



EPISODE 27: How Did This Happen? Latest Scandal Shows Just How Much Secrecy Exists in Judicial System

[00:00:00] **Mandy Matney:** Hello and Happy Monday. Liz and I have always talked about the Murdaugh case in terms of monsters being around every corner, meaning that back when we started reporting on this case in 2019, it seemed like every new bit of information led to another monster, another rabbit hole that we had to go down. This week, we were reminded that those monsters don't just exist in the Murdaugh world. This week, Eric, Liz, and I couldn't wait to talk about the Jeroid Price case. Price, a convicted murderer who was just starting year 20 of his 35-year sentence, hired a high-powered legislator-lawyer who was somehow able to broker a secret deal with a solicitor and a retiring judge that allowed for his early release. And it seems like they told no one about this — not the Department of Corrections, not law enforcement, and most importantly, not the victims, the family of Carl Smalls Jr., who was killed by Price in 2002. Of course, right after we put our cups down on Thursday, more breaking news happened, so it was cups up again. The three of us got together early Saturday morning to talk about the latest updates, so we have a great episode for you in store. Let's get into it.

[00:01:34] **Liz Farrell:** Well, cups up, everyone. Cups up, Eric.

[00:01:38] **Eric Bland:** Cups up, Liz.

[00:01:39] **Liz Farrell:** Cups up, Mandy.

[00:01:41] **Mandy Matney:** Cups up.

[00:01:41] **Liz Farrell:** How are you doing?

[00:01:42] **Mandy Matney:** Doing good.

[00:01:43] **Eric Bland:** Doing great.

[00:01:44] **Liz Farrell:** I like your shirt. Is that because of the settlement you got? It says lucky.



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[00:01:49] **Eric Bland:** No, it's — yeah, I feel lucky this week 'cause I'm starting to finally get over, you know, this knee the knee replacement and starting to feel a little bit better, so I'm feeling lucky. So that's why I put the shirt on today.

[00:02:03] **Liz Farrell:** And you're back in the courtroom this week, huh?

[00:02:05] **Eric Bland:** I was part-time. My partner Ronnie and my associate Scott tried the case this week and we settled this morning before closing arguments. So it was a good week, very good week for our clients.

[00:02:16] **Liz Farrell:** Yeah. Good. And Mandy, it's been a — what, 60 seconds since we last talked with — ?

[00:02:22] **Mandy Matney:** Oh, man. What a week. It's really interesting because like I was not getting bored with what how things were. I was kind of like it's weird. There hasn't been a lot of movement in a lot of the cases in the last week, but it was it's been nice also because everybody kind of got to breathe for a minute and really regroup, and then Monday hit. Eric called David as we were trying to come up with ideas for the episode. And then, this like superstorm. I feel like we were hit by another huge monster, which is the Jeroid Price case and you — who wants to explain that in a nutshell?

[00:03:06] **Eric Bland:** I can or Liz can. What I think it does show — before we get into the facts — is that we have to be vigilant, that we never can relax with our justice system, that as soon as we start to feel confident or satisfied or we feel like that it's on the right course in the right direction, something can just throw it right back into haywire, and this case certainly did. I got a phone call from somebody in law enforcement who I did not know but is a fan of MMP and COJ who said that there's gonna be a story breaking on Tuesday. Do I know David Pascoe? And I said, of course I know David Pascoe. And she said, well, he's livid.

[00:03:56] **Liz Farrell:** David Pascoe is the solicitor of the First Circuit in South Carolina and.

[00:04:02] **Eric Bland:** And he's a very famous solicitor because he's butt heads with Alan Wilson. You know, this week also, Richard Quinn pled guilty or nolo contendere — plea in front of Judge Carmen Mullen — again, Judge



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Mullen, so we had a lot of our old favorites this week. David has butted heads with Alan Wilson and has taken him to the Supreme Court. Alan Wilson tried to get him off the case and, I mean, David Pascoe and David is a very good prosecutor. And in 2003, he prosecuted a pretty bad guy and he was convicted of murder and he got 35 years and he was a high-ranking member in one of the gangs. And according to David, the man had threatened David before the trial and even after the trial. And he went to Broad River and where murderers go. And supposedly, he threatened the warden, the assistant warden, and was running his gang from the prison. And in an extraordinary event that I was never really aware of, they transferred him to New Mexico to serve out the remainder of his time. So can you imagine how bad you have to be to get transferred out of South Carolina? This isn't federal prison — federal to federal. It's comedy. It's one state to another. So I don't know what South Carolina had to take in return.

[00:05:45] **Liz Farrell:** That's a great question.

[00:05:46] **Eric Bland:** To give up somebody like him. And why New Mexico, you know? Why not Idaho or whatever? And I don't know whether there was a supermax prison there. And so the man did 19 years of his time. And as we know, Judge Manning recently retired. And this deputy told me this story that Todd Rutherford, who's a House of Representative on the Judiciary Committee, a high-ranking minority leader, and Byron Gipson, who is our Fifth Circuit solicitor, went to Judge Manning. And I don't know the circumstances. David Pascoe was not informed. The victim's family, I was told, got less than two hours' notice. And for some reason and a secret hearing was done with a secret order — this is what I was told — that changed his sentence from 35 years to time served of 19 years. And a murder sentence is day for day under our statute. So if you get 35 years, you have to serve 35 years. And he was let go. And we don't know the circumstances of why he was let go. Was he a cooperating witness? Was somebody's life was in danger? He saved somebody's life? Don't know the circumstances. But what I do know is that our justice system didn't need this at this time. We thought we were over this. In fact, I was in judge's chambers this morning on our settlement, and he said we're going on court record to put this settlement on record. He said, and thanks to you, guys, and he turned to Ronnie and me. It was Judge McKinnon who said, you know, I want to do it on the record and, you know, you guys, you guys were the pioneers of making us do that. And lo and behold, this thing



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just pops up and it just checks all of the boxes of the fears and insecurities that we have that is still going on in our system.

[00:08:00] **Liz Farrell:** What's interesting is that Jeroid Price was sentenced by at the time Circuit Court Judge Reggie Lloyd, who ended up becoming the director of SLED afterward. So he was sentenced to 35 years but without the opportunity of parole. So there was not only the statute — not only did the statute prohibit him from getting this time served order, he didn't have any wiggle room when it came to parole anyway. So what's interesting — we were just talking about this before the show — but there were such a problem with judges' sealing court records prior to 2003 that the State Supreme Court, after the federal court did the same thing, changed the law to prohibit judges from doing it in cases related to public agencies or public figures. And like there are few circumstances under which you can seal a record. But I will say we have seen such abuse of it anyway, regardless of what these other reasons that you can seal a record involving a public agency. And what's funny is that when I worked at *The Island Packet*, my editor, Fitz McAden went head-to-head with Judge Carmen Mullen because she was, in his view in our view at *The Packet*, abusing that and basically in our view, doing something illegal, which was that she was continuing to seal documents involving public agencies. And you had mentioned the Quinn case earlier, which is a major corruption case in South Carolina legislature and Carmen Mullen was involved with that and so was like you said David Pascoe. So not only is David Pascoe known as a competent and successful prosecutor, he is also known as one of the people in public office in South Carolina who's been willing to go up against corruption, and one of the people he's gone head-to-head with twice is Judge Carmen Mullen as well. So that's kind of — when you say all the players that we've we're well-introduced to are involved, you're not kidding. It's really.

[00:10:18] **Eric Bland:** And just to give you an example, this morning alone, the defense attorney, when we announced the settlement, didn't want to put it on court record. And I said, I am not settling a physical abuse case at a daycare center and doing it not on court record. It's going to be a matter of public record. It's a matter of public importance. And I was gonna blow the settlement so that the public would be aware that this daycare center had allegations of physical abuse. It's that important. And, you know, we just can't have secret settlements. It's just not in the public's best interest. Now, of course, I don't know what information Todd Rutherford and his client were trading in order to get the 35 years to 19. We don't know that yet.



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[00:11:14] **Liz Farrell:** No, no, no, no, no. I like — I'm not even gonna entertain that conversation. Mandy, you can say why.

[00:11:20] **Mandy Matney:** But wait, before we get into that, we also have to realize another ingredient of this is that he has a very powerful defense attorney. Price has a very powerful defense attorney who's also a lawmaker. I don't think Todd Rutherford's name had come up on the podcast before this week, but a lot of people in South Carolina know who he is. He's been in the state legislator since the nineties when he was 23 and in law school. He was elected to the state legislator and he is the House Minority Leader. He's not just a state rep. He's got a lot of power behind him. And he has his own law firm and he is a defense attorney. And Rutherford worked for the Fifth Circuit Solicitor's Office.

[00:12:18] **Liz Farrell:** Which covers the Columbia area.

[00:12:20] **Mandy Matney:** Which covers where this happened and where Byron Gipson now is the solicitor. So I don't think that we can ignore that part. And I know a lot of lawyer-legislators really wanna pretend like everything's fine with the system. But this just keeps happening over and over again. We have Bowen Turner, we have Alex Murdaugh, and we have and now Jeroid Price and with these super powerful — and we can see how much further they can go with a defense attorney like that. And so with — and I'm with Liz in the fact and I really started to pause and think about it. Like if this guy had dirt that brought down the entire Good Ole Boy system, you know? If he had — not even the Bloods, like beyond that. Everything that I'm seeing from the law of murder in South Carolina is that it doesn't matter. You have to serve the minimum of 30 years. It doesn't matter. You cannot — I don't care how much information — if you have information, that just means that like you get more hohos and beat sticks in prison or whatever. Your prison time's a little bit more comfy. If you are serving for murder, you don't get time suddenly off and.

[00:13:40] **Eric Bland:** 16 years.

[00:13:42] **Mandy Matney:** It's a lot of time and.

[00:13:44] **Liz Farrell:** Well, there's also a procedure, so like not — so let's just start here.



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[00:13:48] **Eric Bland:** Yeah, they violated the Victims' Rights Act.

[00:13:50] **Liz Farrell:** Yeah. This shouldn't have happened because the — in our opinion, and I believe a lot of opinions — the law does not allow for it. This guy had a straight sentence. No parole. He had not served the 30-year minimum. He hadn't served even 20 years, I guess. But additionally, there is no parole. The statute literally says you cannot trade information to lessen your sentence in murder. Now, Byron Gipson, who is the current Fifth Circuit Solicitor, came out with a press release last night, a statement, in which he was citing a different statute that said that allows for the exchange of information in an investigation to reduce the sentence of a prisoner. But that, again, that's gonna come head-to-head with the murder statute, right? So what are you doing? So on top of that, like what it was said to me by a source yesterday was it doesn't matter if this guy had information. This isn't, you know, 2001, and he had information on bin Laden. There's still a process you have to go through, notwithstanding the fact that this guy couldn't even get through that door in the first place based on the statute. And then let's add to it they did it in secret. It's like how are we even entertaining a conversation in which it doesn't matter what information he had?

[00:15:06] **Eric Bland:** The big problem for me is the most important people were not present, which are the victims. Again, we go back to victims. Who's more important in our system? Is it the lawyer legislature? Is it the the defendant himself, or the victim? This is a victim's family that lived without a loved one.

[00:15:31] **Liz Farrell:** A nice person within the Department of Corrections apparently made that call to them and said, listen, you're about to get an automated call, but I wanted you to hear this from a human voice. Jeroid Price is gonna get released from prison. So then, sure enough, they got that automated call. But there was no hearing held. Like going back to the that didn't adhere to the process. There was no hearing, and Byron Gipson himself said that in his statement last night. Do you wanna talk about that statement a little bit, Mandy?

[00:16:01] **Mandy Matney:** So as we were trying to finish up MMP last night, we got this — Liz got this statement from Byron Gipson. And I had to really like stop and read it several times because I was like, what is this? I couldn't believe it. And again, I shouldn't be shocked by any of these people anymore,



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but I still am all the time. What that statement should have said is something really wrong happened here and we're trying to get to the bottom of it right now and we're trying to fix it. Instead, it said basically that Byron Gipson the Solicitor said that he met with Todd Rutherford in December, right?

[00:16:45] **Liz Farrell:** Yeah. So this happened — and I think we're probably jumping all over the place here, but in December 2022, Judge Casey Manning retired from the bench. And he — during that month, Henry McMaster, who's our governor, awarded him the Order of the Palmetto, which is one of the highest honors you can get in the state and basically puts him in a small club of people who are considered like the top of the top citizens of South Carolina. So this is when the secret order was initiated or when it was signed anyway. It wasn't executed until March 15th of this year. And when we're talking about this, we're talking about major leaders in law enforcement being caught completely off guard by this. The way people found out about it it seems is because one of the original investigators in the Smalls murder, he heard from somebody who heard from a gang task force member that Jeroid Price was back on the streets. Let's just say he had information to take down the entire organization of Bloods members across the country or something major or significant like that. Law enforcement would've been involved, right? We're not talking about just Byron Gipson the Solicitor, Todd Rutherford the legislator-lawyer, and a retiring judge. Those seem to be the only people who knew about this decision. So you don't have the sheriff of Richland County. You don't have — it doesn't seem like SLED knew anyway, but I don't know that we have an official statement on that. But Alan Wilson, our Attorney General, certainly didn't know. So not it was just — it's absurd. Like it's there's so much to talk about in this that it's like confusing even but.

[00:18:37] **Eric Bland:** The sheriff is very upset. Leon Lott, just so you know, is extremely upset because he has worked very hard on gang violence in Richland County and in breaking up a lot of the gangs, and he was not aware of it, which like you said, Liz it's incomprehensible. With something of this magnitude, there would have to be coordination from law enforcement agencies and governmental officials. It wouldn't be a retired judge, a lawyer-legislator, and just the Fifth Circuit Solicitor. It just wouldn't be that way.

[00:19:09] **Liz Farrell:** I just keep picturing Hannibal Lecter. You know how he like gets like wheeled in because he can help with like the serial murders?



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Can give his insight. Like it's not even at that level, this guy, even though like he told that he was considered "The Godfather" of the Bloods and he was basically running the prisons.

[00:19:29] But anyway, back to this press release statement from Byron Gipson. Mandy, like we, I mean, we were — but this is the thing is like we were done with the writing part of the episode. Like that part was done. But it was like the decision like we talked last night. We're like, what do we do with this statement? Because he's saying I believe my interpretation of the law says that I could do this, but I didn't file a motion the way you're supposed to.

[00:19:55] **Mandy Matney:** But he said that he was going to, basically.

[00:19:58] **Liz Farrell:** I was gonna. I was gonna do it.

[00:20:00] **Mandy Matney:** Right. So in a nutshell, his statement basically said, here's this obscure law that kind of maybe in a weird world could justify this, but I don't think it would hold up in court personally and I'm not a lawyer but we can discuss that at another time. And then he said, but I did meet with — I did meet with Rutherford a couple months ago and I was gonna sign it and do the procedure, but Judge Manning kind of beat me to it and skipped the hearing. So now, because victims deserve a voice, we need to go back and do a hearing and kind of make this right. But that doesn't make any sense because the cat is already out of the bag. There is no — who knows where this guy is at this point?

[00:20:47] **Liz Farrell:** And why, Mandy? Why do we not know where he is?

[00:20:51] **Mandy Matney:** Because the Department of — it's SCPPP — Probation, Parole, and Pardons — has no record of this man. Callie Lyons, our researcher, checked multiple times with different — tried different spellings of the name, etc. They say we have no tabs on him.

[00:21:13] **Eric Bland:** This is how these offices work. Just so you know, there's always a deputy solicitor that's a bookworm. So a politician solicitor has a deputy solicitor that's been in the office for years and years and years the same way that Creighton had Don that's been there for 40 years that knows the rules. So he has a deputy solicitor who would've said to him, Chief, you



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can't do this. Byron, you cannot do this. You cannot do this. Somebody would've had to have said — if he disclosed it to somebody in his office, somebody would've said, Chief, you cannot do this. It's not following the law.

[00:21:53] **Liz Farrell:** So let's talk about that because let's say like, you know, let's say Byron Gipson wasn't part of this in the sense that like this was done in spite of him, and now he's in a situation where he has to explain why he didn't speak up, basically. Let's just say that he did not — he wanted to do this the right way and he felt like he was outmanned. The question is like, what is so wrong with our system that since December — we're now in April. This — first of all, you went four months with no one finding this out. But more than that, since March, like so that was a full month before anyone knew about this. So were these guys just sort of waiting for this to be found out? I just think that that conclusion here is sort of inevitable. I don't know that you do this and you think like, oh, I'm never gonna hear about it again.

[00:22:44] **Mandy Matney:** I just wanted to mention this tweet that I saw yesterday as we were trying to make sense of this. By David Haskins. After the absurd — I thought it was absurd — statement from Gipson's office, David Haskins tweeted, "Oh, the solicitor discussed with the defense and not the victims. This with the defense and not the victims. I missed the part where solicitors were supposed to serve defense counsel instead of the victims of the crimes that they prosecute." And that is the problem here like the fact that this statement was out and he tried to justify it with like, Hey, we were working on a backroom deal with the defense, and then we forgot about the victims. Oops. Is insane because they are working for the victims, not the defense. They should not have entertained that. Like the victims should have been first of their mind and.

[00:23:41] **Liz Farrell:** Do you know what the response to that is though, Mandy? And it's sickening because we've had this come up a lot when we were at the paper like, you work for the victims. That's what we say to prosecutors. Their answer to that is, no, we don't. We work for the state.

[00:23:55] **Eric Bland:** We work for the state.

[00:23:56] **Liz Farrell:** We don't — we do not represent the victims. We do not.



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[00:23:59] **Mandy Matney:** Well, do you work for public safety?

[00:24:01] **Liz Farrell:** Right. Right. You work for the state. Exactly.

[00:24:04] **Mandy Matney:** Do you work for — so if you're working for the state, then public safety should be top of mind, which means backroom deals to let murderers who have threatened — think if you were those wardens that have been threatened like that. Think how they felt about all of this.

[00:24:20] **Eric Bland:** How do you quote a fee? How do you quote a fee on this? Let's talk about this one. So somebody calls Todd Rutherford on the phone, and I don't begrudge Todd for, you know, earning a fee. Lawyers do it all the time. But how do you even quote a fee to say, I'm gonna call you about getting a murderer off that has a 35-year day-to-day sentence that's in New Mexico that was transferred out of our state because he's such a danger to our community and you're gonna try to do some kind of secret deal by going to Byron and Judge Manning? I mean, that's what somebody has to start asking questions about. How do you even formulate this?

[00:25:03] **Liz Farrell:** There's something deeper here, right? I think there's gonna be something deeper because this is so malevolent. You know, we were comparing it to "The Wire" on the show today because this guy obviously is very smart because he has — like I said, we're being told that he sort of run the prisons. And one of the names that has been attached to this is the name Jimmy Causey. We were told that Jeroid Price had information about the escape of Jimmy Causey, who was a prisoner. This escape occurred in May 2017 at a time when Jeroid Price was in New Mexico. Jimmy Causey escaped from Lieber Prison, which is a maximum security prison. And the way he did it is he had — there was a drone that dropped some tools so he could cut his way out of the prison yard. And he used a dummy to sort of fool guards. He was gone 18 hours before the prison system knew he was gone. And the way they knew he was gone is because allegedly Jeroid Price told them. Now, this guy, Jimmy Causey, was found in Texas with \$50,000 in cash, a fake ID, right? And how do you, as Jimmy Causey, who has been in prison since 2003 — this is not his first escape, by the way, and we'll talk about what he did to get in prison in a second — how does that guy get to Texas so quickly? How does he get a drone to come get him out? How does he get \$50,000 in cash in just a few days? Who's funding this? Who's his benefactor, right? So the question or the — I would say the information that I got



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yesterday was that there is a belief out there that Jeroid Price orchestrated the Jimmy Causey escape in order to turn him in and try to negotiate some sort of early release, right?

[00:27:12] But I wanna talk about Jimmy Causey really quickly because as we said earlier, there are a lot of names coming up that are familiar. And one of the names associated with this is attorney Jack Swerling, who you guys have heard Eric talk about a lot. So Eric, do you wanna just quickly say who Jack Swerling is and Jimmy Causey is one of two people that, allegedly high on coke, kidnapped Jack swirling and his wife and his daughter and held them hostage in their home.

[00:27:42] **Eric Bland:** Yes. Jack Swerling is a legend in our state. He is probably the most famous defense criminal attorney in our state. He's tried over 300 murder cases. He's in his seventies. He practices full-time. He's a monster of a man. He's like six feet 10, and he's a huge man with a huge presence and a beaming voice. And he had represented Jimmy Causey and he broke out of prison and he came to Jack Swerling's house at the time in Spring Valley, which is in Northeast Columbia, and held Jack, Erika, and his daughter for 14 hours at gunpoint. Can you imagine that?

[00:28:32] **Liz Farrell:** Do you remember that happening?

[00:28:33] **Eric Bland:** I do. I do. We were so, you know, we were just mortified for Jack. One, he's a, you know, he's a very good friend of ours. Plus, he's in the Jewish community, so we're all close and we're mortified for his family and scared, you know, because, you know, he did a good job for the guy, but the guy got convicted. Sometimes, people get convicted because they actually are guilty. And Jack recognized him. They were wearing masks and Jack recognized him and he came and he wanted Jack's Rolex and money. I mean, it's just a horrible, horrible thing for Jack to go through and Jack's wife and daughter have never been the same. And you can imagine that they've never been the same, never been the same.

[00:29:19] **Liz Farrell:** It sounded terrifying that they held a gun to the back of Jack's neck and duct taped them all. They had just sat down for dinner. So Jimmy Causey escaped from prison in 2005 as well, and he was found in Ridgeland in Jasper County, which is in the Lowcountry in the 14th Circuit. And he was discovered, I believe, by a pizza delivery person who recognized him.



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And I remember that escape as well. This guy, Jimmy Causey, is dangerous. But still, how has this man who was in and out of prison up until his 2004 arrest for what he did to the Swerling family, how is this guy getting this kind of money and this kind of resources? So I guess the supposition behind the scenes was that Jeroid Price had funded this somehow or orchestrated this in order to get his early release. That said, there was supposed to be a hearing today, today's Thursday. In fact, in 20 minutes, that hearing was supposed to be held. And right before the show, we found out that it was canceled and that hearing was to unseal the order. Alan Wilson's office had called for the unsealing, and there's no need to do that because the Supreme Court Chief Justice has agreed to do it as has Byron Gipson and Todd Rutherford. So now, it's on. But do you guys think like — Mandy and I were talking about this a lot yesterday as just, especially after Byron Gipson's statement, the ramifications. Like this has just made it so dangerous for so many people, especially because in Gipson's statement, he mentions that this was an exchange for information about the Bloods. So he's basically put a target on Jeroid Price's back, if Jeroid Price is even in the state. Who knows where he is? So I mean, a lot of people it seems like are having to look over their shoulder, especially knowing how what can go wrong. You know, looking back on what happened to Jack Swerling.

[00:31:14] **Eric Bland:** Let me just ask this basic question. I mean, look. Last two years ago, I had this situation with Judge Mullen and, you know, Judge Casey Manning's a great guy. He's a friend of mine and, you know, he was not happy with what I did with Judge Mullen and what I was bringing out. How did he let himself get in this position? I don't understand how it happens. I don't understand how you get yourself in this position.

[00:31:43] **Mandy Matney:** Well, let's talk about that. So another one of my lawyer friends texted me yesterday and was like Judge Manning is a great person and he's awesome. I can't see him doing this. There's gotta be something. They probably snuck something in or something. What did they tell him? And I — it was the same things that I was hear — I mean, granted, not as many people say that about Carmen Mullen. I will say that. Like a lot of people don't like Carmen Mullen, but a lot more people like Judge Manning and respect him.

[00:32:15] **Eric Bland:** Correct.



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[00:32:16] **Mandy Matney:** From my from everything that I hear from people, right? But it was the same things that I was hearing of these excuses of like that happened in the that people said about Mullen in the Satterfield agreement, which was like maybe she wasn't aware of all of these things and maybe they pulled a fast one on her and blah, blah, blah, and making all these excuses. So the same things were being said yesterday about Judge Manning of like maybe they didn't give him all the information. Maybe they blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. But here's the thing. A judge carries the greatest responsibility in the justice system. They wear the robe. They are in charge. They're in command. When they sign their name to anything, it is their responsibility to ensure that what they're doing is the best for public safety. They were working for the state. So I cannot think of any possible excuse for why — and when you're dealing with a murderer, when you are dealing with somebody who is very known as very dangerous, if you are signing your name to release that person and to affect countless amounts of lies with your signature, you should be up all night going through every single possibility and scenario attached to this and ensuring that you know everything before you sign it. I don't understand how he — I just don't get it.

[00:33:54] **Liz Farrell:** Eric, do you think there's something more going on here that maybe we're gonna be shocked by?

[00:33:59] **Eric Bland:** I don't believe that Byron Gipson would intentionally mislead Judge Manning. He was his law clerk. Judge Manning was a sponsor for him and a supporter of him. There's no way that Byron would do that to Judge Manning. And I don't think Todd Rutherford would do that. There has to be something more here where this man, who recently was let out of a murder sentence, had some kind of major information against somebody major. That's the only thing I can think.

[00:34:36] **Liz Farrell:** Okay. But I'm gonna say the word. What about money? Going back to Jimmy Causey.

[00:34:41] **Eric Bland:** No way, Casey Manning. No way, Casey Manning would take money.

[00:34:45] **Liz Farrell:** I'm not saying to Casey, but here's the thing. Jimmy Causey was able to get that cash, right, when he escaped. By the way, because Jeroid Price allegedly ordered, quote unquote, hits on two wardens,



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the results of Jimmy Causey's 2017 escape was that a warden the warden had to step down. So maybe he got what he wanted. Maybe Jeroid Price got what he wanted if he was involved in that. But you have to ask that the question though because nothing else makes sense to me. It doesn't matter what kind of information. Like I said, there is a process that has to be gone through, even though he didn't even qualify for that process. So what is going on here?

[00:35:28] **Eric Bland:** It's gonna come down to political. I think Alan Wilson is going to get to the bottom of it because Todd Rutherford's a Democrat. These are Democrats that are involved and if Alan Wilson had no knowledge of this, he can look like the White Knight. So I do expect that he's gonna chase this to the gates of hell to get an answer. And it could, you know, whether it turns out to be a political hit as a result of it, I think we will get an answer. I don't believe that this is gonna be swept under the rug. I think we're gonna really find out.

[00:36:02] **Liz Farrell:** Yeah. But the answer seems like it's gonna be really scary.

[00:36:04] **Mandy Matney:** Right.

[00:36:05] **Eric Bland:** Yeah, it does. It does seem scary.

[00:36:07] **Mandy Matney:** And I think the more time that passes and we're not hearing anything from Rutherford at all — Liz and I texted him yesterday to see if like, you know, with situations like this, you just never know if there is an off-the-record conversation that could make everything make sense. And he never responded. And he's been very quiet and I just — I really do hope that they get to the bottom of this. And I think that you're right, Eric, and I think Alan Wilson really he's coming off of the height of the Murdaugh case and I think that he I've noticed that he is putting himself out there a lot more. He seems to be — bigger political aspirations are in sight for him.

[00:36:54] **Eric Bland:** Correct.

[00:36:55] **Mandy Matney:** And I think that that's a good thing in this scenario because whatever it takes to motivate these guys to get out corruption, I don't really care at this point. Everything is so bad and it's getting more and more dangerous, and that's what I'm mostly concerned about. Again, public



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safety is like the last priority for a lot of these people, and that's the way that it should not be.

[00:37:23] **Eric Bland:** We didn't need it. Again, I come back to this again. It just — it's like full circle, you know? We think we were making such progress and this is the worst of the worst. You couldn't come up with a factual scenario that's worse than this, could you?

[00:37:38] **Liz Farrell:** No, it's really weird.

[00:37:39] **Mandy Matney:** It's pretty bad. And it's — we said this on the podcast and I just keep thinking about it and it's like the precedent here, man. How do we know that in 20 years Alex Murdaugh isn't gonna be able to do the same thing? If we're just — if laws are just so loosey-goosey like this and people are able to.

[00:37:59] **Eric Bland:** Has it been done before?

[00:38:01] **Mandy Matney:** Right. This is just bad.

[00:38:03] **Eric Bland:** Has it been done before that we don't know about?

[00:38:06] **Liz Farrell:** And that's the biggest question. Because once again, you just —

[00:38:10] **Mandy Matney:** Right. It's terrifying. It's terrifying to think that because, again, the law of murder is very simple. You have to serve. If you're convicted of it, you have to serve at least 30 years. No ends — no like, no exceptions. That's what the law says.

[00:38:30] **Liz Farrell:** So let's talk a little bit about the sealed documents thing because sealed records, obviously, going back to the Satterfield thing, we know that that was hidden for so long because documents simply weren't filed, and apparently that was common practice in the 14th Circuit — that these judges were just allowing lawyers to hide these settlements or what have you. I was doing — and we will have probably have this on an episode of MMP in the future — but I was looking into a case. I was given a complaint filed against a law firm, and that complaint was rather salacious. I mean, it



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really showed how this law firm was operating. And I went to get more information about the case. I had the case number and I went into the public index to type in the case number and nothing came up. So I called over to the clerk of court's office and they basically told me that it was sealed, that that case had been sealed, and that's why you couldn't see it. And my whole point to them and subsequently the county's attorney was you cannot — I wanna know, a) the judge who sealed it, and b) I wanna know why it's not in the public index. So even if it is sealed, you still are required to show that something exists. This can't not exist, right?

[00:39:47] **Eric Bland:** Exactly.

[00:39:48] **Liz Farrell:** So I think it was in the summer that I had started reporting this. And because of what happened in this case, I revisited the story and my reporting. And I went back into the public index and lo and behold what was in there but the case that I was looking for, but it's sealed so there's no documents attached to it. Once again, though, this case being sealed from what I understand, the judge, the original judge, on it wouldn't do it because it wasn't proper and they found themselves a judge who would, and that's how this got hidden. And it doesn't serve the public well.

[00:40:26] **Eric Bland:** Every defense attorney and defendant wants a case to be sealed because they don't want, you know, plaintiff's attorneys to know, oh, we paid this for this type of dram shop case or this kind of wreck case. And Justice Toal to give her some credit, you know, she obviously gets some criticism for, you know, she can be pretty dictatorial, but she was adamant that she didn't believe in cases being sealed; that there had to be an incredible showing. And she was instrumental in Rule 41.1 I think it is, that you just can't seal cases that are of public interest. And this, what more — and this and the Bloods and, you know, is there anything more than public interest than this? I mean, a warden's life was in danger. David Pascoe who prosecuted this guy, his life is potentially in danger. I mean, come on.

[00:41:23] **Mandy Matney:** Right. And Liz and I were talking last night, and I hate saying this, but we are so close to getting like someone is probably gonna get killed in all this. And I hate to say that, but like it is getting so dangerous and this cannot happen anymore. I hope that this is the straw that breaks the camel's back with the system. I hope that before somebody gets hurt they fix all of this. But gosh, this is getting — it's not even absurd



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anymore. It's dangerous and it's disgraceful. It is disgraceful what happened. There are so many reasons as to why this — and there's so many systems in place for this not to happen, and it did. And we also need to find out like the legalities. How did this happen? And everybody needs to be held responsible because this is it.

[00:42:22] **Eric Bland:** Where does the order go to? Where did that order go to? Judge Manning signed it. Where did it go? Did it —

[00:42:30] **Liz Farrell:** That's a good question because if it was signed on December 31st and not executed till March 15th, why that lag? That needs to be explained obviously. But I understand that there are going to be times when prisoners get reduced sentences based on the help that they're able to provide in other cases, and that's something that you weigh against the danger to society. But I don't know of a situation where you get information from a prisoner and you're like, ah, thank you. Okay. Yeah, you can get out. We're gonna do this in secret. Without vetting it first, without making sure that it was valuable. And maybe — I don't know a scenario where we're gonna find out that this is the case because law enforcement not being involved or seemingly not involved, I guess. We haven't heard from the FBI. But seems like SLED would've been involved. Seems like Leon Lott would've been involved. Seems like Byron Gipson would've been able to say a lot more than he did. But that said, remember earlier when I said that the AG's Office was gonna release something that the hearing had been canceled? They did release, as we've been talking, they're calling for a bench warrant to be issued to re-arrest Jeroid Price. And I guess it's on now, Mandy, because this is the thing. Like are they gonna be able to get him? Where is he? Like they're — how are they gonna find this guy, and is he gonna go in alive? He's put a lot of effort into getting out of prison.

[00:43:57] **Mandy Matney:** Yeah. Like Jeroid Price is gonna see that and be like, oh, okay. I'll go. I'll be right there. No, he's gone. He is gone. That guy is — and this is just. And then, that's the part about it is that we have no indication that there's any tracking on this guy whatsoever. That's the part that really, really, really bugs me because if there was some secret deal worked out, if there was, it doesn't matter. They should have had tracking on him. If he was giving them information, they still should have been able to follow up with that information and.



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[00:44:36] **Liz Farrell:** At least an Apple tag. They could have slipped it in his pocket, I mean.

[00:44:42] **Mandy Matney:** Not just something.

[00:44:43] **Liz Farrell:** At the very least.

[00:44:43] **Eric Bland:** Sew it into his pant cuff.

[00:44:45] **Mandy Matney:** Because — Right. Like watch him walk into Mexico.

[00:45:01] **Eric Bland:** Well, I am comforted by Chief Justice Beatty because he obviously is very concerned with the perception of our justice system, and he has stepped in a couple times over the past couple years, obviously, to say, Hey, wait a minute here. We're gonna make this — we're gonna do something right. So he jumped in on this, and I gotta believe that he's sending the message down just like he did on Murdaugh with Judge Newman and Judge Lee. And I think he's concerned about how we look, you know? Again, as a lawyer, I just can't believe we're back in this same position again.

[00:45:43] **Liz Farrell:** I can. I feel like that things have gone dormant for so long. Like this is gonna be — I keep talking about volcanoes, but this is gonna be a long one. Like this eruption is just — I mean, there's so many fault lines. There's gonna be so many little places in South Carolina that are gonna see hot lava come down on them. So I think it's about time.

[00:46:04] **Eric Bland:** We'd like to know from New Mexico what kind of prisoner he was while he was there for the last 15 years. That's gonna be interesting to see, you know, what he did there.

[00:46:17] **Liz Farrell:** Oh, I'm sure he was charming. That's the other thing is that like you take into account what kind of prisoner when you're looking at the factors that go into releasing someone. It's like, I hate even — I'm sorry that I keep doing this, but I hate having this conversation because even talking about the factors that go into why someone would get a reduced sentence is almost legitimizing what happened in a way. Like saying like, well, it could be this or it could be that. Well, no. It should never have been



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anything. So it's just irritating. But, yeah. He was a terrible prisoner in South Carolina, but he sounds like a really good businessman, I mean.

[00:46:50] **Mandy Matney:** He's smart just like Alex. And speaking of, can we talk about him really quick? Jim Griffin went on *NewsNation* this week and whined essentially for his client and said that Alex really wants to get out of this secret, solitary situation that he's in, and he wants to get in it with the prisoners.

[00:47:12] **Liz Farrell:** Do you remember when he was in jail? They put him in like the COVID unit because for the same reason like for protection. And we found that document where he signed away his — basically saying, look. I don't wanna be in this. I don't wanna be in this unit. He wants in there, man. He wants — now that there's a spot, now that Jeroid Price is out of — the CEO is gone.

[00:47:36] **Mandy Matney:** Right. The kingpin. They need a new kingpin. He's ready, and he's great at that stuff. Like I'll give it to the guy. He's great at freaking controlling people, manipulating, scheming. He wants to scheme. It's in his blood. And somebody said on Twitter and it makes so much sense like the worst thing that you can do to a narcissist is put them in solitary because they want people.

[00:48:00] **Eric Bland:** They can't act.

[00:48:01] **Mandy Matney:** They can't act, and they have no attention on them. And so it's just so funny. And Jim Griffin is like he wants to get out to help people. Jim, what are you thinking? How can you possibly think that this man is trying to — has any sort of wholesome intentions right now? Like he wants to get out because he wants to be the kingpin. That's why.

[00:48:27] **Liz Farrell:** I feel like Jim has lipstick marks all over his face from Alex. Like just like the most embarrassing sort of like Bugs Bunny way where he can like get up there and kiss him and just be like it's all gonna be fine. Like I'm not up to anything. It's just.

[00:48:42] **Eric Bland:** Listen, if you guys would've asked me what was the chance of the last month and a half you wouldn't hear a word from Dick



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Harpootlian, and I would've said no way in hell. But Dick, Dick obviously has kept his mouth shut. I've not heard a word of him since the statement he made in the well of the Senate. I don't understand why Jim keeps talking.

[00:49:04] **Liz Farrell:** Well, I think like you said from the beginning, Eric, that this wasn't personal for Dick. Dick — it's just work. You win some, you lose some.

[00:49:11] **Mandy Matney:** Yeah, and he realized that it's a lose-lose. He realized that there — no matter what he does anymore, he's gonna lose there. So might as well just shut up and move on.

[00:49:20] **Liz Farrell:** Plus, people were wishing him butt cancer. And I think that that was what really seemed to really have affected him — the thing that he mentioned on the Senate floor.

[00:49:28] **Mandy Matney:** Yeah, I think he just — I mean, and Dick is out for Dick. You have said that all along, Eric. Like he realizes that that's a losing fight and he's not gonna fight that. But Jim, who is like, Jim is like a manipulated girlfriend type of like —

[00:49:45] **Eric Bland:** Stockholm syndrome.

[00:49:46] **Mandy Matney:** He did, and he just can't get out.

[00:49:48] **Eric Bland:** He can't get out.

[00:49:50] **Mandy Matney:** And he just keeps digging, digging deeper. But it's really funny how — I guess to wrap this up. Like it's funny how still to this day, Jim and Alex still think that like the system should bend for them. Like Alex is in protected custody because there's a job for DOC and they need to protect the inmates and they need to protect Alex's safety at the end of the day. They're not worried about Alex's feelings because they have a job to do. And I just can't — it's just like, again, the audacity. You should be lucky that you're not on death row, Alex.

[00:50:28] **Liz Farrell:** Yeah, really.



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[00:50:29] **Eric Bland:** What do you think would happen — what do you think Jim would say if Alex wants to go in gen pop and they put him in gen pop and he's knifed the next day and killed? I mean, that's not gonna make the Department of Corrections look any better. That's not gonna be a good thing, a good sight for our state.

[00:50:44] **Liz Farrell:** Our state is one in which prisoners were able to escape because they saved the peanut butter from their sandwiches to fashion a door number, like a number that they could press onto a door, and then they fooled a rookie guard into that's the door you let us through to get to our cells, and the guy unlocked it and off they went. So that's the state of affairs in South Carolina. I think that should tell us everything. All they had to do — they got drones flying into the prison yards, dropping things, and they can't get control of these cellphones, and they look ridiculous.

[00:51:20] **Eric Bland:** Yeah. When Jimmy Causey went to prison, there weren't drones. So how did he figure out how to hook up a drone?

[00:51:25] **Mandy Matney:** I mean, that's what I keep thinking of with Jeroid Price is that like the man was sent to prison like before Facebook when everybody had like flip cellphones that barely worked. Could you ima — and they just like let him loose and there is no re-entry, nothing. Could you imagine like the shock? I feel like he probably thinks he's in a different universe, but it seems like he's been able to figure out cellphones. He seems extremely smart, which is again scary.

[00:51:56] **Liz Farrell:** Yeah, sounds like prison is a real it's the right place to be for some people, and I think it's the right place for Alex.

[00:52:02] So with that said, guys, sorry to everyone out there that this episode is so all over the place, but it's we're literally like in real time absorbing some of this information and there are a lot of players and. Yeah. So we're just sort of like you're catching us in rant mode really, truly.

[00:52:28] Knew this was gonna happen. There's so much news between when we last recorded and now that we had to take a few minutes to talk about the two major things that have happened. The first being that we saw



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the order that Judge Casey Manning signed to release Jeroid Price. Did you guys get a chance to read that?

[00:52:51] **Eric Bland:** We did.

[00:52:52] **Mandy Matney:** Yeah.

[00:52:53] **Liz Farrell:** What were your impressions, Eric?

[00:52:56] **Eric Bland:** It was troubling. And you and I discussed it about the inconsistency of one it said that a petition was made by the defense, and then Byron Gipson in a statement said, no, a motion hadn't been made. There may be a technical glitch there that there was a joint motion made, and sometimes people make — attorneys make oral motions in front of judges. But clearly, there was an inconsistency. It really didn't set forth the grounds that would've been necessary if they could have accomplished what they did. It was a very thinly-filled motion and order. I mean, thinly order. I was really troubled by it. But as I said to Mandy, you know, out of darkness comes light. Creighton and Judge Newman saved the week yesterday. But we have a real problem with this Jeroid Price thing, and I don't think it's gonna go away. And I think it's gonna — the hole's gonna just keep getting deeper.

[00:54:02] **Mandy Matney:** It's very disturbing. I have no idea how those inconsistencies passed. And again, I think the thing with the order is it clearly says he's a murderer. So I don't know why Manning didn't really check into this. And I also did not think that the attached reasons for his release made any sense whatsoever. As far as I'm concerned, the man could have — he could have saved a prison from burning down and he still needs to serve his time. Like it just didn't make any sense. And I've never seen anything like that.

[00:54:40] **Liz Farrell:** Right. There are a couple of things. The first is that the order itself leaves out two things. One is that this 35-year sentence was — it wasn't just a 35-year sentence. It was a 35-year sentence without the opportunity for parole, which means that this judge, Reggie Lloyd, the one who originally sentenced Jeroid Price, he intentionally made that sentence without parole without the opportunity for any sort of early exit is basically what that says to me. The second thing is that it refers to a motion, and I know you say that you can do an oral motion, but Byron Gipson himself the



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Solicitor has said that he was going to do a motion, but that by the time he did went to do it, the order was already signed. So that would indicate to me he's saying that there was never a motion. There's a third issue, which is that the addendum solely cites the reason for his early exit as the Jimmy Causey escape in 2017, the aid that he gave DOC. But then attached to that are two affidavits. One is from the convicted murderer himself, describing not the Jimmy Causey escape, but a fight that happened between prisoners and a prison guard, whose last name was Miller, and how Price stepped in to sort of save him. The second was from a woman named Asia Love. Asia Love was Jeroid Price's former girlfriend. She was a prison guard who worked there and I believe until 2011 maybe. And she in 2019 signs this affidavit saying that like he did the same thing. He was a superhero and he saved this one woman prison guard in 2010, and that this prison guard, her final wish in life was to have Jeroid Price have his sentence reduced. So that's not mentioned. It's not mentioned that that's his former girlfriend; that she was an employee. I guess she met this guy Price at prison and they dated and then she tried to like get — this is all according to the state newspaper by the way. She tried to get a — she tried to visit him in prison after she left her job as a prison guard and said that she was his sister and that she had never worked for the Department of Corrections. And they declined her visitation applications, so she didn't get to see her boyfriend. But she certainly did help him in 2019. So what I'm saying is you have this order signed that leaves out details. You have it the order itself saying it's based on the fact that he helped in this Jimmy Causey investigation. And then, as evidence of this Jimmy Causey escape investigation that he helped with, they include two affidavits about two incidents that have nothing to do with that escape. And that is what our judge signed. That is what Todd Rutherford presented as reasons. So it's quite disturbing and.

[00:57:37] **Mandy Matney:** It's really even worse than we thought it would be.

[00:57:40] **Liz Farrell:** Truly, truly. I don't know how they were like, yeah. I mean, I know they said they had no choice, so they had to sort of sign. Byron and Todd had to say like, yeah, we'll unseal it. But they must have been like clenching big time knowing what was about to be released, right?

[00:57:55] **Mandy Matney:** Mortified.

[00:57:57] **Liz Farrell:** Yeah.



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[00:57:57] **Eric Bland:** Judge Manning, and I said this before, you know, he has a legacy that he wants to leave and that was pretty much his last order signed, and I think it's going to tarnish his service on the bench, which was almost 30 years. I think that Byron Gipson's gonna have a lot to answer for, you know, specifically we've had trouble in our Fifth Circuit Solicitor's Office with the previous solicitor, Dan Johnson, going to prison for stealing money, and Byron Gipson supposedly came in and was gonna clean it up. And for all intents and purposes, he's done a pretty decent job. This is his first real trip up. But I think Todd Rutherford's got a lot to answer for, you know? He's a legislature. Yes, he's a lawyer. Yes, he has an obligation for his clients and I don't begrudge him one bit trying to get this done because that's what lawyers do. It's the job of the solicitor and the judge to make sure that the lawyer is doing the right thing. And people should have been noticed here. Again, there are so many people that have a vested interest in this case. Victims, the attorney general, the Department of Corrections. Is he being released with parole? Does he have a parole obligation? Does he have post-release obligations of drug testing? Are there restraints on whether he associates with known criminals or other gang members? All of these things Judge Manning could have put in that order if the proper things were done. But it just seemed like it was rushed, it was quiet, it was gonna go under the radar, and nobody was ever gonna see that order.

[00:59:50] **Liz Farrell:** Did you notice the notes on the order showing that it had been unsealed in March on I think it was March 9th and then resealed after Price was released?

[01:00:00] **Eric Bland:** I didn't notice that.

[01:00:01] **Liz Farrell:** Well, somebody told me that that was an indication that Byron Gipson signed off on that being resealed. So meaning that Byron Gipson can come out and say, Hey, I tried to do the right thing here. But it sounds like he made another decision. It wasn't just a decision in December. It sounds like there was another decision that he would've made in March, which is to again keep that quiet. So that's something that he has to answer for. And I just texted you guys a photo that was sent to me of what appears to be Todd Rutherford and Byron Gipson on the day that Byron Gipson is filing to run for solicitor. They're in the office, the election — it looks like the election office. And I haven't verified that photo to make sure that that's what I'm seeing, but sure is what it looks like. So they're doing something.



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[01:00:50] **Eric Bland:** Can we just say what needs to be said and that is we as citizens have a right to participate in this decision, and that participation is through an unconflicted judge, an unconflicted solicitor, the participation of the attorney general and the Department of Corrections. We have a right to not have a killer be let loose in our state. We have a right to have a voice to that. And when we give a sentence, we want certainty in sentencing. You said it. Reggie Lloyd, who was head of SLED for a while, became a judge, became a US attorney. He was certain in his sentence. And I am very disturbed that this was done in the dark. Now, I don't know what can be done, whether appellate court's gonna reverse Judge Manning or is this a jeopardy situation. I don't know. But something seriously needs to be addressed here.

[01:01:54] **Mandy Matney:** The way that the system is supposed to work is there was supposed to be somebody with common sense looking out for the people as that order was being considered, and there wasn't anybody. And that's the really scary part. And I think too the fact that that order was sealed is crazy. And when you look at it, it's — and the fact that it's so disturbing and you see why it was sealed because nobody wanted that to come to light ever because they all knew it was messed up.

[01:02:27] **Eric Bland:** But we have a Supreme Court rule that says you can't seal something if there's public interest involved. What more public interest could be involved than bringing a murderer from New Mexico and letting him potentially back into South Carolina?

[01:02:44] **Liz Farrell:** First of all, this situation happened in 2017. So if he did help with the Jimmy Causey investigation, that was six years ago.

[01:02:53] **Eric Bland:** Why didn't they move then? Why didn't they move then? Why didn't they wait till the last day of Judge Manning's tenure? Why didn't they move sooner, Liz, Mandy?

[01:03:02] **Mandy Matney:** Yeah.

[01:03:02] **Liz Farrell:** We know why. I should say we know why, but we don't know why they did it, as in like what incentive did the judge, did the solicitor, and the lawyer have to make this happen? We don't know that part of it.



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[01:03:14] **Eric Bland:** I feel like we're gonna constantly hear, well, he kept a clean cell. He taught English to, you know, Hispanic people that didn't know English.

[01:03:26] **Liz Farrell:** But that's not what he did.

[01:03:28] **Eric Bland:** I know. They're gonna keep adding to it.

[01:03:30] **Liz Farrell:** Oh, sure. But additionally, like, I mean, the one thing that isn't we don't see as part of that order is verification from the Department of Corrections. We don't have anyone from the Department of Corrections saying that this is true. We checked this out. He really did. Had he not stepped in, we would've had deaths on our hands. Nothing like that.

[01:03:51] **Eric Bland:** Why didn't Casey Manning say, look, he's a member of the Bloods. If I'm gonna let him out, I'm saying he cannot live in South Carolina. He cannot be in South Carolina. Why didn't they have, again, guardrails for this type of person? This is letting out somebody like El Chapo.

[01:04:08] **Liz Farrell:** Yeah, it actually really is. It's like not even an exaggeration.

[01:04:13] **Mandy Matney:** And because this involves two states and should the FBI is — can the FBI get involved in this? Is this — ?

[01:04:21] **Eric Bland:** They can. It's interstate.

[01:04:22] **Liz Farrell:** I think that they might be involved, yeah. I think that there's indication that they're involved.

[01:04:26] **Mandy Matney:** That's great.

[01:04:27] **Liz Farrell:** Meaning now. I don't know about before.

[01:04:30] **Mandy Matney:** Because we need help. The situation needs the biggest and the most —



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[01:04:36] **Eric Bland:** You're right.

[01:04:36] **Mandy Matney:** It's — we are in desperate, desperate need in South Carolina.

[01:04:41] **Eric Bland:** And full sunlight. And full sunlight.

[01:04:43] **Liz Farrell:** I really feel confident in saying that what we're seeing here is something that's happened many times in the past with other people, too. So I'm not just saying that this is something that these three individuals have engaged in that hasn't been done before but.

[01:04:58] **Eric Bland:** How do you think the people of Richland County feel that Todd Rutherford is their representative. Do they? You know, that's the problem when you're a lawyer-legislature. He's walking into court doing this as a lawyer, but it has an effect on constituents. This is the problem.

[01:05:15] **Liz Farrell:** Well, talk about that, Eric. What do you think — I know what one person in Hampton County thinks of him. Russell Laffitte. So if you guys wanna talk about that. And I'm not sure what Richland County thinks of Todd Rutherford, but we know that Russell Laffitte thinks he's super cool so.

[01:05:33] **Eric Bland:** He is a very good lawyer, a good defense lawyer. But he's not in the top circles. How did that marriage happen? I don't understand.

[01:05:45] **Liz Farrell:** You don't understand how Russell Laffitte hires Todd Rutherford the day after it comes out that Todd Rutherford got a murderer out of prison secretly?

[01:05:53] **Eric Bland:** I don't, and I don't understand how Mark Moore, who is a former US attorney who works for Nexsen Pruet, makes the decision to bring on Todd Rutherford on the team. Not that Todd is not a good lawyer and not that he couldn't do a good job. I just don't understand how the union happened.

[01:06:12] **Liz Farrell:** Mandy, what do you think how this happened?



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[01:06:16] **Mandy Matney:** So let's go back a little bit. So a hearing happened on Friday morning. It was supposed to be a scheduling hearing. Originally, I heard it was just about Eddie, and then the day before, we're hearing rumblings of it's gonna be about Cory and Russell and all these other main players. And sure enough, it was like a Alex's buddies conference situation. They were all there. And the weirdest thing was that before the hearing started, Todd Rutherford, who we've been talking about all week, was sitting next to none other than Russell Laffitte. And he stood up and said, "I'm now representing Russell Laffitte." Turns out, he was hired like that morning or sometime this week, as all of this shocking information has come out about Rutherford's client being released from prison years later. And it all just looks like — we all know Russell is very shopping around. He seems to not be able to find an attorney good enough for him and he is constantly trying to get more. But it seemed like this week, he found out that Russell found out that Todd has a secret skill for swaying judges, and he hired Todd Rutherford. And I, again, I can't — it's funny how we make these connections behind the scenes of this person's connected to this person and then, they just do it for us. Here's how Todd Rutherford is getting right in front of everybody. Todd Rutherford's right in the middle of this with Russell Laffitte, so there you go.

[01:08:08] **Eric Bland:** What about the \$300,000, Mandy, that just popped out that Nelson Mullins was parking \$300,000 for Russell Laffitte in their trust account, and it was just sitting there? Why is that?

[01:08:24] **Liz Farrell:** Well, this was the arrangement because it's from when Russell sold his house. And so instead of that money going to Russell and Susie, the agreement was that it would stay — that Nelson Mullins would hold it in an account to prove that that money was still there.

[01:08:40] **Eric Bland:** Then now where's it getting transferred now? Who gets it now?

[01:08:43] **Liz Farrell:** But can we talk about the fact that like if I were Nelson Mullins, I'd be like, yeah, okay. You're getting that money back. You owe us money, jerk. Like you never paid your bills. You never fully paid your bills. So, you know, you have people at that law firm who I would assume that their livelihood to some degree is affected by that non-payment. So it's really, it's really shady, yeah.



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[01:09:07] **Mandy Matney:** Yeah. That's a lot of money.

[01:09:08] **Liz Farrell:** I, you know, seeing Todd Rutherford there, I wish that I had just an ounce of that confidence to just sit there knowing that all eyes are on me for not a good reason, and to act like nothing is wrong. Because there are things that I did in seventh grade that I'm still carrying around on my shoulders and I can walk into a room and think people still people are like, remember when she did that? So it's just it's amazing to me that like there are men out there that literally just does not even matter. I'm I was really fascinated by that when I was watching it. I wanted to tap into whatever energy that was and just borrow it for a day.

[01:09:46] **Eric Bland:** Now, how does Russell think that getting Todd at this point in time benefits him? Because Todd has a, you know, a nuclear glow around him right now that's gonna have to be dealt with. How does he think now that if he hired him for his relationships, is it going to benefit him?

[01:10:07] **Liz Farrell:** I have two words for you, Eric, and it's "Russell" and "TV." We're dealing with a guy who thought it was a great idea to record himself in front of a barn with his cousin and then to air it right before his federal trial and during his federal trial. So these are people that do not take advice. And I think I have to say this like there's always — this entire story for me has just been one vindication after another, just constant vindication. And I have to remember that during the times when I'm questioning myself because I feel incredibly vindicated by Russell hiring Todd. It just shows once again that we are correct about this person. This is a person who will only do things one way and that is his way. And you can see that the advice that he's getting could be from his family. I don't know. But it's bad advice, and he is going to fight until the bitter end. He is Russell "Can't Admit Defeat" Laffitte. So that was one thing.

[01:11:05] Now, I wanna talk about something really quick here. Do you guys find it weird? And Eric, you especially I wanna hear the answer on this. So Cory was there with his attorney, who I think is goals. Debbie Barbier, she was a classmate of Cory's and Alex's. So, you know, tiny, tiny world there. But she's just so great. She's so organized and just — she's so crisp.

[01:11:28] **Eric Bland:** She is as good as it gets in our bar. And I'm not saying female, male. I'm just saying as good as it gets.



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[01:11:35] **Liz Farrell:** Absolutely. Like there's a part there where she said like I work well on deadlines. And I was like, Go, Debbie. Like good. Yes, you tell them how you work well and make them work accordingly. But she's in the room and so is Mark Moore, who I referred to as a gremlin of an attorney in a letter to Verizon that I wrote after he subpoenaed for our phone records. But Mark Moore and Debbie are both representing Greg Parker in the boat crash case as well. So what a small little — like it was just odd for me seeing those two people, one of whom I have great respect for, one of whom I have zero respect for, just knowing that these are the two people we're gonna be seeing a lot of come August, you know?

[01:12:18] **Mandy Matney:** I will say that there was a huge difference between their lawyering yesterday. Deborah Barbier came in there just like X, Y, and Z. Oh, we'll be prepared by September. Great. Let's do it. And then Mark Moore and Russell's team were like, we just started, and excuses, excuses, excuses. And then you could tell Creighton was getting annoyed 'cause Creighton did his whole, first of all. Second of all.

[01:12:47] **Liz Farrell:** Well, they insulted him. Cory represented Connor Cook for a minute. Let's not forget. And so Cory has information, one would presume, about the boat crash that came from Alex and that came from Connor. How, you know, about Paul and whether Paul was driving or not. And that seems to be a big issue for Greg Parker, right, because if Paul wasn't driving then the whole issue is moot. He wants Connor Cook to have been driving, right? So Debbie is representing the guy who represented Connor and also Greg Parker now. How is that not a conflict of interest? If Cory has information about the boat crash itself, right, but Cory's not on trial for the boat crash. He's on trial for the Satterfield stuff and others possibly. But what — so how does that work if — do you know what I'm saying? Like.

[01:13:38] **Eric Bland:** I do. So is he going to broker that information and then once he decides he's gonna broker that information, it puts Debbie Barbier in a complex situation. So obviously, to date, he hasn't cooperated. We would've known some of that.

[01:13:56] **Liz Farrell:** No, we wouldn't though because I'm talking, I'm not talking criminally, I'm talking about civilly. I'm talking about Cory giving Greg Parker information that would not have been known otherwise. Do you



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understand? Like. Yeah. How does that — that seems like the conflict to me, but, you know, I don't know.

[01:14:16] **Eric Bland:** Who raises the conflict then? Who would be the one to raise that conflict?

[01:14:19] **Liz Farrell:** I suppose Mark Tinsley could, right? Or Joe McCulloch 'cause Joe McCulloch is representing Connor Cook now. Not to say, I mean, like, if I'm Cory, I definitely want Debbie as my attorney. And if I'm Greg, I definitely want Debbie as my attorney. But it just seems like there's crossing boundaries there. And also Mark Moore works for the law firm that also has NP Strategy, which is the public relations firm that was hired by the Murdaugh family.

[01:14:53] **Eric Bland:** What did bother me was Creighton saying that — and the other defendant were necessary charges. They're not big fish. They're small fish. He didn't indicate that they lead to bigger fish. He said, look, you know, we have to do it. The crime's presented to us. It's not something we would've chased. But because it fell in our lap, we're gonna prosecute him. I thought that I didn't like that statement at all, to be honest with you.

[01:15:22] **Liz Farrell:** Why?

[01:15:23] **Eric Bland:** Because it diminished their crimes. Like he said, look, they committed a crime. They're not big fish, but we're not gonna look the other way. I did like that he said we're not gonna look the other way on a crime. But why are they prosecuting these guys? How is it that they laundered money for Alex? Were they part of the drug purchasing? Did Eddie cash the check and give the money to the Rivers guy and the Rivers guy get the drugs? I mean, I wanna see the chain go up higher to find out who Alex got his drugs from, where Alex got his — where the money went. How much did he pay for? That's what we're all waiting for, right?

[01:16:06] **Mandy Matney:** Well, and it's like what we need from those three defendants is exactly that. We need to know what went down, how it went down, and who all was involved. Those guys could have a lot of answers. The downstream guys could know how the whole thing works and we can't just



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brush that to the side and then be like, oh, we got the whole — we got everybody because we got these few guys.

[01:16:30] **Eric Bland:** We still have an opioid distribution problem in our state and these lower-hanging fruit. I don't — I'm not anxious for them to be convicted. I'm anxious for them to help out. I mean, Eddie Smith seems to be a bungling criminal. He doesn't seem to be the guy that's the mastermind behind any crime. He just — he's gone along for the ride. He cashed some checks. No, he didn't get all that money. Yes, he bought drugs for Alex. Let's help him out. Let's see if he can give information on where these drugs were purchased. Let's go to Rivers and find out from Rivers. We have a drug problem because Alex Murdaugh was giving millions and millions of dollars purportedly for opioids, and those people are still dealing opioids in our state. So instead of just convicting these people like Creighton is, and I'm sure he's trying to work the angles and get them to talk, but let's give them an opportunity to really cooperate so that we can go after the people that are polluting our state with drugs.

[01:17:36] **Liz Farrell:** So you have these other attorneys though that are drawing this out — like the whole reason we had this status conference was to talk about when to schedule these things, right? And then you have Mark Moore and Todd Rutherford who just gets added almost as a strategy to continue to draw it out farther. And meanwhile, we just have these little guys who have these like either publicly appointed or free attorneys who are just like — I noticed a striking imbalance in the in terms of how the court regarded their cases. These cases are easy to try. We don't have to get into it much. We'll give them the discovery. It's just a couple days. The only reason they're easy to try is because they don't have Debbie Barbier saying, yeah, we need two weeks for this because they are going to draw that stuff out. They are gonna make every little piece of evidence is going to get parsed and pulled out, and so they can find some reasonable doubt in it. But these cases are just it seems almost perfunctory. It's just something that you can just check a box on. Okay. We did it. We're we prosecuted them. They're done. Not to say what information they have or don't have. It just it did bother me because you see Russell Laffitte there, who pretends to be poor to some degree, now has this attorney, Todd Rutherford, and they're using his presence there at this juncture to say we can't even schedule a date for this because we have new attorneys, so we're gonna need some time. They're gonna put every trick in the book to get him whatever advantage they can in



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this court system, whether it's to tire people out and to the point where they can't testify because they no longer work in that role or if it's to put some time to get evidence lost. Whatever they do, they're able to do because they're being paid.

[01:19:15] **Eric Bland:** But Todd's not cheap either. Just so you guys know that.

[01:19:18] **Liz Farrell:** Not what does that mean? What do you think he makes an hour?

[01:19:21] **Eric Bland:** It's not an hour. He's taking this on a flat fee and he's — I'd be shocked if it's anything less than \$150,000-\$200,000. He's not a \$50,000 or \$25,000 lawyer. He's just not.

[01:19:35] **Mandy Matney:** So here's my problem with that, and I think that that kind of can wrap this whole thing up. What if Todd is benefiting from — like what if all these defendants across South Carolina who have tons of money are getting word that Todd can get people out of jail — prison, sorry — and what if he can increase his fees because of this? I mean, that's another dangerous part of this is that like. And the way that he waltzed into the courtroom yesterday, like no problem. Everything is dandy. Look, I got myself another client, a very expensive client. It just seems really, really wrong and really, really dangerous.

[01:20:17] **Eric Bland:** I think his utility is expired for a while. I don't think there's gonna be a judge that's gonna put themselves herself or himself in a position like Casey Manning. So I think any utility that Todd had I think has been used up for a while, I'll be honest with you.

[01:20:35] **Liz Farrell:** Right. You can hire Todd all you want, but you think Clifton Newman is sitting up there like, oh, yeah. This is a good idea. This is gonna work. It made him look like a clown..

[01:20:44] **Mandy Matney:** Todd still gets money from that. Like he still gets clients and he still —

[01:20:48] **Liz Farrell:** Yeah. Jokes on Russell.



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[01:20:49] **Mandy Matney:** Right. I mean, jokes on Russell and.

[01:20:53] **Liz Farrell:** The other thing is we got to see the how the legislative how it works when you have a legislator-lawyer and they get to use that immunity. Dick and Jim didn't show up yesterday. And did you notice — was it Creighton or I think it was Creighton who made the point that, yeah, Dick Harpootlian had legislative immunity and that's why he's not there for the status conference. But Jim Griffin isn't a legislator. Maggie Fox isn't a legislator. Phil Barber isn't. Any one of those three could have shown up and done this, but they hid under the umbrella of that immunity.

[01:21:24] **Eric Bland:** And then, Creighton said we're gonna schedule stuff in August real quick. I don't want this just to end with Russell, Alex, Cory, Rivers, Eddie Smith, and the other guy. There's too many other people that are gonna have to answer for what Alex did financially. And then, Alex and the drugs.

[01:21:42] **Liz Farrell:** Like we always say is the tip of the iceberg and we know we're just entering into a new phase here. But again, I think the Rutherford-Jeroid Price situation has opened a new window into how the system was working even before Alex Murdaugh or this is the system that Alex Murdaugh was working and this is how we got to the point that we're at. And I think that that's important to note, too. But you're right, Eric. There's a lot that we don't know about what the role Alex's drug involvement is and how far and how deep that goes, or how high, I should say, how high that goes.

[01:22:16] **Eric Bland:** And I also am comforted by the fact that as we get younger judges, the chance of what happened with Jeroid Price will lessen as we go on. I think when you have judges that get very comfortable on the bench with a lot of lawyers and they're on the bench for 25 years, and lawyers who commonly appear before them, that's the kind of way that something like the Jeroid Price have happened. And I think a new judge these newer judges are much more cautious.

[01:22:50] **Liz Farrell:** I think you're right, Eric. And I think that's a good note to end on. With that, I say cups down to both of you. Hopefully, this is the last time we record Cup of Justice this week, which hopefully nothing happens in the next 48 hours.



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[01:23:04] **Mandy Matney:** Yeah, cups down.

[01:23:06] **Eric Bland:** Cups down.

[01:23:13] **Outro:** This Cup of Justice bonus episode of the Murdaugh Murders Podcast 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.

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