

**REID'S STATEMENT WITH RESPECT TO THE TRAINUM CASE SETTLEMENT**

John E. Reid & Associates, Inc. (“Reid”) is pleased to announce that it has settled its lawsuit against James L. Trainum (“Trainum”). Trainum is a paid consultant who has worked with defense counsel for criminal case defendants.

Last year, Reid sued Trainum in the Superior Court of the District of Columbia in Washington D.C. Reid’s Complaint alleged that in 2024, Trainum made statements to reporters in Detroit, Michigan and Spokane, Washington, that were published in articles in the Detroit Metro Times and Cascade PBS Media. The Detroit Metro Times Article and the Cascade PBS Media Article focused on cases where abusive and coercive interrogation tactics were used by law enforcement authorities to generate false confessions by suspects who were then charged with crimes. Reid’s Complaint alleged that the articles attributed to Trainum statements that claimed that the abusive and coercive tactics used by the interrogators in those cases were part of the “Reid Technique” method of interview and interrogation.

The Complaint alleged that the statements by Trainum were false as the Reid Technique does not condone, and in fact prohibits, abusive or illegal interrogation tactics. The Complaint charged that Trainum defamed Reid and was guilty of commercial disparagement about the Reid Technique. The Complaint alleged that Trainum’s statements were made with “actual malice,” that he knew the statements were false or made them in reckless disregard for their truth. The Complaint also reflected that Trainum’s statements had caused Reid reputational harm and money damages. Finally, the Complaint alleged that prior to the lawsuit, Reid demanded that Trainum unequivocally retract the statements and that he would not do so.

Trainum responded to the Complaint with multiple motions to dismiss. He included with those motions his Declaration, a sworn statement, in which he claimed that he did not make the statements attributed to him in the articles referenced in the lawsuit, was misquoted, or was quoted out of context.

In his Declaration, Trainum mentioned that he was familiar with the Reid Technique. He acknowledged that the Reid Technique explicitly states that certain interrogation tactics should not be used, including:

- Locking suspects in small rooms for hours if they refuse to talk,
- Denying suspects asking for attorneys and a phone call,
- Confining suspects and witnesses without arrest warrants or legal justification,
- Promising suspects that they could go home if they signed a confession,
- Impersonating a prosecutor and falsely threatening to file charges and promising leniency if the suspect signed statements admitting guilt,
- Using racial slurs,
- Physically abusing and choking suspects,
- Threatening to expose a suspect to the media as a murderer,
- Promising to set a suspect free if they signed a confession, and
- Falsely telling suspects that they had already been arrested and charged with a crime.

Trainum claimed to regret any misconceptions about the Reid Technique. And he insisted that the reporters of the articles referred to in the lawsuit had not accurately reported what he told them.

In response to Trainum's motions to dismiss and Declaration, Reid requested "targeted discovery" as provided for by the law of the District of Columbia. Reid asked that it be allowed to subpoena the authors of the articles for their documents and depositions to learn of their discussions with Trainum. Reid wanted to test the truth of the assertions of Trainum that he did not make the statements about the Reid Technique attributed to him in the articles. Reid also asked the Court to allow Reid to take Trainum's deposition to question him about his Declaration.

Trainum objected. He did not want to be deposed. He did not want Reid to receive documents and depositions from the authors of the articles about their discussions with him. The Court overruled his objection and permitted the discovery Reid requested.

Reid, via subpoenas, received documents from the Detroit Metro Times and the author of the Detroit Metro Times Article, Steven Neavling. The documents included Mr. Neavling's handwritten notes of his discussion with Trainum that referred to the Reid Technique.

Reid deposed Mr. Neavling, a seasoned reporter with 24 years of experience, who stated under oath that:

- He spoke with Trainum on the telephone prior to the publication of the July 24, 2024 Detroit Metro Times Article.
- They discussed the abusive interrogation tactics used by the police in the cases featured in the article.
- Those tactics included confining suspects for hours in small, locked rooms, telling them that they could go home if they signed confessions, and making false promises of leniency.
- In reference to what the interrogators were doing in those cases, Trainum told Mr. Neavling that this was all about Reid and it was all based on the Reid Technique.

The Detroit Metro Times Article had a section entitled the "Reid Technique." Immediately in that section of the article, the author refers to "James L. Trainum ... an expert and consultant on interrogation and confessions" who said that the "tactics were psychologically coercive and could easily lead to false confessions." The article then stated:

He says Simon (the Detroit detective) uses a controversial method of interrogation known to create false confessions. Called the "Reid technique," the method is aimed at increasing suspects' anxiety by creating a high-pressure environment, such as confining them to a room for hours and saying they are going to spend the rest of their lives in prison. The interrogator then presents evidence – real or invented – to suggest that police already have proof of the suspects' guilt. The technique was developed by former Chicago cop and polygraph expert John E. Reid in the 1950s.

Mr. Neavling testified that the "He" mentioned in the quotation above referred to Trainum.

Further in the section of the Detroit Metro Times Article on the Reid Technique, Mr. Neavling wrote:

“The suspects are presented with a situation where they feel like they are going to get screwed,” Trainum tells *Metro Times*. “They are being guaranteed that they are going to be convicted by an authority figure. Then they start talking about leniency and say the judge will like it much better if they confess. They’ll say, ‘If you take responsibility, they are going to go much lighter on you.’ It’s a forced choice.”

Trainum adds, “What the interrogation process is doing is limiting your options. They are able to lie to you about the evidence. All of that puts you in a vice.”

Mr. Neavling testified that he accurately reported all of the statements attributed to Trainum in the Detroit Metro Times Article.

Subsequent to the July 24, 2024 publication of the Detroit Metro Times Article, Mr. Neavling received no communication from Trainum or his attorneys indicating that there was any inaccuracy in the story.

Trainum was deposed on September 11, 2025. He was represented at his deposition by three attorneys. His testimony included:

- In April 2024 he gave a telephone interview to Steve Neavling of the Detroit Metro Times regarding a story he was writing about false confession cases.
- He recalled that the “Reid Technique” was a subject of their discussion, but he could not specifically recall what he said to Mr. Neavling.
- He admitted that he would not have made the statements attributed to him in the Detroit Metro Times Article about the Reid Technique because they were not true, and he knew them not to be true.

The following is a verbatim quote that appears on pages 58 through 61 of his deposition:

Q. Do you see in the article, 'He says Simon uses a controversial method of interrogation known to create false confessions called the Reid Technique. This method is aimed at increasing the suspect's anxiety by creating a high-pressure environment, such as confining them to a room for hours and saying they are going to spend the rest of their lives in prison.' Do you see that?

A. Yes.

Q. Would you have said that to Mr. Neavling about the Reid Technique?

A. I would not have.

A: I would not have because it wasn't true, and I knew it not to be true.

Q. Did you say that quote to Mr. Neavling about the Reid Technique?

A. I would not have, no.

Q. The article also discusses certain tactics engaged in by Detective Simon that I want to ask you about. The first is her tactic of allegedly denying suspects access to an attorney or phone call. Would you have told Mr. Neavling that Reid approves, promotes or condones or teaches that tactic?

A: I would not have.

Q: Did you tell Mr. Neavling that Reid approved, condones, promotes or teaches that specific tactic?

A. I would not have because I knew it wasn't true.

Q. The article further alleges that Detective Barbara Simon discusses physically threatening suspects. Did you tell Mr. Neavling that Reid approves of or teaches that tactic?

A. I would not have because it's not true.

Q. Okay. The article states that Detective Simon discusses -- I'm sorry. The article states that Detective Simon makes false promises of leniency to suspects during interrogations. Did you tell Mr. Neavling that Reid approves, promotes, condones or teaches that tactic?

A. Directs false promises of leniency, no, I would not have because that's not correct.

Q. The article discusses Barbara Simon allegedly confining suspects for hours in small, locked rooms until they confess. Did you tell Mr. Neavling that Reid approves, promotes, condones or teaches that tactic?

A. No, I would not because it's not true.

Q. The article alleges that the Detective Barbara Simon prohibited suspects from having food or drink during interrogations. Did you tell Mr. Neavling that Reid approves, teaches, promotes or condones that tactic?

A. No, I would not because it's not true.

Q. The article further discusses Detective Simon's tactic of allegedly promising suspects, including teenage suspects, that they can go home if they sign a confession. Did you tell Mr. Neavling that Reid approves, teaches, promotes or condones that tactic?

A. No, I would not because it is not true. In fact, I know no legitimate interrogation school that teaches you an accusatory process that would teach that technique or any of those techniques.

Q. The article also discusses Detective Simon using a tactic of calling suspects a racial slur. Did you tell Mr. Neavling that Reid approves or teaches that tactic?

A. I would not. I would not have because it is not true.

Reid had also subpoenaed documents from Cascade PBS Media and the author of the Cascade PBS Media Article. Reid also subpoenaed the author for a deposition. The author initiated a court action in the State of Washington as part of a refusal to produce documents and refusal to testify about any discussion with Trainum. Rather than engaging in extended proceedings to compel documents and testimony from the author of the Cascade PBS Media Article, and given the information Reid already received from the Detroit Metro Times and Mr. Neavling, Reid did not continue pursuing enforcement of the subpoena to the author of the Cascade PBS Media Article. Reid then filed an Amended Complaint in its case against Trainum, omitted the allegations about the Cascade PBS Media Article, and instead focused on its allegations against Trainum with respect to the Detroit Metro Times Article.

In reviewing whether it should sustain Reid's lawsuit against Trainum, the Court also considered the Declaration of Reid's President, Joseph Buckley.

Mr. Buckley's Declaration made clear that:

- The statements in the Detroit Metro Times Article equating abusive or illegal interrogation tactics with the Reid Technique are false.

- The Reid Technique does not condone, and actually prohibits, coercive tactics such as confining subjects for unduly long interrogations, denying them their rights, and making false promises of leniency.
- Trainum has been well-versed in the teachings of the Reid Technique and its prohibitions, as he has attended Reid courses and accessed their website and publications on many occasions.
- Trainum wrote a book and recognized the permitted and prohibited interrogation tactics of the Reid Technique.
- Trainum made statements to Mr. Neavling which were reported in the Detroit Metro Article and the statements were known to be false or were made in reckless disregard to their falsity.
- Reid suffered reputational and money damages because of the false statements.

On November 18, 2025, the Court ruled on Trainum's motions to dismiss. The Court largely sustained Reid's Amended Complaint, with the exception of one count which was dismissed. The two counts that remained, one for defamation and the other for commercial disparagement, were allowed by the Court to continue in the case.

In sustaining those claims in the Amended Complaint, the Court found the following statements of Trainum reported in the Detroit Metro Times Article to be actionable given the testimony of Mr. Neavling and Trainum and other evidence:

**Detroit Metro Times Excerpt #1:** [Trainum] says [the Detroit Detective] uses a controversial method of interrogation known to create false confessions. Called the 'Reid [T]echnique,' the method is aimed at increasing suspects' anxiety by creating a high-pressure environment, such as confining them to a room for hours and saying they are going to spend the rest of their lives in prison.

**Detroit Metro Times Excerpt #2:** The suspects are presented with a situation where they feel like they are going to get screwed,' Trainum tells the [*Detroit Metro Times*]. 'They are being guaranteed that they are going to be convicted by an authority figure. Then they start talking about leniency and say the judge will like it much better if they confess. They'll say, 'If you take responsibility, they are going to go much lighter on you.' It's a forced choice.

The Court ruled that after reviewing the evidence, Reid established a likelihood of success on the merits for the sustained defamation and injurious falsehood claims. The Court closely reviewed the evidence and found:

In his deposition, Mr. Neavling unequivocally answers questions in the affirmative about whether he spoke with Defendant (Trainum) about the content of the excerpts and whether he accurately reported his conversation. *See, e.g.*, Exhibit A at 16:18-22 (“Q: And did you accurately report in this article that Mr. Trainum had told you that Simon’s tactics were psychologically coercive and could easily lead to false confessions? A: Yes.”); *id.* At 31:02-07 (“Q: And of your interview with Mr. Trainum and what he told you [] it says it’s all based on a Reid Technique. Do you see that? A: I do. Q: And did Mr. Trainum tell you that? A: Yes.”). He also confirms that the “he” referenced in Excerpt No. 1 is Defendant. *Id.* at 20:13-20 (“Q: ... just the first sentence it says he says Simon uses a controversial method of confession to create false confessions. Do you see that sentence? A: Yeah. Q: And who is he? A: That is Mr. Trainum.”). Mr. Neavling’s interview notes mention the Reid Technique in multiple instances and in a way that mirrors the structure of the article, and Mr. Neavling explained in his deposition that he takes notes contemporaneously. *Id.* at 27:04-05 (“A: Those are my interview notes. When I was talking to him on the phone, I typed them out.”); *id.* at 27:16-19 (“Q: And would it be fair to say what was going on was you were talking with him on the phone and you were typing at the same time? A: Yeah, yeah, definitely.”).

Conversely, almost all of Defendant’s (Trainum’s) responses about the details of his conversation with Mr. Neavling either did not answer the question or redirected his response by saying he merely provided his “usual spiel.” *See, e.g.*, Exhibit B at 23:8-12 (A: ... When I talked to him, I pretty much gave my usual spiel that I give to every reporter when they call asking for background about interrogations and false confessions.”); *id.* 25:5-8 (“Q: And did you mention to Mr. Neavling the phrase the ‘Reid Technique’? A: As part of my normal talk with any reporter, I would have.”); *id.* at 25:23-24 (“A: [] I do so many of these interviews in the past, and they’re pretty much the same standard thing I talk about in each one.”). A properly instructed jury could find that Defendant’s routine “spiel,” the contemporaneous interview notes, Mr. Neavling’s testimony regarding his reporting compared to Defendant’s, and both Defendant and Mr. Neavling’s long-standing experience talking with reporters and conducting interviews all reasonably support Plaintiffs (Reid’s) claim. *See Mann*, 150 A.3d at 1233.

The Court found that Reid can demonstrate a likelihood of success on the merits for its claim that Trainum made the actionable statements with “actual malice”:

Next, Plaintiff (Reid) can demonstrate a likelihood of success on the merits at this stage of establishing actual malice by clear and convincing evidence. Actual malice requires knowledge of a statement’s falsity or reckless disregard for its truth. *Burke*,

91 A.3d at 1044. As previously mentioned, Defendant (Trainum) has a background on the Reid Technique sufficient to create a “usual spiel” that he provides seemingly by second nature. He was trained in the use of the Reid Technique, he purchased Reid’s textbooks on the Reid Technique, he viewed Reid’s training materials, and he authored a book that describes the Reid Technique and contradicts the statements he made to the identified media outlets. *Id.* In his book, Defendant states that “[a]ll this said, for many, the bottom line is that the interrogation tactics taught by the Reid Institute have been proved to be extremely effective in gathering true confessions from guilty suspects. Their use has resulted in untold numbers of crimes being solved.” *See Am. Compl.* ¶48 (p. 125 in Defendant’s book). Notwithstanding the above, Defendant’s “usual spiel” to a reporter with twenty-four years of experience who takes contemporaneous notes and stated under oath that he accurately reported the interview reflects the contrary. Accordingly, a properly instructed jury could find the evidence supports Plaintiffs claim that Defendant acted with reckless disregard for the truth by clear and convincing evidence. *See Mann*, 150 A.3d at 1233.

And the Court found that Reid had demonstrated sufficient evidence of damage caused by

Trainum’s remarks:

Finally, Plaintiff (Reid) can demonstrate at this stage a likelihood of establishing harms proximately caused by the challenged statements. Plaintiff alleges that the statements “cause harm to the reputation of Reid, lower Reid in the eyes of the community, and deter customers and clients from associating with Reid.” *See Am. Compl.* ¶ 89. Plaintiff “has already fielded questions and negative feedback regarding the criticism of the Reid Technique and false comments about the Reid Technique in the Article.” *Id.* ¶ 92. Plaintiff “has also expended substantial time and resources to create marketing materials, such as articles and blog posts, which rebut the false statements and conclusions made about the Reid Technique.” *Id.* ¶ 93. Plaintiff’s “programming at its seminars and trainings [have] been altered because of misrepresentations made regarding the Reid Technique.” *Id.* ¶ 94. Finally, Plaintiff states the statements “have discouraged customers and clients from utilizing Reid or purchasing Reid’s training packages.” *Id.* ¶ 95. Notably, at this stage, evidence supporting Plaintiffs claims may be provided but need only be proffered. *See Salem Media Grp., Inc. v. Awan*, 301 A.3d 633, 369 (D.C. 2023). Thus, a properly instructed jury could find the evidence at this stage supports Plaintiffs claims of reputational and financial harms.

After its decision allowing the case to proceed, the Court set a schedule for further discovery and submissions for settlement mediation. Trainum filed a motion for an award of attorneys’ fees with respect to the dismissal of one count from the Amended Complaint. Reid

responded and requested that the Court award Trainum nothing and, instead, award attorneys' fees to Reid.

On \_\_\_\_\_, the parties settled and agreed to a dismissal of the case to avoid the further time and expense of litigation. Neither party will pay the other and each will absorb their own attorneys' fees and costs. For Reid, this case was not about money. It was about holding Trainum accountable and demonstrating that the statements about the Reid Technique attributed to him in the Detroit Metro Times Article were false. That objective was realized. And this case demonstrates that Reid will vigorously protect the truth as to the teachings of the Reid Technique.