of Caleb 'Kai' McGillvary from hero and internet darling to convicted murderer – none of which has ever had anything to do with Hazlewood.”

“The harm that Netflix caused to Hazelwood has been extraordinary,” according to the lawsuit. “The Film has been viewed by tens of thousands of people, and as a result of Netflix’s false portrayal of him as, dangerous, as a murderer, and/or as an untrustworthy person, he has been subjected to personal distress, anguish and reputational harm.”