



## EPISODE 37: Facing Threats in a Lawsuit Head On + Do Killers Deserve Compassion?

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**Mandy Matney** 00:04

Hello and Happy Tuesday. The Luna Shark team is back. We've missed you and have so much to share with you in today's episode, including some really great news about something that has been a huge monster for us lurking in the shadows: a Reddit page that was created specifically to target our team was finally taken down. The page was a hateful cesspool that seemed to be an incubator for dangerous people hoping for our demise. I call them emotional terrorists. But it wasn't just that they were hateful and ugly. Their obsession with us was disturbing and unexplainable. Today, we talk about that takedown. Plus we talk about what's behind the motivation of one of the trolls we identify. On today's show, Eric opens up about a recent murder trial in which his friend and client Greg Lyon was found guilty and sentenced to 30 years in prison last week for killing his wife's lover in 2016. We also talk about the free Tiffany movement, which is calling for the release of Tiffany Janae Carroll, a South Carolina woman who was convicted of killing a man who horribly abused her. All right, so let's unpack it.

**Liz Farrell** 01:29

Cups up guys, I'm so glad to see you. It's feels like it's been so long. Well look at my cup. Eric, happy birthday.

**Eric Bland** 01:38

Yep, yep, I turned 61 You know, I don't like birthdays. Now. I'm just gonna be honest. You know, I know some people my age that are like, well, age is just a number and, you know, happy where I am grown older. I do not like growing older. I'm just going to be honest. It is. It's scary and daunting. You know, you look in the mirror, your hair is turning white if you're not as thick as it was, and it's, I never thought you know what it would be like to be 61. I mean, I feel in pretty good health. But I



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remember when I was younger, you know, if he told me about a 48 year old, 49 year old, I say, Wow, that person's old. But then when I turned 50, I was like, Well, I don't feel really old. But now when you start to get up in 61, you start to say, you know how much time do I have really good time left?

**Liz Farrell** 02:25

You got the happy part of birthday, right? You're really?

**Eric Bland** 02:30

No, no, but I'm just saying that. You know, I'm happy that I'm healthy. But it's a scary thing when you turn 61. I'm just that's just me.

**Liz Farrell** 02:39

No, I get it. Mandy I remember being your age and thinking I was just so old and making fun of myself for being so old. And people telling me like, You're crazy. You're so young. And I just looked back. I mean, it is true. You do reach a certain age and you start to look around for me it's looking at celebrities and seeing like Matt Damon looking all bloated and like a version of a milk carton type like aging has been done to him. Some like computer generated aging has been done to his face. And it's actually just what he looks like now. It's just that kind of stuff that depresses me for sure.

**Eric Bland** 03:12

Geraldo Rivera just turned 80. I mean, at Harrison Ford's 81? I mean, what, where's the time going?



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**Liz Farrell** 03:21

Yeah, it goes so quickly. It does. You know what didn't go quickly though, this past week. So Mandy and I took, and David, we took much needed time off. And I don't think that people realize this, but since the time when Maggie Murdaugh and Paul Murdaugh were killed, Mandy and David have worked every single day, pretty much including during their wedding week, like literally, I think they had maybe their wedding off. I'm not even sure if you took your wedding off. They have worked every single day for the past two years. And I think that we take that for granted because it's just been such a treadmill of just like fast moving fast paced, always just getting to the next goal of what the story is. And so this past week, we all took off. And it was fantastic in so many ways, which Mandy is going to tell you about in a second. But it really went. It was like the longest week ever, just because I think we're so used to like that fast pace, and suddenly it just slowed down. But Eric, we had a heck of a week last week, regardless of being off and maybe do you want to tell what you guys did this morning.

**Mandy Matney** 04:27

I'll start with a funny story. At the beach, I don't even think I told you this, Liz, but last Monday, you know, when you start out your Monday and you start out your week, and you could kind of tell like what Director I believe in like foreshadowing in life and that like, you can kind of see where things are going. And I think everything is interconnected and all that whatever. I started out last week in a beautiful nature trail in the Dominican Republic, and it was so fun and my friends were swimming in this beautiful lagoon that was like Turco is an awesome and David was swimming and having a good time and I look down and I am covered in bird poop. Like the biggest, like brown bird poop everywhere like and I think I was leaning on it. And, I don't know what



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happened. But all of a sudden I was like, oh my god and it was like, what bird poops that much? It was like this much and I don't even want to know what kind of animal it came from. It was horrifying. My friend Meredith was on the phone with a client and Meritus a lawyer and her client was asking her how things are going and Meredith was like everything. Yeah, everything's fine Anyways, that was foreshadowing for what happened from that moment forward.

**Eric Bland** 05:52

Did you go in the lagoon to get it off?

**Mandy Matney** 05:54

Yes, I went into the lagoon to get it off. And I was all over my swimsuit. It was over my clothes. I wanted to just burn my clothes. But David was like, I think we should just wash them.

**Liz Farrell** 06:05

Oh my god, I'd want to go to the doctor after that.

**Mandy Matney** 06:08

And it was like a solid half mile the height to this thing. So like I had to hide back all this horrible.

**Liz Farrell** 06:17

I'm sorry. Actually, now that you told me that like that really did set the tone for the week.

**Mandy Matney** 06:24

Oh my God, right? So we just had thing after thing, starting with this freaking group within Reddit that I am finally talking about now



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because they're gone. And I didn't want to talk about it before this point because I did not want to give any more oxygen or attention. So this group was a hate group like they just did every their sole mission was to...

**Liz Farrell** 06:50

What was their mission? Like the what could you possibly say what their mission is? It's like to take us...

**Mandy Matney** 06:56

Yeah, like malign, bully. Hate, it was hating the three of us and everybody in our realms. They made fun of everything that we've ever done. The slightest little, I took a picture of David's splashing in a pool one time and they immediately screenshotted it and we're like, oh, this is so gross. They body shamed my husband, which I don't appreciate. They body shamed me. They I mean, every type of every insult that you could imagine these people came up with and the weirdest thing. And I'm still like, slowly processing what this was doing to me in the past few months, and all of us, but it always just felt like there was a looming monster in the background. And even if you ignore, here's the thing, there's there's no logic, there's no logic to what they say either. I could, I could have a six pack. And they would hate me for that, too. I could like, I just..

**Eric Bland** 07:55

What was the name of the Reddit?

**Mandy Matney** 07:59

Luna snark, with a shark, but...



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**Liz Farrell** 08:00

It a word that I despise. What the hell.

**Mandy Matney** 08:04

They were horrible. They were horrible to you to Eric horrible, horrible, horrible, horrible. And it was just yeah, it felt like there was just a dragon hovering around, and you couldn't do anything about it. Because if you gave it attention, then that could set off a whole nother set of events. So I try my best to ignore it.

**Liz Farrell** 08:27

Well, they existed for a while without me paying attention. And I think you really weren't looking at it either. But there was a day when they tagged somebody posted and tagged both of us. And so I got alerted through Reddit that I had been tagged in a post and it was just a super hateful, really aggressive and angry and very frightening message where you have to look at your life and say if somebody hates me this much for what I'm doing, what else are they capable of? Like? It's not just the same as being like my friend Robin hates Tom Hanks like She despises him. And it's always made me laugh because it's just like, straight and like, but I mean, at the same time, like she just would shudder from it, you know, but that's the extent of it. She never like, impressed upon me that I should hate him to or went online to talk about how awful he is or contacted him to tell him how I feel like nothing. It was just an personally held opinion, which everyone's entitled to. And even if she had gone on that like this is different. This is not just expressing that you just don't like something.



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**Eric Bland** 09:32

Do you think they're more than keyboard warriors list? Yeah, I think there could be I think there's some that are more than keyboard warriors that if we were out somewhere that they would confront us or if our car was there, they do something to our car. I mean, yeah, I would say 90% 99% and more keyboard warriors. They would if you saw them outside, they never would confront you. But there is the 1%.

**Liz Farrell** 09:56

Well they're commenting on my location. I noticed there's posts that commented on my location. And I think that's where you start to like really worry. And I just want to like, again, remind people like you're a lawyer, Eric, we're journalists, these we're not like, we're being attacked for doing a job and doing our job. And that's where I think that that like gets to the point of being scary. Like it's it's like they're assigning these motivations to us that simply don't exist, or they're completely inaccurate and things are saying, but I wasn't paying attention, because who cares? I don't care if people hate us to that extent. But once you crossed the line into your tagging me so that I know just how angry you are. And then, like the viciousness with which they were posting and threatening, honestly, in some ways, but anyway, Mandy, I think that was the turning point, right for us was when we got tagged was that that was like a couple of weeks ago, right?

**Mandy Matney** 10:49

And it was just it was just escalating. And I was just hearing more and more No, it was becoming harder and harder to ignore, and more and more people were reaching out and the the nicest of ways, but saying, Hey, I'm really concerned about you, because these people are obsessed with you. Like, this is an obsession. This is not something to take lightly.



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### **Eric Bland** 11:08

Do you read more than we do online? Right, man? Do you? Do you? I know you try to be disciplined and not but you know, there, you know, you sometimes you're compelled to do it. I don't read it all. So I'm spared of that. Liz, do you read at all?

### **Liz Farrell** 11:22

No, I had to pull away from it. I would say just turn to you know, talking about mental health. Like I have some very serious mental health issues in general, that I after the trial I've been dealing with. And that was not helping matters just because I don't need to hear my worst thoughts echoed back to me. But at the same time, I had this fear of just somebody coming up to my window or just like I was at a festival on Hilton Head, and somebody commented to me, I live just down the street from you. And it wasn't somebody I knew is a stranger. And I was like, I walked away with my friend. And I was like, how do they know where I live? And she's like, Liz, it's all over the internet. And so that just freaked me out. So this this Luna Snark group, it's not the same thing. Somebody on Twitter just like making a comment that's just ugly. This is a site that was set up to directly attack and every way they could, but it was the anger and the force with which these are people that I had to think had a personal vendetta, specifically against Mandy and me, for whatever reason, whether it's a jealousy, or how many people there's like, 200 people in the group. I don't know how many people participated.

### **Mandy Matney** 12:32





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Oh my God, like, was it 200 People, each each, every single one of these crazy people has like 30 accounts, right?

**Liz Farrell** 12:40

Good point. Yeah.

**Mandy Matney** 12:42

So you have to keep that into consideration. They're all in red. It does nothing to stop that. That's what makes me so mad.

**Liz Farrell** 12:48

And we're not this conglomerate either. We're people we're two individuals like and it's a small like, what bothered me.

**Mandy Matney** 12:55

The most was just we have found out time and time again in this country that spreading hate and misinformation is very, very dangerous in the lies that these people were spreading about the three of us about Sandy Smith, about the case about all the things that we talk about, about basically everyone in our lives, these people just literally look at my Instagram and draw up some sort of wild conclusion. Like they said, I was vacationing this was a this was another big kicker that I saw this week. They said I was using the justice for Stephen's money from the GoFundMe to go on a vacation in the Caribbean.

**Eric Bland** 13:32

Lies. Do you read? Did you read this stuff while you were on vacation? Mandy?

**Mandy Matney** 13:37



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No I didn't. But I did have to deal with some of this while I was on vacation. It was really really escalating.

**Liz Farrell** 13:43

We were vetting that information with a third party looking at it right.

**Mandy Matney** 13:47

And what I mean super huge shout out to the group of incredibly pesky women who were very aware of this and kept reporting and kept reporting and kept reporting to read it until finally on Saturday, it got shut down and it's done. They're like It's like they slayed the dragon continuing on with my week, and I expected after the group got shut down that there's going to be a lot of angry lunatics that want to find other ways to get to me because I'm sure they're man, they lost their little game. And it didn't take long. I tweeted about the group being shut down because I was it was a huge weight off my shoulders and I was really really freaking glad that and I'm honestly still just extremely pissed off that Reddit let this allowed to go on for so long. Because you know what? People can be hateful and by themselves and in their own little dungeons. And that's one thing that when you get people spreading misinformation about people spreading hate and spreading lies and making it look to other people like this warped world is the truth. Lose, which is what's going on. It's just so dangerous. They made us they made us to be the enemy of the Murdaugh story. How does that happen? So group got shut down. I tweeted about it. And I tweeted a GIF of my girl, Taylor Swift, which is a lyric from one of my favorite songs, karma that said, Karma is a relaxing thought, which I love. And I immediately scroll down. Few minutes later, a tweet came in. Eric, do you want to read that? Okay, this is the tweet, you think

**Eric Bland** 15:33



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I'm not going to tell the world about you, eventually. You and your husband and judge Newman, just wait. I will go scorched earth when the time is right, you vapid child.

**Liz Farrell** 15:44

Judge Jocelyn Newman, Judge Newman has a daughter who's also a judge.

**Mandy Matney** 15:49

So this is great storytime. We're doing a little rewinding. So I know who this is. Because I got a tip earlier this week that again, lots of pesky people out there, lots of pesky people looking at all this stuff. But I got a good tip the other day saying, hey, I want you to first of all, I'm really sorry that like, I see that you're harassed all the time online, and I see that you're harassed by the certain person on line all the time. I just want to show you this deposition, and you should read it. So this person's name is Alexandra Stasko. And she is the girlfriend of a professor named David Voros. She and her boyfriend are suing me and several other media outlets and several other journalists, for reporting on Voros his alleged harassment lawsuits. I think that was 2020. This was a few years ago.

**Liz Farrell** 16:49

And he's a University of South Carolina art professor was and he was being sued by two women who accused him of harassing them. And Mandy reported on the story like a normal reporter would like attributing things to the case. It's a fact objectively reported, like a journalist would write these lawsuits were filed. And here's what they say.

**Eric Bland** 17:13



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So against a state employee, this is what journalists do exactly

**Liz Farrell** 17:16

Against a state employee the keywords.

**Mandy Matney** 17:22

The lawsuit is technically still ongoing, so I can't say a ton of details about it. But I believe it's frivolous, especially considering the fact that the University of South Carolina settled in one of the lawsuits before I wrote about the one and 2020 a previous lawsuit with a woman named Alison Donovan, who is a student of Voros is said she was harassed by him and back years ago.

**Eric Bland** 17:48

You know, it's sad, though, before you get into this, Mandy, you have to spend your own money. You and David your hard earned dollars. Oh, yeah. Defend yourself by hiring private lawyers. You know, you don't have insurance that covers you on this. Is that correct? You're spending this from your dollar?

**Mandy Matney** 18:07

Yeah every dime is mine. And I've spent a lot in the past six months horrible just to get this to go away. I believe it's a frivolous lawsuit. I don't understand why it's taking so long for it to get dismissed. But it is. And it's horrible that people it's it's very much so bullying, and it's called a slap lawsuit. Eric, how about you explain that.

**Eric Bland** 18:31



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A slap lawsuit is when somebody who does something wrong. And you pointed out, they come back at you like you are the problem instead of them. And so the focus goes off of the underlying behavior, which gave rise to the story and to begin with. Now, all of a sudden, here, this vindictive journalist that is going after this person who, you know, had a great reputation did not had, you know, should have been left alone should not have been because it's a matter of public concern, USC public employee, and now all of a sudden, you're the focus instead of him. Correct.

**Mandy Matney** 19:07

And in South Carolina, they are still a lot of states have outlawed slap lawsuits, I believe, and South Carolina shocking, has not so far.

**Liz Farrell** 19:17

People who follow Mandy and me on Twitter, and I think, Eric to have seen this on your account as well, for a long time you would see whenever we would post something perhaps about just any anything that we've been covering, there would often be a troll account that would say what about Mandy's defamation lawsuit? What about Mandy getting sued for defamation? And again, you said this already, but I want to reiterate, Mandy is one of several parties who are being sued several journalists and news agencies. This was for her work that she did before the murders this meaning like in another lifetime, so it has nothing to do with a murder case. And as Eric and Mandy have both said, it's a slap lawsuit and journalists are protected. We are able to report facts attributable to documents, records, interviews, other people, we cannot knowingly publish something that is false. Obviously, everything that Mandy did from what I remember back then was by the book, it was attributed to interviews. It was attributed to the lawsuit.



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She never accuses she's not accusing this professor or doing this. She's simply reiterating what this lawsuit says and what the University of South Carolina's response to it was.

### **Eric Bland** 20:31

So she did not have actual malice, what you just described is she did not act with actual amounts under the New York Times versus Sullivan standard. She's a journalist, for them to prevail against Mandy, she would they would have to prove that Mandy had a personal animus a separate apart from being an objective journalist reporting on a matter of public concern of a public employee of a public institution where our tax dollars fund, they would have to prove that Mandy had this personal vendetta against this guy separate apart from being a journalist, which is impossible to prove. And we want that high standard, to let journalists feel that they have, you know, the right to report otherwise, you're going to feel like you always have handcuffs on you. And you're not going to objectively report things of a matter of public concern.

### **Liz Farrell** 21:24

That's right. And I think what we're learning and what we've learned from the belt crash case, and from the Murdaugh case, that there isn't just it's not just a lawsuit gets filed anymore. There is a public relations campaign that happens separate and apart from that, whether it's a formal one in which somebody has hired a public relations firm to help them or some sort of strategic political messaging company or anything like that, or social media experts, whatever it is, there's another option though it could be informal, to where people who are motivated, independently have the time create these fake accounts and use it to do the exact thing which they're accusing Mandy of doing, which is they're defaming her. So it was very frustrating from my perspective to



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not be able to comment on this case. And knowing that these accounts, these troll accounts, I know exactly what they're referring to and where it was coming from. Seeing that we are okay. As journalists, our credibility means everything. So when we are trying to report the facts, and our opinion based on those facts, having somebody constantly bring this up was driving me nuts because it had nothing to do with anything. It was a frivolous lawsuit. And it's defamatory to me, because I have nothing to do this. And also stood amatory to Mandy, because you are hurting our credibility, which is our bread and butter, you are causing people to question our ability to report the facts, our ability as reporters as journalists, our integrity, every time this person and these people, I should say, posted something about us being defamatory, or us having issues with the truth, you are hurting my livelihood. And so that that and just that's my rant for that. But anyway.

**Eric Bland** 23:00

Well what they're doing also is to comment on you guys personally, and me personally, it's little chisel chipping, that you don't necessarily see a piece of the body fragment go off, but it creates these little fissure fractures all throughout. And over time, they have a tendency to accumulate, and sooner or later if they do it over and over again, all of a sudden it takes on a life of its own and Eric doesn't really have a lot of credibility anymore. Maybe we should not follow Him anymore because he's out for himself or he's stealing, you know, money from Sandy Smith or he's making too much on like it's a it's a accumulation of accretion, you understand?

**Liz Farrell** 23:43



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They are doing the exact thing that they have accused these journalists of doing which is you know, defamation.

**Mandy Matney** 23:50

And it's with malice like the things that they're saying it shows malice when they like over doing this obsessively over and over and adding insults like you vapid child and things like that, that is defamation with that and so getting back.

**Liz Farrell** 24:06

And accusing you and David of stealing money from the Justice receiving account that's a crime.

**Mandy Matney** 24:12

Right, that's a crime.

**Liz Farrell** 24:14

Yeah so they're accusing you guys of committing a crime which is actually very much in the like that is to the letter of the law of what defamation is accusing somebody of crime they did not commit and that you know, they didn't you they have no way of anyway, I don't want to get upset about it.

**Eric Bland** 24:28

But how is Judge Newman implicated in this Jocelyn?

**Mandy Matney** 24:30

Okay, so let's circle back weirdly, in my very weird week that started with bird poop. During that week, I got this deposition from one of the lawsuits of one of the professors who was suing David Voros and that I





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initially wrote about and this is this deposition is with David Voris, his girlfriend Alexandra, and in this deposition, she admits to owning a ton of these accounts that in and using them that are those comments that Liz was talking about those comments that are always underneath they we see it all the time. It's been repeated. This has been going on for years. And it's fit with you read the deposition and tell me what you thought about that.

### **Liz Farrell** 25:13

There was a couple of things. One, it was just shocking to see some of these names this woman admitting to somebody's very familiar accounts that would pop up under my posts and Mandy's posts accusing one or both of us of being liars or what have you. The second thing was how casually it seemed that this woman was just offering this up as if it's a normal thing to have a dozen accounts or whatever it is that are not your actual so you Eric can be Liz, you Mandy, Mark Tinsley, for instance, we are all tweeting things out or commenting online under our names, no other accounts, I have one fake account. And that is only so I can look at people who blocked me. Should I so desire to do so. And that account is called Breanna Beard. It's not even like, there's no, there's nothing, there's nothing else to it. So I've never commented under it. I've never done a single thing under it, but use it for reporting purposes. That's it. So we are all doing things as difficult as it is sometimes to do things under your name. We have to that's just called integrity. And that's what we do. So to see this person just spew out like, oh, yeah, and this one, and this one and this one, as if it's no big deal as if you don't have a problem as if this is like, you're not just I'd be mortified, and I would shrink back into myself. But no, that's not what this person did. She continued to post under these names that she has testified under oath to owning so one of those accounts is this one that



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we have up on the screen now the one in which she is directly threatening David, Mandy and Judge Jocelyn Newman.

**Mandy Matney** 26:48

And it's Jocelyn Newman, because Jocelyn Newman is the judge in the presided over the hearing which she ruled that I would be dismissed from the case, but she has not signed the order. So it's not beneficial. But she ruled in my favor.

**Eric Bland** 27:04

You didn't get a form for order. There wasn't a forum for order to just know, I think this is a violation of the pre trial publicity rules. And let me tell you why. Because he knows that his girlfriend is posting this type of information in a pending lawsuit to affect the public's opinion of that lawsuit. That's a difference. She doesn't have a right to correct a record like people accused me during the murder case. And when I had some cases pending. Oh, you're you're engaging in pre-trial publicity? No, no, no under Rule 3.6 of our rules of professional conduct. I have a right to correct a public record when Dick misspoke or Jim misspoke about Alex, I have a right to correct a public record. This woman is not trying to correct a public record that you may have put out there. She is indirectly involved in this lawsuit with her boyfriend or fiance. And this is trying to affect a judicial proceeding.

**Liz Farrell** 28:03

There is a violation. She is a party to the case.

**Mandy Matney** 28:05

She is a party to the case.

**Liz Farrell** 28:06



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She's a party to the case, Eric.

**Eric Bland** 28:08

Then it's even worse. Yeah, it's even worse. It's directly somebody should be making a motion to sanction her.

**Liz Farrell** 28:14

Like that. What about threatening a judge going scorched earth on a judge is not allowed.

**Eric Bland** 28:20

But as soon as you see when they mentioned a judge that should it's a clue to the world that this lady is on a rant it doesn't have any credibility? I get it. The distinction is still there with you Mandy, but if he did if she didn't mention judge Newman, then it's a little different put. Everybody starts criticizing judge forgetting nobody's gonna listen. But I understand what you're saying. And it's concerning. And are these people going to cross the Rubicon? Are they just keyboard warriors? Or are they going to act out? That's the fear I have.

**Liz Farrell** 28:53

That's the fear because you see the the force with which they've been coming at us. It's not we're not talking about online criticism, like to just again, be clear, like we're not talking about people expressing their opinions. We're talking about a concerted effort to I think defame and demoralize us and and, obviously, accusing us of crimes, et cetera, et cetera. So something's got to be done. And Mandy, what do you think about something needing to be done?

**Mandy Matney** 29:21



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So, I've been wanting to file a police report about harassment for the last I don't know, year and a half since threats started coming in. whenever that was, I would get one want to go and I would work up the courage and then think in my head like, Oh, they're just gonna think I'm silly. I'll like they're just gonna laugh at me. Oh, like, this could be a threat. But is it Mandy? Are you overanalyzing this? All those crazy thoughts in my head and again, I applaud victims for taking always taking that step because I couldn't for the last and I'm not saying I'm a victim here, but it's it takes a lot to be able to do walk into a sheriff's office and say this is happening to me and I need something done about it. But we did it this morning. Because a couple reasons. This has been going on for so long, and it's escalating and it's getting increasingly scary. And when I was thinking about this weekend, it's it's not just me anymore, like she's threatening judge Newman, all I want her to do is leave me and all these other people alone, and I don't need money from her. I don't care about all that I just want her to stop. And I want other people to stop doing this. I want other people to know that you it is not okay to use fake accounts, to emotionally terrorize somebody that has been going on in my life for far too long. And a lot of people just say, Man, you should just ignore me and you should just ignore it. But it's it affects your personal safety. David goes everywhere with me, thank God, I have a husband who I love and I don't get sick of because he's become my bodyguard, because I'm terrified to go anywhere by myself. These people hate me. They hate me. And hate is terrifying. And it's hard to explain. So we went in and we are in the process of filing the report going back and forth with a deputy now as to like Does this qualify as harassment or it could not qualify as a threat they could see it as not a direct threat, which I just saw last week. I think the Supreme Court kind of made that more difficult when they ruled it



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if you're threatening someone online, they want to party threatening to believe that they are making a threat.

**Eric Bland** 31:39

So now you got to get subjectively it's not an objective standard.

**Mandy Matney** 31:43

You got to be very clear, right?

**Eric Bland** 31:46

It's a subjective standard and not an objective standard. That's insane.

**Liz Farrell** 31:50

So hold on, you're saying that like the person who wrote this tweet, we have to get inside her head so what whereas Can I just ask like the wiggle room on going scorched earth? Is it that it's saying that people like it's an idiom like what why would that not be clear that going scorched earth on somebody isn't like offering to buy them lunch? You know, it's it's pretty clear that you what's left after the Earth has been scorched nothing great.

**Mandy Matney** 32:14

And then she said, how is this different from anything Mandy said about Carmen Mullen? And it's like, I just want peace. I just want to know the truth about her. I just want an investigation. popcarpet That's all I want. That's all I've always wanted. I've never said let's go scorched earth on her good thing that are saying I want this person to be exposed or I want this person to be held accountable. Those are different things.



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**Liz Farrell** 32:38

Also, quoting from a police report when we're talking about Judge mole and we're quoting from a deposition in which she's accused of knowingly ignoring red flags or allowing a quarry Fleming and Alex Murdaugh to not file certain documents that should have been filed like she's these are accusations we're reporting Our opinion is that she should be investigated from.

**Eric Bland** 33:01

Western doors deposition. Right?

**Liz Farrell** 33:06

So people are just it's so crazy to me. Like I just can't understand that like how people don't see that difference. And we're reporting about the accusations that have been made against this person. Our opinion is that they should be investigated Our opinion is that the South Carolina Supreme Court has been lacks on investigating judges because factually they have so I guess I'm a little bit lost this small group of people seems to care about taking down reporters and a lawyer who have done nothing but challenged the system so that it will be fair for everyone that's that's really at the heart of what we've been doing.

**Eric Bland** 33:46

I know I've said this: The lies travel around halfway around the world before the truth can lace up its shoes, you know, these lies go out there and they start to settle in like they do on grass. And then the dog gets in the grass and the grass grows. The same thing is when people establish accounts like in my name that's not something I established or Mandy's name and they start tweeting out some really hateful stuff and I'm unaware of it. You know how much is soaking into the grass before I can



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find out about it and say no, that's not me or, or Facebook or Twitter de lis them you know what I'm saying? I worry about the dew that goes on the grass and soaks in.

**Liz Farrell** 34:31

Well and beyond us just like who else out there is getting harassed we live in a democracy harassing journalists are doing their jobs is I understand the Free Speech element of that where you get to express your opinion freely about people but harassing them no, you do not get the right to do that.

**Eric Bland** 34:48

No criticism is fine. We welcome criticism even though it hurts sometimes criticism can hurt. But that's criticism that's discourse, but when you go to harass And that is against the law. Right.

**Liz Farrell** 35:01

And I think I want to mention just something to about this Luna Snark group and the timing of when it was created. So when we look at some of those accounts, and we look at the timing, and I forget which because our wonderful researcher, Beth Braden has all this information, but there's an account that was created around the same time that Mandy and I left our full time jobs at a news agency, this group Luna Snark appears to have been created right around when the announcement was made, Eric that you are going to represent Sandy Smith. And there's a small group of people out there who seem to believe that Sandy is a commodity, and that Mandy and Eric, you have staked your claim to her and therefore have kept her from being able to speak to this person or that person or take part in this or that Sandy, as we've said many times on the show before, is a human being with



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autonomy. She makes her decisions. Mandy, you are her friend, you've been loyal to her consistent with her from 2019. To this very day, Eric, your hurt attorney, I think it was looked at by a certain group of people as an act of war, when Eric became Sandy's attorney, because that meant that we would, quote unquote, be getting the insider word on what was going on the Stephen Smith investigation, so that apparently infuriated people and enough to it appears at least, you know, correlates with that timing. So that's what seems to be driving some of that hatred in that group. I don't know, if I'm extrapolating there. But that's what that's what we were finding, or what Beth Braden is finding.

**Mandy Matney** 36:31

Right. And again, it just, we've had problems after problems with this group. And as much as we try to ignore it, it just comes up over and over. And we were having to deal with a lot of it on when we are on vacation, unfortunately. And you know, that's, that's part of having a business, I get it, I was glad to be on vacation while I was dealing with it, because I was like suckers. I'm in at least I'm in a beautiful place. You're in a basement somewhere. It's just really, I mean, when I talk about things that have changed me and have gutted me, and warped my sense of positivity that like I used to really be super positive and like really think the best of people that all I think that's been the problem. The you know, everyone says, like, You guys are so brave for what you're doing. I'm sure you guys get that all the time. Thank you for what you're doing. This is this is the kind of stuff that makes it brave. It should not be this hard, but they're making it harder to do the right thing. Because when you go against the system, and when you try to fix the system, everybody has this idea that people are going to come after you and that it's super dangerous, and that it's incredibly brave to even think about going up against these people. Well, these trolls have made it a





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lot worse. And what I fear that they are doing is that they are showing other people who want to speak out like Sandy, if you're a victim and you see Sandy getting attacked everywhere on a Reddit page, and you want to speak up for your son and your son's case. But you also don't want to deal with that. Reddit, you're not let this go on. And I say all this to say that I while we were on vacation, I was like I David, let's look into suing Reddit, I'm at that point where I would like to subpoena for these accounts. I would like to know who these people are who wake up in the middle of the night and look at my stories and write a paragraph about how horrible I am. I would like to know who these people are who make up lies about me stealing money and committing crimes. And the first amendment was not designed to protect people to hide behind accounts anonymously and fully.

**Eric Bland** 38:46

You can't yell fire in a crowded theater. You can't create public safety issues. And that's what's happening here. People are yelling fire in a crowded theater and they're endangering lives, your life, lives, his life, my life to a lesser extent, but yes, my life and our family's life and the people that are closest to us. You know, the saving grace is this is such a small minority of our followers are people who are interested professionally in what we say and what we're doing. But unfortunately, these small minority of people have a platform where for 10 years ago, there really wasn't that kind of platform, but they can reach people in Scotland and they reach people in Australia and they reach people in the Middle East. I mean, they have a megaphone that travels the world. That's the problem.



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### **Mandy Matney** 39:38

But you're right, Eric, we do have a lot of people supporting us, in fact, as I was so nervous going into the Beaufort County Sheriff's office this morning and I was like, you know, preparing my words. And I hadn't been there in years since I was a reporter at the packet and I would spend every Monday there looking through reports, which is good time. But I walked in and the the man at the front desk Mike was so sweet. He was immediately like you guys look familiar. You're Mandy Matney and you're David Moses and oh my gosh. And he was like, Oh, I gotta I gotta shake his hand today and was just asking us like, what do you? Did you think that he would uncover all of that blah, blah, blah. This is so cool. And he was super sweet. And we were like, Yeah, but we got to fill out a police report. That's a perfect example of like, everywhere we go, we have supporters and there's a million more supporters. I was in the Dominican Republic. And in on my plane to the Dominican Republic, a woman behind us was a big fan.

### **Eric Bland** 40:48

But she's done it. Doesn't that make you feel good?

### **Mandy Matney** 40:50

Right. And that's what David settles with. David was like, they don't have people coming up to them at the Dominican Republic Airport saying thank you Good job, like, these people are losers, we are doing the right thing. They are not we have supporters, they do not.

### **Liz Farrell** 41:04

He is right. I'll tell you though, it is hard. Like before the show, we started recording, Eric was telling us about a really good compliment that we got from somebody important. And we get a lot of that behind the



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scenes from people in within the justice system that you know, the movers and the shakers, and we find that they're following us and that they're listening to every episode. And all of that stuff never resonated with me, because it was sort of just like, my mind was always focused on personal safety, but also just you put yourself out there. And I don't know that I was like, well equipped for just how attacked we would be. And normally I just I was used to a certain amount of criticism from people based on my column and all of that, but it's different. It's just a whole different level, there's a difference between being known locally and being known beyond just the state of South Carolina. And so it's a lot and I think that caused me not to attach to compliments, in a way that like made me feel good. And I just this morning, I think had the first time because of what this past week was like Mandy the first time where I've actually felt like good about a compliment. And good to know, like, I'm grateful for everyone out there who supported us. I really am. It's just never connected like the two sides of that never connected for me, because I was so consumed with this feeling of am I doing the right thing? What do we need to look at next? Is it worth it? Like, is it worth fighting this battle constantly. So I just I'm really, I'm excited. I feel like this is a turning point for us. And I feel like this site getting taken down is just huge. And I think if criminal charges were to come from this, that would be a huge sign, not just like to our world and within our world, outside of our worlds that online harassment is that there's no there's not going to be a protection maybe or an absolute protection for people using anonymous accounts. If we can sort of smoke them out and reveal who these people are, and hold them accountable for the things that they've been saying online that go beyond just sharing their their opinion,



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**Eric Bland** 43:03

I can safely say that two judges have come up to me within the past two weeks, and said that they listened to every single episode of True Sunlight and Cup of Justice. And that floored me it's one thing for ordinary citizens who are our fans to listen to it. But two really well known well respected judges who listened to every one of our episodes, and one of them wrote me a note and said, thank you very much for your dog in pursuit of justice. And when I saw the word justice on a note, it really floored me because that is what we have pursued. That is we want justice, we want equal treatment. We don't want two systems. We it's what we've been doing for for two years. And for two judges and I had a couple of legislators come up to me, it gives me hope, because there are people in positions of power, that do the right thing. And they listen to us, not to mock us, but because of our voice and what we say and what we've accomplished. So I feel horrible for you Mandy, but I want you to feel a little bit better because there are people who are important in their daily lives that really respect what you're doing. And look we're all insecure we all have our own issues and feelings of insecurity or inferiority like I have, but when you get that good compliment, enjoy it, let it resonate, think about it your earned income.

**Mandy Matney** 44:38

Well, yeah, and just one more thing I want to say the I think I saw them a saw a Instagram post the other day that said, spend no time on people committing to misunderstanding you. And that's what all of these people this. It was so beyond criticism. It was people that no matter what I would do, I would go left they would criticize me for not going right I would go right they would they were committed to misunderstanding me. And they were committed to seeing me through their lens of hatred and nothing that I could possibly do could



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ever change that. And I have to accept that. And that's fine. I don't even care. But what I want for the future is, this is not okay. And I think that it is not, it is not okay to behave like this online. And it's scary. And I also want people to know that it's not that hard to find out who these people are, most of them are pretty sloppy about making their accounts and their their counseling to other things. And never once have I ever encountered a troll who is doing more than I am. I just want to say that not once have I ever encountered a troll who was more successful than me? Not once they are all jealousy, hatred, all of that is at the heart of this. And it's all about them. It's not about us.

**Liz Farrell** 46:06

So, Eric, you have had a pretty dramatic past couple of weeks with a case that we haven't talked about on the show. Really? I don't think have we brought it up at all? I don't think we have.

**Eric Bland** 46:17

I think we did. Just very briefly briefly, when Dick stepped aside, and Jack swirling came on board. So

**Liz Farrell** 46:23

It's the Greg Leon case, am I saying his last name? Right. You are okay. Greg Leon case out of Columbia. And it is a was a six or seven year old case.

**Eric Bland** 46:33

Yep. Valentine's Day. 2016.



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**Liz Farrell** 46:37

Okay so, yeah, it's seven year old case. And it went to trial this past few weeks and ended up with a guilty verdict for Greg Leon, who's accused of killing his wife's lover, as you say often Eric, who was caught in flagrante with Greg's wife, Greg claimed that it was self defense, the jury did not buy that. And he is a personal friend of yours. So I didn't know if you wanted to tell us just a little bit about what these last few weeks been like for you and what your involvement in the case was, and sort of your thoughts on the outcome.

**Eric Bland** 47:16

So Greg is one of my oldest clients, but my attorney client relationship with Him pales in comparison to my friendship with him. He's probably one of my top three or four friends. A lot of my clients are my friends. But he he is a special friend. And so to watch what he is going through over the past seven years, has been tough for me, I've had to, you know, provide legal advice to him on this and a whole multitude of other issues, corporate labor issues, because he owns nine restaurants. But he's just a really good guy. I know that, you know, the listeners are saying, well, how can a murderer be a good guy. I mean, we're talking about five seconds in somebody's life that they did something that now he's going to pay for for the rest of his life his family will pay for, you know, this is I don't quibble with the jury. But this isn't a guy that was a serial criminal. This is the most generous man that I've ever met in my life. He He provides financial assistance to over 50 families in Mexico. And he does it without fanfare. It's not publicly noted. He, you know, if there's a fire in Lexington or Columbia and somebody loses their house, he contributes to them. He has many houses where people who don't have homes, he lets live rent rent free. He employs over 160 people and the hardest working man I've ever met my life. I mean, seven o'clock in



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the morning, with a smile on his face receiving, you know, deliveries to his restaurants all the way up to 1130 at night before this happened. And unfortunately, his wife was having an affair. He suspected that there was another reason for her detachment from their marriage. He thought she was doing drugs. She had lost a lot of body weight. There was money missing for her safe and he thought that, you know, there was a drug issue and he had a tracker on her car because of the money missing from the house and it pinged on Valentine's Day Night. After he took the family and her to dinner after he bought his wife, roses in a diamond ring. And the car the ping came across his phone that his wife had left their home, left their children there and was at a park and ride parking lot. So he left his restaurant at a twin bed eight o'clock at night and drove there in Lexington and there were two cars in the parking lot. His wife's Mercedes and a white pickup truck that his wife ended up actually buying for her Paramore. Greg got out of his car went there thinking that his wife was in danger, according to him, and there's video he heard a scream, you could see pulls a gun out. He had a concealed weapons permit because he carries large amounts of cash from the restaurant to banks at the end of the day. And he opened up the car door and like you said, his wife and her lover were engaged in sexual relations. And according to Greg, the lover reached and the law says based on appearances, you have the right to protect yourself. And so Greg shot him three times, and he was charged with murder. My participation was both as a lawyer, I received a phone call from Greg immediately, two phone calls, I was celebrating Valentine's Day with Rene in Charleston. And as a result of my interactions with him, I we turned him in to Lexington Police and he was charged with murder. So for the past seven years, he's been under house arrest. And I was trying to convince Greg to plead to voluntary manslaughter, trying to work out a play, he would not go along with it. He's very religious man, he felt



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justified what he did and would say to me, you know, God's gonna watch out for me. And I said, you know, I hope so. But, you know, you have a Lexington County 12 jurors, and they may view this differently. And he went to trial, he would not accept advice to pursue a plea. And the jury came back in an hour and five minutes after a three week trial and found them guilty of murder. The sentence for murder is 32 life, very strong sentencing judge and I gave, I could not participate in the trial because I was put down as a witness for the government that they were going to call me because I was the one that received the phone call after the shooting. And I brought him in to turn himself in. So I made the plea and mitigation, I argued that you know exactly what I just said you about Greg and a whole bunch of other stuff. And I was bawling like a baby for 30 minutes as I was making this argument. And the judge ended up only giving him the minimum of 30 years, but 30 years is 30 years. It's day for day without parole. Greg is 56 years old, he has seven children. And he's a diabetic. So the the prospect of him living to 86 in prison is probably minimal. You know, the health care in prison we all have heard about it is and what we get out here. And prisoners don't live long in prison past the age of 75. Because of the the health of food and the tough conditions as it should be. And so for me, it was the loss of a friend. Now I received a lot of backlash because I posted something about my feelings as a person, not as a lawyer, but as a person losing a friend, I've lost a friend that chapter in my life is over. Yes, I will have a relationship with Him periodically visit, right put money in his canteen, yada, yada. But I lost a friend. It would be like losing you, Liz or Mandy. And I wrote about it. And somebody immediately criticize me and say, Well, how is this any different than your criticism that you gave to Jim Griffin about Alex Murdaugh? You know, Jim is a friend of Alex and you guys, meaning Eric had been so critical of why couldn't he see objectively through the lens of what Alex was? And I immediately





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responded and said, Oh, no, no, no, no, it's not apples and apples. Greg Leon did not steal \$10 million from his clients. Greg chameleon is not accused of killing a wife and a son. Greg Leon was a charitable individual, Greg Leon was a religious man. There were 300 people in that courtroom every day supporting Greg Leon, who were who were wanting to speak at his sense about what he did for their child who had leukemia, what he did for man that came over and became a US citizen, how he made sure that that guy got all the air conditioning work for his restaurants and his homes. So I don't criticize Jim, for his dedication to Alex and his loyalty to Alex, but Greg Leon and Alex Myrtle are two different people because Greg Leon made a mistake. In five seconds, he he could have stopped and retreated, I guess. Or, as the solicitor said, when you catch your wife having an affair, you only have two choices in our civilized society. go to counseling and try to save your marriage or go to court and get a divorce. worse. So I understand and I don't dispute that Greg may have done something wrong, more than he should have by shooting. But that's five seconds. Alex Myrtle did this over 12 1314 years lived an immoral life lived a life of lack of honor lived the life of thievery. So for me, I was thinking, losing Greg as a friend. When Jim speaks, he talks about the legality of Alex, but never addresses the morality of Alex. So that's the difference. And that's why, you know, last week was pretty tough for me.

### **Liz Farrell** 55:37

Seemed like people were wanting to jump on you. Like it gave them an opportunity to jump on you. One question, why didn't he consider like, is there such a thing as a crime of passion, not excusing any kind of passion, but yeah.



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### **Eric Bland** 55:53

Voluntary manslaughter, I had discussions with the solicitor along the way over the past five years about a voluntary plea, and he probably could have gotten somewhere between seven and 12, the 13 years, he served house arrest for six years. So you would be given some credit for that. And then if you go in prison, and you're good prisoner, you basically serve 52% of your time in state court. So he could have been out possibly in about four years. Now. That's not that's a long time. I don't get me wrong. But you have a life. You come out at 60 years old. You you can't gamble. Listen, gambling with money is one thing. But gambling with Liberty is a completely different kettle of fish. You don't heads I walk out of this courtroom, tails, I got a life sentence. You can't do that. You You have to recognize I made a decision that has legal consequences. But I don't want to wreck my life. I don't want to wreck my children's life. Listen, he's not going to get to see his kids get married. He's not going to get to see grandchildren. He's not going to get to, to go to, you know, celebrations of Christmas. I mean, it's over. He doesn't get to go to funerals. It's it's over. And so I was so yes, but he there was he couldn't see his wife for seven years, because there was a charge of attempted murder because she was in the backseat, and he shot a gun discharged the firearm in the commission of a felony. The point is, I had a situation and a workout for him, that he could have a life and I could have a friend and he made the decision. That's his decision. That's his freedom. But I was I've been very frustrated about it. So that's it. Yeah.

### **Mandy Matney** 57:43

I like it. I've never been in that scenario, Eric. So I don't know. And I'm sorry that you're going through that. And I'm sorry that you lost a friend. I have a hard time sympathizing with people that when they obviously



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committed a crime and drag the system through a long court process, that was a pretty long trial. And that kind of frustrates me. I'll be completely honest. I do not know the details. Mill understand. I respect that the case. Yeah. I and I think it's hard to um I don't know if people if there is such thing as a like, I don't know, I have a hard time excusing this behavior of he was outraged because his wife cheated on him. And I think that I just have a problem with that. Because I feel like a lot of men in general just cannot control their anger. And I think that that's a huge societal problem. If he would have just freakin taken a beat and thought about divorce so many things. They do not understand seeking somebody out with a gun and going to somebody's car and finding someone and then thinking that you can claim well, he

**Eric Bland** 59:15

thought that his wife was doing drugs, but you are entirely correct. The jury felt your way. I'm not I'm not disputing that. They they are what I'm saying is I made a personal reflection and a personal revelation on Twitter. And like you said, Liz, people jumped on it. Because there's people waiting to pounce on us for just being human. And just speaking from the heart. And so I'm going to continue to speak from the heart and people can jump me all they want. And I understand it. But the point I was making is there's a big difference between Greg and Alex.

**Mandy Matney** 59:53

Yeah, and I think so too.



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**Liz Farrell** 59:54

Yeah. And I would say as far as that's covering the case, we didn't we've done That is not a story that Greg Leon story was not one that would be one that we would cover in, in our work. And what we're doing.

**Mandy Matney** 1:00:08

And I also just want to say that like, we weren't hiding by not talking about this, the entire time people accused us of like, Oh, they're not talking about it. Because now we understand that Eric was going through a lot. I think we did the best thing, which was to wait until the end of the trial. And I think it's perfectly fine that you express your feelings in the way that you did on Twitter, like, that's humans are complicated. And murder is very complicated. It's never a no two murders are the same, no two situations are the same. And I think that the more I think we need more people being real, we need more emotional responses like that from men, Eric, who are able to process their feelings and put it out there, and you've gotten a lot of good feedback. You've got a lot of also good support. I did see that. Oh, yeah, I did. A lot of people just saying I'm so sorry, Eric, I have no, I had no idea what you're going through. And so people said,

**Eric Bland** 1:01:05

I'm all heart, you know, which is nice, that makes you feel good. Right?

**Mandy Matney** 1:01:09

But that's the thing that I think that it's it's healthy for people to process emotions in that way. And, but people don't, but ugly people don't want that they, they attach to the nugget of why this can make you bad. And again, they're committed to misunderstanding you.



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**Eric Bland** 1:01:29

I'll debate honest disagreement, but when you personalize it, and you demean me or you mock how I look or how I dress or then then you know, you've just lost your credibility on the subject. You're just trying to demean me and humiliate me and tear me down.

**Liz Farrell** 1:01:50

So it's interesting that we're talking about that no two murders are the same and that there are different reasons for people committing murder, and this is not to justify it. But this next story that I want to talk about is from the Charleston Post and Courier and a reporter named Shana add Cox, and the posting courier won a Pulitzer Prize for its coverage of domestic violence in the state of South Carolina. And they wrote about Shana wrote about what's called the free Tiffany movement. And this is a woman who killed her abuser, essentially, who was the father of one of her kids. She was pregnant at the time. And this is, you know, they outline the abuse that she was going through, it was pretty, it was significant. The number of times police were called to her house, and she just ultimately stabbed them to death. And she tried to save his life. They were in the middle of an argument. She tried to defend herself, she said and ended up stabbing him. And as 911 was on its way she was trying to save the life of the man that she loved, but who was abusing her. So her name is Tiffany Janae. Carol, and she was up for parole. The judge that sentenced her, sentenced her to 15 years, but gave her the opportunity to serve just 25% of that accounting for the fact that she's a victim of domestic violence. But the parole board did not agree. And they did not say why they did not agree. But there's so many interesting things to talk about with this case, because especially when we talk about the drewed price case, which is the man who got released early from his murder sentence and had nothing but



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a garbage record while in the Department of Corrections. This woman Tiffany, you know what she was getting sentenced, she told the judge that she's having a hard time forgiving herself. She has taken anger management classes, she's taken parenting classes. She's in sexual trauma therapy, she seems to have done everything right, while behind bars in terms of atoning for her actions and also trying to better herself and her kids are rallying to get her out of prison because they need her and we have a state senator who is actually seeking a pardon for her. But there's a quote that I want to read to you guys that I thought was really interesting is this. Like I said, she is having a hard time forgiving herself. The judge asked me why I didn't leave him or why did I stay? But it was hard leaving someone you love. And I had a lot of faith in him. And I just wanted to see him get better. And this is such an emotional quote for a domestic somebody the last question what is a Woman's Day and

**Eric Bland** 1:04:43

I hate the question.

**Liz Farrell** 1:04:45

Why did you say

**Eric Bland** 1:04:47

I hate the question? What what right is it of him to ask a woman? Why did you stay when you have children you may not be economically independent. You may be emotionally tied is that it's, it's, it's a big question like, why don't you just get up and leave? Like, where are you supposed to go?



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**Liz Farrell** 1:05:06

Right? Right. There's that.

**Mandy Matney** 1:05:10

Especially as I talked to more solicitors who have prosecuted domestic violence cases, Mandy powers, neural is one in particular, she's a part time solicitor in South Carolina. And we've talked about this over and over how important it is for women to become financially independent before they get into marriages. Because that is like, if you're financially dependent, and you're in an abusive relationship, it's nearly impossible to get out of it. And a lot of people don't understand that a lot of people don't talk about that. And it's just really frustrating that we skipped over that part, and we put it on the woman as to, why didn't you leave? Well, what resources did she have to leave? How could she have possibly how could she have left, let's talk about that. She was in a position where it were her abuser was probably isolating her, and making her feel more and more powerless. We've seen that time and time again. And it's just, it's just tragic club.

**Eric Bland** 1:06:24

Plus, even if she does leave, sometimes she's saying to herself, whether it's rationally or not, he'll haunt me and chase me to the gates of Hell, if I leave. Maybe if I stay, I can be beat less, or he'll beat me, but not my kids, you know what I'm saying, Who let him beat on me and not my kids. And if I leave, then this guy's gonna go on a rampage, you know, it's not for me to get inside her head to figure out why she was staying. That's just wrong.



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### **Mandy Matney** 1:06:55

Yeah, and I don't mean to say something super obvious. But like, if you peel back the layers of like a lot of women, Maggie Murdaugh included, were in these positions where it was nearly impossible to leave their husbands and society in a really weird way. Push her into that position to say the best of the best status that you want is to have a rich husband, and you can stay at home and have kids and blah, blah, blah. But at the end of the day, if your husband is cheating on you, or abusing you in any way, you don't have a lot of power to lose

### **Liz Farrell** 1:07:35

that. And there's love. And I'm just going to talk about this part, because it's the mushy part. But this was a childhood friend of Tiffany that she was in a relationship with, she had known for a very long time, she was pregnant with his child. And she loved him. And I think that it's very, we don't talk about this because it's not black and white. It's there's an emotional pole as well that you don't want to believe this person who, during the best of times loves you in a way that makes you feel safe and secure and happy, is capable of doing the monstrosities that they do. And you want to believe them when they recognize and in her case and Tiffany's case he would recognize what he did, and make amends for it and apologize and promise it will never happen again. And of course, that's the cycle of abuse that happens. So that's very human. And the state of South Carolina and most states are not necessarily known for being human. So we have these sort of cold laws, these cold ways of approaching things except for people with money. So when somebody has money, or the ability to hire, let's say, a Todd Rutherford, to engage a judge, let's say a Judge Casey Manning, to talk to a solicitor, perhaps Byron Gibson, to get the wheels moving to get you out of prison for where you're supposed to spend the rest of your natural life. And then





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you have a situation like this with a woman who it's tragic how she ended up in and it's not to say murder, like there's no excusing, like you said, Eric, with Greg Leon. There's consequences for your actions when you break the law. But there should be if we are going to entertain the fact though, that it's okay for a state legislator to get paid ostensibly to help free a murderer who had a terrible record in the Department of Corrections. Why are we not doing more to extend compassion to a woman who was defending herself who immediately recognized that she had made a mistake and tried to save the life of the man that she stabbed? She did not stab him 100 times she stabbed him twice, I think or two Two or three times three. Yeah, three times.

### **Eric Bland** 1:10:02

It's the same five seconds. Isn't it? The same talked about is seconds. Crap, seconds. Right. Gerald, Gerald price wasn't a five second crime. It was a lifetime of gang banging a lifetime of illegal activity, this woman, five seconds.

### **Liz Farrell** 1:10:19

She's done the things that you would want a prisoner to do while behind bars in terms of trying to better prepare themselves for outside life and seems like somebody who values freedom. Why are we not doing more? Why isn't the state doing more than something that our Governor Henry McMaster, if he does not pardon this woman, I asked what the pardon is for. And I think we should start looking into who he has pardoned in the past, if anyone and look into who he has helped cut a break for. Because this is an opportunity for this justice system to say, we're going to cut a break for somebody who deserves it rather than somebody who paid for it.



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**Eric Bland** 1:11:03

We want to encourage drug prices in the prison to come forward and do the right thing. If there's going to be a hit on somebody or somebody is going to be abused to step forward and not be a snitch, but safe people that you can help.

**Mandy Matney** 1:11:22

Right, you want to encourage other you want to use these laws as a way to encourage better behavior for all inmates in the system. And what better way to do that is to say, look at this shining example of this woman made one mistake, and look at all the things that she did well, while she was in prison. It doesn't get any better than that. And guess what we did? We rewarded her instead. If the state does nothing, then all the other prisoners are going to say why would I bother? The

**Liz Farrell** 1:11:56

The judge said that she could serve 25% of her sentence and acknowledging that there was domestic violence at play. So we're not asking for something special. We're not asking for something above and beyond. We're just certainly we're just asking for accountability with the parole board. And, you know, to explain why they denied her parole, and, you know, Governor, McMaster should look into that. That pardon? Yeah,

**Eric Bland** 1:12:23

I think he actually ran on originally on a platform that he was going to do more for domestic violence victims. If you look back on it, he was going to require prosecutors to prosecute more cases and yada yada. You know, until we have a society where more men are domestic violence victims and women this is gonna keep happening.



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**Liz Farrell** 1:12:47

Right until we start hitting. Yeah, good lord.

**Mandy Matney** 1:12:53

But are we getting more women making the laws?

**Liz Farrell** 1:12:55

That's right, get more women making laws it to acknowledge that there's not everything I have to sell to tell you like going back to like Governor McMaster. And his reaction to the drug price release, like, obviously was very like, not my kingdom. But then, at the end of the day, like, he's coming out for more reforms for there to be harsher penalties for criminals when he's missing the point entirely, which is that you shouldn't be able to buy your way out of accountability. And that's, that's just the simple way to say it, like purchasing freedom should not be allowed in South Carolina. That's what your rod price seem to do. And this woman cannot purchase her freedom. She's simply asking for the state to recognize that she served her time. So let's do a quick question. Courtroom question, Eric, where would I find a lawyer to help with a bad real estate deal renovation gone bad, or something small that wouldn't have a big payday, but need some weight behind remedies? But on a limited budget? What can people do? And this is a very important question, because when I worked at the sheriff's office, we got reports, it seemed like every day of people in dispute with contractors contract. Exactly. So. And the answer that we had to give them was not one that they they liked in terms of could they file a criminal complaint against them? There's a civil remedy remedy, usually in magistrate's court, correct



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**Eric Bland** 1:14:30

there is that but there's also the LLR the Department of Labor and licensing. Oftentimes the shady contractors don't have a contractor's license, and therefore they can suffer administrative penalties by LLR. If they do have a contractor's license, and that the work that they did was beneath the standard of care or against code, or violates the contract rights LLR can take to license your actions against the contractor, so you do have an administrative remedy that they can order some type of money to be returned. A lot of times though, these contractors do have a bond that they serve under. And so you can make a claim against that. The question is, well, if it's just, you know, I'm putting four new windows on the back of my screened in porch and closing it in, and he did it, and they leak, and it's ruined my foundation, and he won't come back. And, you know, I paid him. What do I do? There are lawyers out there that there's younger lawyers, listen to me. Go to that first year law student that just hung a shingle out there that's looking for work. I remember when I was a young lawyer, I would take anything, not because I wanted so much the money, yes, I needed the money. But if I could do a good job for Mrs. Jones, I know that Mrs. Jones is going to have a legal problem. In the next 10 years, she's going to get an auto accident, she's going to want a contract drafted, or she has a daughter or friend that's gone had a catastrophic medical malpractice case. And she's gonna say, Man, Eric Bland, he's such a good lawyer, you wouldn't believe what he did to me, he fought for me so hard, over a \$1,200 dispute, any put his teeth in, in the contractors, they asked, and he wouldn't let go. And I finally got my money, or the contractor came back and did the work. As a young lawyer, you you want to do good work, because if you do good work, it'll come back 10 times over. So yes, there are certain cases where you do need seasoned lawyers and expertise, and, you know, people that have been down that road before,

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but oftentimes a young lawyer is hungry, and he'll get the job done. So find yourself a young lawyer.

**Liz Farrell** 1:16:55

I like that advice so much. That's really good advice, Eric. I think that's, that's great. How could people find young lawyers? Where does one? Where does one go to find a young lawyer? Well,

**Eric Bland** 1:17:07

you would look, you know, you'd ask around in your town to you know, if there's an you go see a lawyer, and a lawyer is going to say, look, this is not enough money for me, I'm sorry. You know, it's an economic issue. And you ask, you say, Well, do you know the younger lawyer that is hungry for work, and you've seen would do a good job, and they'll give you two or three names? If not, you look in the phone book, and you go to the bar and the bar. The bar website will tell you when that person graduated law school, and if it's in your area, you go to that person. And oftentimes in a big firm, like Nelson Mullins or McNair and next and Pruitt, they have pro bono required hours that young lawyers have to do. And you call up Nelson Mullins or McNair and you say, Who's the pro bono director of your firm? And they have a pro bono director, a lawyer that's in charge of it, and they make young lawyers do these kinds of jobs to get experience?

**Liz Farrell** 1:18:07

Amazing. I'd love this such good advice. That's so useful. Yeah, that's

**Mandy Matney** 1:18:11

I really I wouldn't have thought of that.



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**Liz Farrell** 1:18:13

Our newsroom Question of the day. Mandy is, what is applicable to FOIA? And what is not? And what happens if my FOIA is denied? Those are very complicated questions to answer. Do you want to give it a step?

**Mandy Matney** 1:18:29

Okay. With any event that is happening within the government, any anything was in a public agency, whether it's their money, whether it's their emails, their time? But if you I'm trying to answer this in the best way, you start with, what? What can I ask for to get more information out of that? So if you think that somebody is stealing money from your school board, what can I do to? What can I do to get more information and more records from my school board to see if that's true or not true? Let's start with that question.

**Liz Farrell** 1:19:10

So the first thing you should do is check out your Press Association in the state where you live, because oftentimes, your Press Association will give you a very user friendly guide on what your state's FOIA covers. And it's important because in the case that made you just mentioned, I would look at the first of all, I would look at the minutes, I would look at the minutes from the meetings to see how things were decided who voted how, what have you. I would also the budget is is public information. So I would look for the budget to see if there's any, these are very dense documents though. So I would essentially you got to isolate the problem and look where the accountability lies in terms of Have your tax dollars. So if it's a situation involving your school board, these are elected officials. So you start by maybe I would like to see their emails from January 2022, between school board member a, and this



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company that I think that they are hiring because it belongs to their sister in law, something like that. So you can isolate it down to just what your your information, what your gut is telling you, but but isolate it. And there's all sorts of best practices and what have you in terms of how to ask for things. But I would start with your Press Association, because, for instance, South Carolina Press Association offers a really good Citizens Guide to the FOIA. And it's not only good for you, it's good. It's like public officials guide actually, oftentimes, public employees don't understand FOIA themselves, and they will try to shut you down or make it difficult for you to get information without fully understanding the law. So find out what is public information, if you want to find out what what your school board members being paid, or what receipts they're they're putting in to get their lunches reimbursed or what travel they're doing. That's all public information, you can ask for that.

**Eric Bland** 1:21:21

So and if you're not getting that information, we do have the ability to do a FOIA lawsuit where you actually can sue that state agency for violating the Sunshine laws of our state and the foil laws of our state and you can recover your fees. And there are lawyers out there. They do FOIA lawsuits. So it is a powerful weapon. But you guys have nailed it. It's how you frame the question. That's the most important thing to get the answers you want.

**Liz Farrell** 1:21:52

Also want to throw this out there. I love FOIA lawsuits for obvious reasons, but also because the discovery is often shared with Reporter So we get to see the things that people ask for. So there were a lot of stories that I've done in my career that were the result of things that were found that were not the original target, but happened to come as



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part and parcel of somebody's FOIA that they sued for. So always, always be generous with your FOIA as people, because reporters can't always afford to do it.

### **Mandy Matney** 1:22:22

And on that note, we will have a lot more when it comes to FOIA as for our Luna Shark Premium members will have we are planning a whole series and we are in the works of it and both doing some things with true sunlight, including because FOIA is just such a powerful weapon as as you just said, FOIA is at the core of everything. And what makes me so mad is that hardly anybody understands it has heard of it. It is not just for journalists, it should be for everyone. And that's our goal. We're going to make it for everyone make it much more accessible.

### **Liz Farrell** 1:22:57

It is a powerful, powerful tool. It is it is your tool is as a citizen. So I wanted to talking about the series that Luna shark is planning, we want to throw shout out to Beth Braden our researcher for being the peskiest of the pesky shooting girl. She is doing great. She had a phone call with somebody when we were looking for information. And Mandy and I listened to the phone call and I could not have been happier with where you giggling wasn't just giggling. I was in awe actually, yeah, really proud. Because it you can't always and this is my mantra and I think connected so much is you can't always rely on people to do their job the way you would do it. So when you find somebody that does your job, their job the way that you and your mind would do it or that you would do it. If you could do it can't be everywhere at once. It just is such a relief and it was just a moment of She's really good. She's just really good at making connections and getting information from people and she's pesky. She's pesky, but polite as Mandy has called her before. So





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that thank you for doing such a great job. And we have so much in store for people on both this podcast and true Sunday podcasts, including for Premium Members maybe do you want to talk about the happy hour that's happening Thursday at six o'clock.

### **Mandy Matney** 1:24:26

There's a happy hour with myself, Eric Bland and Drew Lawrence. We have talked about before but we have not introduced him to you all. He has worked as a freelancer and various gigs including for The Guardian. And he's just a really cool and he's now a contributor with Luna shark and you guys will love him. He is a talented reporter on July 13 at 6:30pm Join us Luna Shark Premium members and I think on that note, cups down.

### **Liz Farrell** 1:24:58

Cups down guys. Great episode was good seeing you again.

### **Eric Bland** 1:25:02

Cups down. Wow what an episode man we covered the gamut.

### **Mandy Matney** 1:25:14

This Cup of Justice episode is created and hosted by me Mandy Matney with co-host Liz Farrell, our executive editor and Eric Bland Attorney at Law aka the Jackhammer of Justice. From Luna Shark Productions.