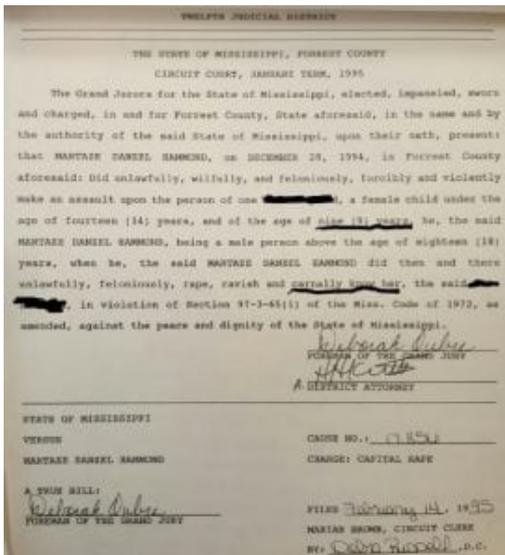




US Attorney appears to be closing in on Mayor Dupree with grab of election soldier (PART 1)



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The federal government is fast at work building case after case involving high level public officials in Forrest County and Hattiesburg Mississippi. Mayor Dupree suffered a devastating blow when his longtime friend and campaign manager, Kenneth Fairley Sr., was convicted of stealing federal money designated for housing the poor. The money was reportedly to allegedly pay the mortgage on his church. Now,

the US Attorney has in their custody Martaze Hammond. Hammond was a key player in Dupree's reelection campaign,

Hammond is a career criminal, who started off in 1995 at eighteen when he was indicted by a grand jury. The charge was for allegedly raping a nine year old relative. The indictment said Hammond,

*"Did unlawfully, willfully, and feloniously, forcibly and violently made an assault upon the person of one [REDACTED], a female child under the age of fourteen (14) years, and of the **age of nine (9) years**, he, the said MARTAZE DANZEL HAMMOND, being a male person above the age of eighteen(18) years, when he, the said MARTAZE DANZEL HAMMOND did then and there unlawfully, feloniously, rape, ravish and carnally know her"*

The original charge for Hammond was Capital Rape, but the charge was reduced to Fondling. It was done with the consent of the victim, her mother, and her grandmother under the condition that he received psychiatric counseling. Judge Dickie McKenzie suspended the jail sentence and put Hammond on 5 years of probation.

Hammond's criminal career didn't stop there. Hammond also served time for credit card fraud and on March 10th, 2006 Hammond pleaded guilty to being in the Possession of a Handgun by a Convicted Felon. He was sentenced to 78 months imprisonment and 3 months supervised release. Hammond spent the next four years filing various, unsuccessful motions with the federal court and 5th Circuit of Appeals, before he was released on parole sometime in 2010 or 2011.

In 2012, Hammond was brought into the Dupree camp to work on the 2013 reelection campaign. One of Hammond's duties was to bring elderly voters into city hall for absentee voting, prior to election day, and to the polls on election day. During absentee voting, Hammond was videotaped by this outlet driving

a large transportation van with Georgia plates, loaded with elderly people.

When this outlet took a photograph of the occupied van's license plate in front of City Hall, passengers inside became vocally agitated, shouting they didn't give permission for their photographs to be taken. The prospect of being identified concerned the group. On yet a different voter run by Hammond, a reporter for this outlet entered City Hall to witness what looked like Hammond assisting voters with their absentee ballots. To get assistance, a voter must state to the election official (in this case the City Clerk) that the voter is either blind, physically disabled, or illiterate.

A video recording was started to record any voter violations, but Hammond became extremely agitated when the camera was pointed in his direction. He made an emergency call (documented on the video to the left), then grabbed the camera and took it into his possession. It was retrieved by a policeman in the building, who made no arrest of Hammond.

After the election, Hammond was rewarded by Dupree and hired to work in the Public Work's Department. Hammond was given a city vehicle and access to city gas, but on September 17th things caught up with Hammond. A warrant was issued for his arrest for failing to register as a sex offender. Hammond was arrested by Forrest County deputies, but a high profile attorney emerged; one Hammond could never afford. His name is John Collette. Collette is the attorney for disgraced Correction Commissioner Chris Epps and also the Attorney for John Lee's in the tax fraud investigation into Lee's finances. He doesn't come cheap.

Part two will be published tomorrow. Stay tuned and visit Hattiesburg(DOT)Life for the best of Hattiesburg.

