

Mississippi Swindle: Brett Favre and the Welfare Scandal that Shocked America

Shad White

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Mississippi Swindle is Shad White's gripping account of the largest public fraud in Mississippi's history—the misuse of nearly \$100 million in federal welfare funds.

Appointed Mississippi's state auditor in 2018, White led the team that uncovered suspicious activity related to a celebrity wrestler's stay at a luxury drug treatment program in Malibu. The expenses, authorized as "training" by an educational nonprofit organization, had been funded by taxpayer dollars from a temporary assistance program. White's team determined that the educational nonprofit—controlled by a well-connected socialite—received a disproportionate amount of welfare funds but reported few measurable results. After a meticulous investigation, auditors determined that over three years, \$98 million meant for impoverished families had become the wealthy family's personal slush fund.

In this disturbing account, White details the machinations of the fraud, including phantom staff rosters, event schedules, and class lists; inflated rent for empty offices; expensive travel; high-paying jobs for friends and family; fake invoices; and money laundering, including the misappropriation of funds for a down payment on the socialite's home in an exclusive community. The scandal encompassed a wide ring of accomplices and beneficiaries, including retired quarterback Brett Favre, leaders within the Department of Human Services, and the governor. Even a journalist had a hidden agenda.

White's descriptions of greed and the abuse of power by special interest groups are bold, brave, and commanding, as is the assertion that "the choice was plain. Taxpayers needed to know what happened here. ... torpedoes be damned." His is an engrossing look at political maneuvering behind the scenes, showing how his team negotiated with other state and federal agencies in the investigation and prosecution.

Highlighting an astonishing fraud that misdirected welfare dollars in the poorest state in the country, *Mississippi Swindle* issues timely warnings to the rest of the nation.

KRISTEN RABE (July / August 2024)

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