| 1<br>2                          | GERARD FOX LAW, P.C.<br>GERARD P. FOX (SBN 151649)<br>gfox@gerardfoxlaw.com   |  |  |  |
|---------------------------------|---|--|--|--|
| 3                               | BELINDA VEGA (SBN 208236)<br>byega@gerardfoxlaw.com   |  |  |  |
| 4                               | Los Angeles, CA 90067   |  |  |  |
| 5                               | 1880 Century Park East, Suite 1410<br>Los Angeles, CA 90067<br>Telephone: (310) 441-0500<br>Facsimile: (310) 441-4447 |  |  |  |
| 6                               | Attorneys for Plaintiffs  |  |  |  |
| 7                               | ARTHŪR WILLIAM BELL, III and A  | AIRYN RUIZ BELL                                      |  |  |
| 8                               |   |  |  |  |
| 9                               | UNITED STAT   | UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT                         |  |  |
| 10                              | FOR THE NORTHERN  | FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA              |  |  |
| 11                              | ARTHUR WILLIAM BELL, III,   | Case No. 3:16-CV-6879                                |  |  |
| 12                              | an individual, and AIRYN RÚIZ<br>BELL, an individual,   | COMPLAINT FOR  |  |  |
| 13                              | Plaintiffs,   | ) (1) DEFAMATION<br>(2) DEFAMATION PER SE            |  |  |
| 14                              | v.  | (2) DEFAMATION FER SE<br>(3) FALSE LIGHT INVASION OF |  |  |
| 15                              | MICHAEL ALAN WEINER a/k/a   | PRIVACY (4) INTENTIONAL INFLICTION OF                |  |  |
| 16                              | MICHAEL SAVAGE, an individual, WESTWOOD ONE,  | EMOTIONAL DISTRESS                                   |  |  |
| 17                              | INC. a Delaware corporation, and CUMULUS BROADCASTING, INC., a Delaware corporation.                                  | (5) NEGLIGENT INFLICTION OF<br>EMOTIONAL DISTRESS    |  |  |
| 18                              | Defendants.   | )<br>  JURY TRIAL DEMANDED                           |  |  |
| 19                              |   | ) SURT TRIAL DEMANDED                                |  |  |
| 20                              |   | )<br>)   |  |  |
| 21                              |   |  |  |  |
| <ul><li>22</li><li>23</li></ul> |   |  |  |  |
|                                 |   |  |  |  |
| <ul><li>24</li><li>25</li></ul> |   |  |  |  |
| 26                              |   |  |  |  |
| 27                              |   |  |  |  |
| 28                              |   |  |  |  |
| ۷۵                              |   |  |  |  |

COMPLAINT AND DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

Plaintiff Arthur William Bell, III ("Mr. Bell") and Airyn Ruiz Bell ("Ms. Bell"), by and through their undersigned counsel, Gerard Fox Law, P.C., as and for their Complaint against the Defendants Michael Alan Weiner a/k/a Michael Savage ("Savage"), Westwood One, Inc. ("Westwood One") and Cumulus Broadcasting, Inc. ("Cumulus") allege as follows:

### **NATURE OF THE CLAIM**

- 1. On September 25, 2016, Savage made defamatory and slanderous statements on his radio program, *The Savage Nation*, regarding Plaintiffs. In his discussion of the consequences of addressing various topics on the radio, Savage stated "You say UFOs, you wind up in the Philippines with a ten-year-old hooker and you are off the radio after a number of years. You can't do UFOs. That's an in joke, by the way, for people who understand the business." This broadcast was made from a San Francisco radio station owned and operated by Cumulus and distributed for syndication across the nation and throughout the world via the Internet by Westwood One.
- 2. The statement was defamatory to Mr. and Ms. Bell. Mr. Bell, a member of the National Broadcasters Hall of Fame, is widely regarded as a founder of UFO-themed radio programming. Mr. Bell married his wife Ms. Bell in the Philippines. Savage falsely asserted that Ms. Bell was a "ten-year-old hooker" at the time that the Bells married and that discussion of UFOs caused Mr. Bell to be "off the radio." Savage demonstrated a reckless and utter disregard for the truth. Ms. Bell has never been a prostitute and was twenty-two years-old when the Bells married. Also, Mr. Bell was not "off the radio" because he discussed UFOs or married Ms. Bell. These facts were publicly known and closely followed by many in the radio broadcasting industry and general public.
- 3. Plaintiffs demanded that Defendants make a correction or retraction of the defamatory statement, but Defendants ignored Plaintiffs' demand and have neither corrected nor retracted the statement.
  - 4. Plaintiffs have been damaged by Defendants' defamatory and slanderous

statement. Plaintiffs bring this action to recover the damages that they have incurred because of the Defendants' wrongful conduct.

#### **PARTIES**

- 5. Plaintiff Arthur William Bell, III, known as Art Bell, is, and at all times relevant to this Complaint was, an individual and resident of the State of Nevada.
- 6. Plaintiff Airyn Ruiz Bell is, and at all times relevant to this Complaint was, an individual and resident of the State of Nevada. Ms. Bell is a permanent resident alien of the United States who is currently thirty-two years-old.
- 7. Upon information and belief, Defendant Michael Alan Weiner a/k/a Michael Savage is an individual and resident of the State of California.
- 8. Upon information and belief, Westwood One, Inc. is a Delaware corporation duly organized under the laws of the State of Delaware.
- 9. Upon information and belief, Cumulus Broadcasting, Inc. is a corporation duly organized under the laws of the State of Delaware with its stock publicly traded on the NASDAQ stock exchange. Westwood One is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Cumulus.

# **JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

- 10. This Court has original subject matter jurisdiction with respect to this action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1332 as there exists complete diversity of citizenship between Plaintiffs and Defendants and the amount in controversy exceeds \$75,000, exclusive of interest and costs.
- 11. Venue is proper in this District pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1391(a)(1) and (b)(1)-(2). Upon information and belief, Savage resides in this judicial District. The events giving rise to this claim the broadcasting of the defamatory statement occurred in this District.
- 12. Defendants are subject to personal jurisdiction in this Court. Savage is subject to personal jurisdiction in this Court because, upon information and belief, he resides in this judicial District and transacts business in this District. Westwood One

and Cumulus are subject to personal jurisdiction in this District because they transact business and purposefully avail themselves in this District. INTRADISTRICT ASSIGNMENT 3 4 13. Upon information and belief, pursuant to Civil Local Rules 3-2(c) and (d), this action arose due to actions and omissions of Defendants that took place and originated in San Francisco County. Therefore, this case should be assigned to the San Francisco Division. 8 **FACTS Art and Airyn Ruiz Bell** 10 Mr. Bell is a radio broadcaster and author, widely regarded as one of the 11 founders of UFO- [unidentified flying objects] and paranormal-themed radio programs. Mr. Bell was inducted into the National Broadcasters Hall of Fame in 2008. 12 13 15. From 1988 to 2007, Mr. Bell's most prominent radio program, Coast to Coast AM, was syndicated across the United States on more than 500 radio stations and 15 with approximately twenty-two million listeners across the world. During this period, Mr. Bell was the only nationally-syndicated radio broadcast talk show host who 16 17 regularly discussed UFOs. 18 Mr. Bell is the author of numerous books, including *The Coming Global* Superstorm, which was the basis for the popular and successful Hollywood movie The 19 20 Day After Tomorrow. 21 17. Mr. Bell broadcasted shows from a radio studio located on his property in Pahrump, Nevada. 22 23 18. Mr. Bell founded and was the original owner of Pahrump, Nevada-based radio station KNYE 95.1 FM. 24 25 19. In 2006, Mr. Bell was introduced to Ms. Bell by his now brother-in-law, who was a friend of Mr. Bell's at the time. At the time, Ms. Bell was twenty-two years-26 old and was a university student in the Philippines. During her university studies, Ms. 27

Bell worked in the food hospitality industry.

28

- 20. On April 11, 2006, Ms. Bell, then aged twenty-two, married Mr. Bell in a legal ceremony performed in the Philippines
- 21. Mr. Bell resided in Manila, Philippines from June 2006 until December 2006.
- 22. It was well known in the radio industry and by individuals in the general public that Mr. Bell married Ms. Bell and subsequently moved to the Philippines.
- 23. Mr. and Ms. Bell experienced repeated difficulties obtaining a visa for Ms. Bell to reside permanently in the United States, a fact that was publicly known and closely followed by many in the radio broadcasting industry and general public.
- 24. On or about July 1, 2007, Mr. Bell announced his retirement from daily radio. Through 2010, Mr. Bell occasionally served as a guest host for various radio programs.
- 25. In July 2015, Mr. Bell returned to radio, hosting the show *Midnight in the Desert*.
- 26. In or about November 2015, Mr. Bell and his family were subject to repeated intrusions on his property in Pahrump, Nevada, including gunshots and trespassers.
- 27. In November 2015, Mr. Bell received a telephone threat that Plaintiffs and their young daughter would be killed if Mr. Bell broadcast his radio show, *Midnight in the Desert*, that evening.
- 28. In fear for his family's safety and after consulting with the local police, Mr. Bell opted to leave radio broadcasting under a well-founded belief that an intruder or intruders desired that he no longer broadcast any radio program. *Midnight in the Desert* ceased broadcasting on December 11, 2015.
- 29. It was well known in the radio industry and by individuals in the general public that Mr. Bell ceased broadcasting *Midnight in the Desert* because of his concerns about the security of his family.
  - 30. Currently, Mr. Bell is not working in order to spend more time with Ms.

Bell and their nine-year old daughter.

#### **Defendants' Radio Program**

- 31. Savage is a radio personality who currently hosts *The Savage Nation* (the "Program"). The Program is routinely rated as one of the top five most popular terrestrial radio programs in the United States with an audience of over 5,000,000 listeners.
- 32. The Program is syndicated and distributed by Westwood One and broadcast on over 400 radio stations throughout the United States and is available throughout the world via online streaming services. In Nevada, where Plaintiffs reside, the Program is broadcast on KKOH 780 AM in Reno, Nevada and KBET 790 AM in Winchester, Nevada.
- 33. Upon information and belief, Savage broadcasts his show from a studio located at radio station KSFO Hot Talk 560 ("KSFO") in San Francisco. Upon information and belief, that station is owned and operated by Cumulus and has a signal that is broadcast from a Cumulus radio transmitter located in San Francisco.
  - 34. Westwood One is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Cumulus.
- 35. Throughout his career, Savage has attracted controversy and can be described as a "shock-jock." For example, Savage formerly had a television program on MSNBC. After four months on the air, Savage was reportedly fired from the program for making controversial and unseemly comments. Upon information and belief, Savage was also included on a list of individuals banned from entering the United Kingdom for engaging in unacceptable behavior.
- 36. The Program is currently broadcast on two radio stations in Nevada, KKOH 780 AM in Reno, Nevada and KBET 790 AM in Winchester, Nevada.

## **The Defamatory Broadcast**

- 37. Upon information and belief, on September 25, 2016, Savage broadcast the Program from his San Francisco studio at KSFO.
  - 38. During the September 25, 2016 Program, Savage made the following

defamatory and slanderous statement:

I generally avoid gun questions. I know this from the first day in radio. I learned you never do certain topics where you can destroy your show. Third rail... You say UFOs, you wind up in the Philippines with a ten-year-old hooker and you are off the radio after a number of years. You can't do UFOs. That's an in joke, by the way, for people who understand the business.

(available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gDVFQxKh6ks, at 36:12) (the "Statement").

There are other topics you can't do . . ..

- 39. Upon information and belief, Cumulus and Westwood One failed to exercise due care and adhere to standard radio broadcast industry practice by not utilizing the delay function to prevent broadcast of the Statement.
- 40. Upon information and belief, Cumulus and Westwood One were well aware that Savage was a shock jock who routinely made hateful and untruthful statements on the Program about individuals and various segments of the population.
- 41. Upon information and belief, motivated by greed to attract high ratings to increase advertising revenue, Cumulus and Westwood One permitted Savage to broadcast the Statement with reckless disregard for the truth and with cognition that such broadcast would defame and disparage Plaintiffs.
- 42. Although Savage did not specifically identify Mr. Bell by name, Savage stated that "people who understand the [radio] business" would understand to whom he was referring. Indeed, a listener of the Program would understand that Mr. Bell was the foremost radio personality that spoke about UFOs on the air and that Mr. Bell is not currently on the air. The Statement is defamatory per se because Savage falsely stated that Mr. Bell is no longer broadcasting a radio show because he allegedly engaged in a sexual relationship with an underage female prostitute and that Ms. Bell was a prostitute.

- 43. The Statement intended to injure Plaintiffs and cause harm to Mr. Bell's radio broadcasting and professional journalism businesses.
- 44. Despite the material and substantial factual falsities in the Statement, listeners of the Program identified Mr. and Mrs. Bell as the subjects of the Statement made by Savage.
- 45. Admirers of Mr. Bell's work immediately identified Plaintiffs as the subject of the Statement, some directly contacting Mr. Bell to express their sincere concern.
- 46. The Statement is false. Ms. Bell has never been a prostitute and was twenty-two years-old when she met Mr. Bell in the Philippines. Mr. Bell was not forced to retire from radio because of his relationship with Ms. Bell or his on-air discussion of UFOs.
- 47. At present, Mr. Bell is strongly considering resumption of his radio broadcasting and journalism careers. However, the Statement has harmed his professional reputation and is hindering his efforts to return to broadcasting and journalism.
- 48. Within twenty days after learning of the Statement, on October 4 and 5, 2016, Plaintiffs, by their counsel, delivered certified letters to each of the Defendants (the "Demand Letters") specifying that the Statement was libelous and requesting that Savage make a correction or issue a retraction during the Program.
- 49. Defendants ignored the Demand Letters. Defendants did not send any response to the Demand Letters. Nor did Defendants make a correction of the Statement on the Program or in any other form.
- 50. Upon information and belief, the Defendants disregarded and purposefully avoided reliable, readily available information that Ms. Bell was neither under age, nor a prostitute, and that Mr. Bell was not broadcasting a radio show for reasons unrelated to Plaintiffs' relationship to one another or his on-air discussion of UFOs.
  - 51. At the time that Savage made the Statement, Defendants had no reliable

4

5

6

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

| 1  | station or network of stations originating the broadcast of the Statement. Cumulus and     |  |
|----|--|--|
| 2  | Westwood One are liable for the defamatory Statement broadcast over the radio because      |  |
| 3  | they failed to exercise due care to prevent the publication or utterance of the Statement. |  |
| 4  | Cumulus and Westwood One were well aware that Savage was a shock jock who                  |  |
| 5  | regularly made hateful and untruthful statements on the Program, but permitted him to      |  |
| 6  | broadcast the Statement in any event motivated by greed to attract high ratings.           |  |
| 7  | 63. Cumulus and Westwood One failed to exercise due care by not utilizing a                |  |
| 8  | delay function to prevent broadcast of the Statement.                                      |  |
| 9  | 64. The Statement has harmed Mr. Bell's reputation. The Statement has also                 |  |
| 10 | caused Mr. Bell shame, mortification, hurt feelings and marital discord. The Statement     |  |
| 11 | has caused injury to Mr. Bell's business and occupation. The Statement has hindered        |  |
| 12 | Mr. Bell's efforts to return to broadcasting and journalism. Mr. Bell was also forced to   |  |
| 13 | hire an attorney to protect his reputation and defend against the Statement, incurring     |  |
| 14 | costs and attorneys' fees.   |  |
| 15 | 65. Mr. Bell demanded that the Statement be corrected or retracted. However,               |  |
| 16 | Defendants failed to correct or retract the Statement within three weeks after the         |  |
| 17 | Demand, or at any time thereafter.   |  |
| 18 | 66. Defendants' wanton conduct in conscious disregard for Mr. Bell's rights                |  |
| 19 | warrants the imposition of punitive damages.   |  |
| 20 | 67. Accordingly, Defendants are liable to Mr. Bell for general damages, special            |  |
| 21 | damages, exemplary damages and punitive damages in an amount to be proven at trial.        |  |
| 22 | SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION   |  |
| 23 | (Defamation under Cal. Civ. Code §§ 44, 46 and 48.5)                                       |  |
| 24 | (By Ms. Bell Against All Defendants)   |  |
| 25 | 68. Plaintiffs restate and incorporate by reference each of the foregoing                  |  |
| 26 | paragraphs and every allegation contained in the paragraphs above as though fully          |  |
| 27 | stated herein.   |  |
| 28 | 69. On September 25, 2016, Savage slandered Ms. Bell by making the                         |  |

78. Ms. Bell demanded that the Statement be corrected or retracted. However, Defendants failed to correct or retract the Statement within three weeks after the

26

27

28

fees.

| 1  | protect her reputation and defend against the Statement, incurring costs and attorneys' |    |
|----|---|----|
| 2  | fees.   |    |
| 3  | 96. Ms. Bell demanded that the Statement be corrected or retracted. However             | r, |
| 4  | Defendants failed to correct or retract the Statement within three weeks after the      |    |
| 5  | Demand, or at any time thereafter.  |    |
| 6  | 97. Defendants' wanton conduct in conscious disregard for Ms. Bell's rights             |    |
| 7  | warrants the imposition of punitive damages.  |    |
| 8  | 98. Accordingly, Defendants are liable to Ms. Bell for general damages,                 |    |
| 9  | special damages, exemplary damages and punitive damages in an amount to be proven       | l  |
| 10 | at trial.   |    |
| 11 | FIFTH CAUSE OF ACTION   |    |
| 12 | (False Light Invasion of Privacy)   |    |
| 13 | (By Mr. Bell Against All Defendants)  |    |
| 14 | 99. Plaintiffs restate and incorporate by reference each of the foregoing               |    |
| 15 | paragraphs and every allegation contained in the paragraphs above as though fully       |    |
| 16 | stated herein.  |    |
| 17 | 100. The Statement made by Savage on September 25, 2016 caused publicity to             | o  |
| 18 | be generated about Mr. Bell that was false or misleading.                               |    |
| 19 | 101. This false publicity has impaired Mr. Bell's efforts to resume his radio           |    |
| 20 | broadcasting and journalism career.   |    |
| 21 | 102. The publicity created by Savage regarding Mr. Bell – describing Mr. Bell           |    |
| 22 | as someone who "wound up in the Philippines with a ten-year-old hooker" who was         |    |
| 23 | "off the radio" after discussing UFOs – is offensive to a reasonable person.            |    |
| 24 | 103. Mr. Bell has been injured as a result of this false light invasion of privacy.     | •  |
| 25 | 104. Westwood One and Cumulus are vicariously liable for Savage's conduct a             | as |
| 26 | the owner, broadcaster and distributor of the Program that employ Savage.               |    |
| 27 | 105. Savage's false light invasion of privacy was knowing, malicious, willful           |    |
| 28 | and wanton, thus entitling Mr. Bell to an award of punitive damages.                    |    |
|    |   |    |

| 1  | 106. Accordingly, Defendants are liable to Mr. Bell for compensatory and                    |  |  |
|----|---|--|--|
| 2  | punitive damages in an amount to be proven at trial.  |  |  |
| 3  | SIXTH CAUSE OF ACTION   |  |  |
| 4  | (Intentional Infliction of Emotional Distress)  |  |  |
| 5  | (By All Plaintiffs Against All Defendants)  |  |  |
| 6  | 107. Plaintiffs restate and incorporate by reference each of the foregoing                  |  |  |
| 7  | paragraphs and every allegation contained in the paragraphs above as though fully           |  |  |
| 8  | stated herein.  |  |  |
| 9  | 108. Defendants' conduct in making the Statement, as alleged above, was                     |  |  |
| 10 | extreme and outrageous.   |  |  |
| 11 | 109. Savage intended to cause Plaintiffs emotional distress when he made those              |  |  |
| 12 | statements or acted with reckless disregard of the probability that Plaintiffs would suffer |  |  |
| 13 | emotional distress.   |  |  |
| 14 | 110. Plaintiffs did in fact suffer severe emotional distress.                               |  |  |
| 15 | 111. Savage's extreme and outrageous conduct was a substantial factor in                    |  |  |
| 16 | causing Plaintiffs' emotional distress.   |  |  |
| 17 | 112. Westwood One and Cumulus are vicariously liable for Savage's conduct as                |  |  |
| 18 | the owner, broadcaster and distributor of the Program that employ Savage.                   |  |  |
| 19 | 113. Savage's extreme and outrageous conduct was knowing, malicious, willful                |  |  |
| 20 | and wanton, thus entitling Plaintiffs to an award of punitive damages.                      |  |  |
| 21 | 114. Accordingly, Defendants are liable to Plaintiffs for compensatory and                  |  |  |
| 22 | punitive damages in an amount to be proven at trial.  |  |  |
| 23 | SEVENTH CAUSE OF ACTION   |  |  |
| 24 | (Negligent Infliction of Emotional Distress)  |  |  |
| 25 | (By All Plaintiffs Against All Defendants)  |  |  |
| 26 | 115. Plaintiffs restate and incorporate by reference each of the foregoing                  |  |  |
| 27 | paragraphs and every allegation contained in the paragraphs above as though fully           |  |  |
| 28 | stated herein.  |  |  |
|    |   |  |  |

| 1  | 116.  | Savage was negligent in making the Statement about Plaintiffs, as alleged      |
|----|---|--|
| 2  | above.  |  |
| 3  | 117.  | Plaintiffs suffered severe emotional distress.                                 |
| 4  | 118.  | Westwood One and Cumulus are vicariously liable for Savage's conduct as        |
| 5  | the owner, b  | proadcaster and distributor of the Program that employ Savage.                 |
| 6  | 119.  | Accordingly, Defendants are liable to Plaintiffs for compensatory damages      |
| 7  | in an amour   | at to be proven at trial.  |
| 8  |   | PRAYER FOR RELIEF  |
| 9  | WHE   | REFORE, Plaintiffs prays for the relief and judgment, as follows:              |
| 10 | 1.  | That the Court enter judgment for Plaintiffs on each of the above claims for   |
| 11 | relief;   |  |
| 12 | 2.  | For compensatory, general, special, exemplary and punitive damages in the      |
| 13 | amount to be proven at trial;                                   |  |
| 14 | 3.  | For pre-judgment and post-judgment interest as provided by law;                |
| 15 | 4.  | For attorneys' fees and cost as may be applicable;                             |
| 16 | 5.  | For any other such relief, including equitable relief, as the Court deems just |
| 17 | and proper.   |  |
| 18 | 1 1   | DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL  |
| 19 | Plaintiffs respectfully demands a trial by jury in this action. |  |
| 20 |   |  |
| 21 | Dated: No   | vember 30, 2016 GERARD FOX LAW, P.C.   |
| 22 | Duicu. 110  | SERVINOET 50, 2010 SERVINOET OIL ELIVY, 1.C.                                   |
| 23 |   | By: /s/GERARD P.FOX  |
| 24 |   | GERARD P. FOX<br>BELINDA VEGA  |
| 25 |   | Attorneys for Plaintiffs   |
| 26 |   | ARTHUR WILLIAM "ART" BELL, III and   |
| 20 |   | AIRYN RUIZ BELL  |
|    |   |  |
| 28 |   |  |