



JOHNETTA PAYE ESQUIRE

ENTERTAINMENT    OCTOBER 14, 2016

# Defamation of character or the straight truth: The legal implications for the ‘Straight Outta Compton’ biopic



JPAYE





JPAYE

Save

-  SHARE
-  TWEET
-  PIN



CELEB SOCIAL MEDIA PROMOTIONS: WHEN TO ADD MORE 'AD' INFORMATION



Corey Hawkins may be a bit gruff on “The Walking Dead,” but he brought out the charmer in himself while playing the likes of Dr. Dre in the 2015 film “Straight Outta Compton” based on the legendary hip-hop group NWA. However, ‘70s and ‘80s babies could immediately pick up on the elephant in the room that got no film time: Dr. Dre’s physical abuse accusations from writer Dee Barnes and singer Michel’le.

To his credit, the mega producer did issue a public apology on [The New York Times](#).

“Twenty-five years ago I was a young man drinking too much and in over my head with no real structure in my life. However, none of this is an excuse for what I did. I’ve been married for 19 years and every day I’m working to be a better man for my family, seeking guidance along the way. I’m doing everything I can so I never resemble that man again. [...] I apologize to the women I’ve hurt. I deeply regret what I did and know that it has forever impacted all of our lives.”

While Dee Barnes accepted the apology in a [Gawker post](#) and hoped it was heartfelt, Michel’le was a bit more skeptical. In a conversation on BBC’s

While Dee Barnes accepted the apology in a [Gawker post](#) and hoped it was heartfelt, Michel'le was a bit more skeptical. In a conversation on BBC's Radio 5 Live [via Billboard](#), she stated: "I don't really think it's a sincere apology." On New York's [The Breakfast Club radio interview](#), she pointed out multiple instances of alleged abuse at the hands of The Aftermath record label owner during their six-year relationship.

And now she's taking it one step further with the Lifetime "[Surviving Compton: Dre, Suge & Michel'le](#)" show premiering Sat., Oct. 15. Although the allegations are anything but private, Dr. Dre has reportedly threatened to sue. According to [TMZ via IBTimes](#), Dr. Dre denied the abuse, a cease and desist letter was sent to Sony Pictures from his legal team, and the letter points out that there was never a police report or medical attention directly connected to the abuse Michel'le states she underwent during her relationship with Dr. Dre.

While it may seem strange that Dr. Dre would wait until now to take legal action, a decade or two after these women had been [vocal about the abuse](#) that they underwent in either romantic or work relationships with him, the real question is does he have grounds to sue Lifetime and Michel'le. Dr. Dre could assert a defamation claim against Michel'le and Lifetime in

Dre could assert a defamation claim against Michel'le and Lifetime in court.

One of the the elements that Dr. Dre would have to establish for a defamation claim is that Michel'le made a false and defamatory statement about Dr. Dre. This may be why Dr. Dre's legal team is stating Michel'le never filed a police report or sought medical attention at the time of the alleged incidents. Dre's legal team could challenge how could Michel'le claims be true if there is no evidence or documentation to establish it ever happened.

As a public figure, Dr. Dre would also have to show that Michel'le intentionally or recklessly lied about the alleged allegations. Although there are no police reports or witness statements supporting the alleged abuse, this doesn't sufficiently establish that Michel'le is intentionally or recklessly lying about the alleged abuse claims. If Dr. Dre does take this battle to court, a jury or judge will get to decide if Michel'le's claims are truthful. The truth is a defense to a defamation lawsuit.

In the meantime, the public has already aired their own opinions about everything from "Straight Outta Compton's" casting directors focusing on

In the meantime, the public has already aired their own opinions about everything from “Straight Outta Compton’s” casting directors focusing on the complexions of the extras to the dark history of Death Row Records, even before the movie released to the public. If Dr. Dre follows through, the legal team will have a handful on their hands filtering through NWA fans, anti-NWA fans and Michel’le fans to assemble a jury to look past the celebrity lifestyle, and focus on Dr. Dre and Michel’le as any other man and woman with a past.





The Lifetime television network logo, consisting of the word 'Lifetime' in a red, sans-serif font.

-----  
Have more questions about celebrities and defamation lawsuits? Contact [J. Paye & Associates](#) today.

Shamontiel L. Vaughn contributed to this blog. Find out more about her at [Shamontiel.com](#).

*The information contained here is intended to provide useful information on the topic covered but should not be construed as one-size-fits-all legal advice. Speak to an attorney specifically about your contractual agreement for specific terms and conditions.*

#### RELATED ITEMS

LEAVE A REPLY