



EPISODE 69: 'Accountability Happens Here': Russell Laffitte Found Guilty On All Charges

[00:00:00] **Mandy Matney:** I now know that Russell Laffitte conspired with Alex Murdaugh to steal millions of dollars from clients. As Justin Bamberg once said, "Ain't no allegedly about it." Russell Laffitte was found guilty on all six federal counts. He now faces up to 180 years in prison and up to \$6 million in fines. And that, my friends, is a big deal. My name is Mandy Matney. I have been covering the Murdaugh case for nearly four years now. This is the Murdaugh Murders Podcast, produced by my husband, David Moses, and written by Liz Farrell.

[00:01:02] So, yes. Big, big news finally came in last night, the Tuesday before Thanksgiving in the Russell Laffitte case, but not without some major drama, of course, which we will get into in a minute. But first, I want to say Happy Thanksgiving to my MMP friends. So crazy. This is the second time I've said that to y'all. I wanna start out this episode by saying thank you to you, our fans, our followers, our listeners, who have encouraged, inspired, and supported our team throughout the past 17 months. Also crazy to say that — 17 months. And here we are, 69 episodes in, way beyond anything I could have ever imagined. So I will talk a little bit more about this at the end of this episode for a super special fan segment where we take questions from an MMP super fan. But this Thanksgiving especially, I just want to express my pure gratitude to every person listening to us right now and every person who continues to support us while we are on this crazy, unpredictable ride together. You know, I've gotten a lot of really kind messages in the last week saying things like, "If it wasn't for your team, there wouldn't be a trial right now. And these guys would've just kept scheming." And, you know, I'd be lying if I said I have not looked back and wondered, if our team didn't expose what we did and when we did, where would we be right now? But I promise you we wouldn't be here if it wasn't for the army of supporters having our back through every step of this, asking questions, pushing us to be better and constantly craving and providing more information. So, thank you for dedicating so much of your time to this podcast. Without you, we would not have been able to start our own company. Without you, who knows where we would be? So many of you have showed us kindness in our darkest days and reminded us how wonderful humans can be while we've been working on this story about how terrible humans can be.



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[00:03:25] And speaking of our fans, the holidays are approaching. We have some amazing merch in our store for your loved ones this Christmas. I personally just bought a bunch of super soft MMP T-shirts and that's a big deal necklaces for my friends. I'm so excited to give them out. And the best part, all proceeds from our merch store this quarter go directly to Gloria's Gift Foundation, the charity in Gloria Satterfield's honor, which gives Hampton County families in need presents this Christmas. So if you are looking for a special gift for an MMP fan in your life, check out murdaughmurderspodcast.com/merch and order soon.

[00:04:13] Okay, so. Before we talk about the verdict and what it means for all of the Murdaugh cases going forward and before we talk about all the jury drama and the anticipation leading up to the six guilty counts, I wanna talk about what went down in court on Monday. And to be clear, we were not in court on Monday. Honestly, Liz, David, and I did not really anticipate there would be a trial at all here and we did not think that it would last this long. All of us had obligations that we had to stick to this week. And we didn't want Russell Laffitte ruining any more of our plans this month. But thankfully, Justin Bamberg and Eric Bland took one for the team and sat in court on Monday, so none of y'all had to miss a beat. And also, I want to say, shout-out to the local reporters who stuck it through till the end and kept us all updated on Twitter Monday and Tuesday: Drew Tripp, Riley Benson, Thad Moore, and Melissa Rademaker, and so many others. That kind of trial work is long and tedious and thankless, and y'all should be commended for your accuracy and commitment.

[00:05:25] I wanna walk you through the lead-up to this big moment where Russell was found guilty. We told y'all on the last Cup of Justice episode how Russell took the stand on Friday. He tried hard to present himself as a simple country boy who was duped by the super duper Alex Murdaugh. He was asked a series of softball questions that lasted hours. And we also told you about how Assistant US Attorney Emily Limehouse was likely sharpening her knives all weekend, preparing for an absolutely brutal cross-examination of Russell. And much to no one's surprise, things really fell apart for Russell Monday morning. Here is Justin.

[00:06:13] **Justin Bamberg:** Honestly, I wasn't surprised by a lot on cross-exam. I think that this whole southern gentleman good guy image that he tried to, that he attempted to portray on direct exam really kinda went away and got



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put in the trash can when he was getting crossed because he was way more combative, way more defensive. There was a lot of what I refer to in trial work as a witness playing dumb to make the lawyer work harder as they're questioning them, you know? Like, well, what do you mean by this? Or what are you actually referring to? And in a case like this where you're trying to convince a jury that you are an innocent and good guy who is also a victim of Alex Murdaugh, I think that actually hurt him because it came off as very disingenuous. And just the lack of remorse, you know? It's like this whole concept of, you know, I'm not sorry for the things I didn't do. And I'm also not sorry for the things I did do. And I really don't, I can't comprehend why y'all even have me on trial because I'm a victim, too, you know? And that's what, Mandy, what people have to remember is that there are real victims — the Plylers, the Pinckneys, Natasha, you know, Arthur Badger. When people say willy-nilly that they are also a victim of Alex Murdaugh, depending on the role in which you are referring to, it's really offensive.

[00:07:55] **Mandy Matney:** Not only did Russell appear to be disingenuous, he contradicted himself on several occasions. But things really fell apart for Russell when he admitted in court that he intentionally did not pay taxes on the more than \$400,000 in conservator fees that he got nearly a decade ago, and he admitted to only paying those fees in 2021 when it was clear that investigators were closing in on Alex's schemes. That was a big deal moment for the prosecution. It showed that he knew enough to hide the fees from the federal government at the time and knew enough to pay them back when authorities started poking around. The crime and the cover-up — that shows intent.

[00:08:47] **Justin Bamberg:** Oh, a jury definitely would not like someone who works for a bank, as was testified to by one of his family members, dang near worth a billion bucks. And you make all this money. And it wasn't like a, oops, I didn't know that I was supposed to pay taxes. It was a, I purposefully didn't pay taxes, but I did pay 'em last year. Yeah. After the FBI comes saying, "Give me all your stuff." Yeah. It's like some Wesley Snipes stuff, like, yo, I'm a sovereign citizen. I'm just not gonna pay my taxes. Like it comes off as, again, offensive. The whole undertone of the defense to the claims and allegations brought by the United States of America really is offensive to most people. I don't care who you are. If somebody washes my car and I pay them in a check or somebody comes and blows off my driveway and I pay them in a check, they're gonna read the "For" line. No one gets a check without looking at the



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"For" line like. And I get it. Well, that's for the person writing the check. I'm sure it is. That's how I fill it out. But I never take a check from anybody without reading it, and I ain't a banker.

[00:10:07] **Mandy Matney:** So when it came time for closing arguments, there really wasn't much for the defense to do. Defense attorneys Matt Austin and Bart Daniel both spoke during closing. Their argument essentially was that Russell was duped by super schemer Alex Murdaugh. Austin argued that Russell admitted to everything but he doesn't admit to the crimes because nothing he did was intentional. But things really went off the rail when Bart started talking about World War II enormity and patriotic duties, which was purely a distraction.

[00:10:43] **Bart Daniel:** And I think that they did the best job that they could with the facts they had to work with, right? Lawyers, we don't write the law, and we also don't make the facts. You literally play the cards you're dealt. And sometimes, you're dealt a really, really crappy hand. And your option is fold and throw the hand back in. In this instance that would be, man, go ahead. Plead guilty to all six counts. Or you do the best you can with what you got. I just don't think that they had a lot to work with, you know? And there ain't but so much explaining a way a lawyer can do in arguing and advocating for his client before the lawyer starts coming off as having no credibility, right, to find a line to walk.

[00:11:41] **Mandy Matney:** During closing arguments, the prosecution basically said, hey, look. You've seen the evidence. You've heard from the victims. Here are the facts. We showed you the crimes. We showed you the cover-up. He was not fooled. He knew what he was doing. And it was powerful when Emily Limehouse said this, quote, maybe none of this would have happened without Alex Murdaugh, but none of this could have happened without Russell Laffitte. And Holiday also had a powerful quote at the end of their closing argument. He told the jury, quote, accountability only happens here in this courtroom where facts matter and influence does not.

[00:12:27] **Justin Bamberg:** You know, I think that the US Attorney's Office really nailed it in their closing, particularly in the rebuttal by pointing out a couple of things to address some of the smoke and mirrors that was brought up during the defense's closing. And you have to have a strong rebuttal if



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you're the government. And not only did they nail it, they nailed it with a diamond-coated nail. I did not see a way out.

[00:13:00] **Mandy Matney:** And that is how so many of us who have been following this for a really long time felt after Monday. Done deal. Facts are facts. Russell is toast. Liz and I had several sources telling us that they were guessing the jury would be done by lunch on Tuesday, including Justin. But then, typical to everything in this case, things did not go as smoothly as we all had anticipated after the jury went to deliberate Tuesday morning.

[00:13:31] **Justin Bamberg:** So what, Mandy, I ain't gonna lie to you, Mandy. I expected it to go after lunch in part because even if generally speaking on a high profile case that goes on for two, three weeks, the jury going to, even if their mind is made up, they going to at least make you think they're in there talking about stuff. So I expected them to have lunch. I did not expect to be walking out of the courthouse 9, 10 o'clock at night. When the first note came in wanting the transcript, wasn't really worried too much. I'm just like, alright. Maybe they wanna look at something. Again, in my mind, I'm thinking they're looking at the bank fraud piece with the loans and stuff. Well then now, it's 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 o'clock and they're getting dinner. There was a part of me that was kinda like, what the heck is going on. Like, and, you know, and Eric and I talked, you know? We were kind of both trying to, alright, talk this thing through, what are we thinking, yada, yada, yada. You know, the thought was, well, maybe at this point, there's no way that they're gonna find him innocent on everything, hopefully. But you never know with the jury, you know? I mean, I was involved in the Walter Scott case. You had a cop who shot somebody in the back eight times from like 50 feet away, and there was a hung jury on that in the state court trial. I mean, I've seen strange things happen at trial. And then part of me's like, but they have to have a verdict tonight. They have to have a verdict tonight. Do not send them home. Then you start pondering, well, Thanksgiving's coming. I mean, there's no way they're gonna let the jury leave. Courts close tomorrow, like they can't let a jury leave for the holidays and come back and finish deliberations five days later.

[00:15:37] **Mandy Matney:** During the day, two notes from the jury came in, one asking for a transcript of Russell's testimony and another asking for the jury to relisten to a recording of a Palmetto State Bank board meeting. This presumably gave the defense some hope, especially considering the hours



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that had passed. The jury was focusing on details, and those details could distract them from the facts. There was a time around 5:00 PM when Eric Bland called me and we both started freaking out just a little. And then the press started reporting that the jury had ordered pizza, which oddly gave us some hope. Maybe they were close to finishing this thing up. And then, more notes started coming in. And suddenly, everything slipped into chaos. One juror said that they had anxiety, another claimed that they needed antibiotics. Then a juror said that they were bullied and everything just got weird.

[00:16:35] **Justin Bamberg:** You know, now, it's nighttime, you know? And food's ordered, and then you're getting notes like, you know, hey, I gotta take my antibiotics. I can maybe go another hour or two, which me personally, I get it. I've been on antibiotics before. I would be hours late. Like it was never that big of a deal. I figured there was more behind that. And then the issue of, you know, one juror who was having anxiety. And then, you know, there's another note. Hey, judge. There's a juror back here who, has like bringing up prior experiences and saying that they're not gonna listen to certain evidence and that they disagree with the definitions you included in your charges. And under this charge, you said you can't bring your personal preferences, yada, yada, yada. And it turned kind of into a little bit of a madhouse of, you know, again, what the heck is going on?

[00:17:38] **Mandy Matney:** Thankfully, Judge Gergel, who honestly has restored my faith in the justice system through his fairness and his kindness in the last few weeks, showed everybody just how it's done. He quickly talked to the prosecution and the defense and agreed to swap two problematic jurors with two alternates. And then, things started moving really quickly.

[00:18:01] **Justin Bamberg:** That's when I knew in my gut. But then other two jurors come in there, and what had gone on for seven, eight hours, or whatever it was, and now, it's another hour, and it's like, we got a verdict, I was like, Russell going to prison.

[00:18:19] **Mandy Matney:** So within an hour after the alternate jurors were swapped, the jury finally reached a verdict. This was a really good sign for the prosecution. It appeared like the two jurors, the one with the anxiety and the one who needed the medicine, were holding up the process. So at 9:19 PM, the jury reached a verdict and they were called back into the court. Russell's entire family was sitting behind him. And then, the jury read the verdict.



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Count one, conspiracy to commit wire fraud and bank fraud: guilty. Count two, bank fraud: guilty. Count three, wire fraud: guilty. Count four, misapplication of bank funds: guilty. Count five, misapplication of bank funds: guilty. And count six, misapplication of bank funds: guilty.

[00:19:21] **Justin Bamberg:** I was in there when the first guilty verdict was read. And, you know, there weren't any screams or gasps or anything like that. But if you looked around the courtroom, some of the people who were there in support of Russell were visibly upset. I saw some people crying. And my heart does go out to people who had, you know, everybody has somebody that loves them, right? And people on Russell's side who do, they love him, you know, and they have nothing to do with any of this. They just know that bam, my loved one is about to go to prison, right? And I hate that for them. But I hate it more for Pamela Pinckney and Malik Williams and Natasha Thomas and Hannah Plyler, right, Arthur Badger. And there's nobody to blame but Russell himself for what he did. And it's all this. And you see the same trend with the money that went to Chris Wilson's office, right? And it's always this — or I followed up my friend, right? Alex put Chris in the middle of a murder case, you know? And I hate it for a lot of folks. These people deserve justice. And today, they got a piece of it. And some have been waiting for over 10 years. And I'm happy for them.

[00:21:04] **Mandy Matney:** This was the first trial related to the Murdaugh case since we started covering this thing in 2019. Yesterday's verdict was the outcome of so many people's hard work, bravery, and dedication to truth and justice. There was so much on the line when it came to momentum and really changing things in South Carolina. Needless to say, the Laffitte verdict was a long time coming.

[00:21:37] **Justin Bamberg:** So, all day into the evening may seem like a very, very long time. But those of us who know this like the back of our hand, just been doing it for over a year, not really that bad that it took them this long. I mean, sometimes, these juries go out and they be in deliberations for four or five days a week, two weeks, you know? So I just am grateful for, you know, law enforcement and the US Attorney's Office who was willing to prosecute somebody who is in a category of people who often feel as though they're untouchable, including by the government. We're grateful for you and Liz and all the work that y'all have done over all this time, telling these facts, talking about things when they're not comfortable or popular to talk about. I'm



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grateful for your listeners. I'm grateful for all the people who have shown love and support to the real victims, to Ms. Pinckney, to the Plylers, to the the Badgers, to Tasha, Malik, you know, to —'s family. Everybody played their role and everybody's role was important. And I think it took the effort from everybody to get here. And I don't think this is the end, you know? Like Bill Goldberg used to say — I'm a big wrestling guy — Bill Goldberg used to say it, "Who's next?"

[00:23:09] **Mandy Matney:** And we'll be right back.

[00:23:20] **Liz Farrell:** So Tuesday might have been the longest day in my journalism career, even though I wasn't in the courtroom. Generally speaking, trials are my most and least favorite to cover. They're exciting. You're learning a lot more about a case than you knew before, which, obviously, was the situation here when we heard about the PMPED confrontation on the day of the murders. They're also conclusive. You finally get long-awaited answers and hopefully, you get to see some justice get delivered. There's a lot of drama and the stakes are high, so that makes them really, really anxiety-provoking stories for me. The tension of the situation is undeniable. And if you're me, you end up feeling extreme empathy for everyone there, especially the victims. And I'm not gonna lie. I'm often trying to hold back tears while also taking notes. This, however, was the very first time I've covered a trial and not been in the courtroom for the verdict. And I have to say it was still nerve-racking, maybe even more so. But it was made a lot easier knowing that I wasn't alone in my restlessness. I had Mandy to trade updates with and make jokes with. And I found out that even the great Eric Bland, our Cup of Justice co-host, was feeling our same sense of tension. I talked to Eric first thing Wednesday morning to get his thoughts on the incredible verdict and to learn more about what comes next for Russell in all of this. Eric, as usual, put things in perspective. We started off by talking about how yesterday went for him.

[00:24:48] **Eric Bland:** The pressure on a lawyer and a litigator while a jury's out, and then that very second before they announce their verdict is nothing like I've ever felt in my life. And yesterday, I wasn't even the attorney or my client wasn't a party. And I just was not right all day long. I wasn't sharp. I was preoccupied. I was worried. The devil works in the dark and when you're, nobody knows what goes on in the deliberation room. No one, even today. I mean, it's the one thing. We know how a rocket gets to the moon. We can watch, you know, a laparoscopic device blow up a kidney stone. But we just



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never see what deliberations are like, you know? It's anecdotal. Nobody has a camera in a jury room. And a lot of strange things happen in a jury room. And you saw it with the jury notes. And then, you know, as Judge Gergel said, he's tried over a hundred cases. He's been a judge for 13 years. And he said he never saw what happened yesterday where you had one juror who wanted out because they couldn't get an antibiotic. And then you had another juror that almost looked like he could be held in contempt or she because, according to the note, that juror said she would not follow the judge's instructions, which you take an oath to follow the law and follow what the judge tells you. Look, from an evidentiary standpoint, it was overwhelming. It was a slam the door shut. But once you inject the jury and people who come with their life experiences, and I think some of these jurors had, you know, concerns about, well, Russ doesn't look like the normal criminal, and, you know, I wouldn't mind sending a rapist to jail or a murderer. But, you know, am I gonna send somebody like Russ? So, that's why the juries are so finicky.

[00:26:46] **Liz Farrell:** Because of this finicky jury, Eric said the case was in serious jeopardy at one point.

[00:26:51] **Eric Bland:** We almost lost this case last night, you know? Judge Gerel rescued it. He saved it with a heavy lasso because, you know, if he had released those jurors, the alternate jurors, in the morning like most judges do when juries begin to deliberate, this trial would've been over because he had to release two jurors for medical reasons, and without having alternative jurors who are sitting in a room, remember they're just sitting in a room for eight hours, they can't use their phones because then they would've been infected. I mean, Judge Gergel is to be applauded. He saved this trial.

[00:27:32] **Liz Farrell:** Throughout the trial, all three of us had critical feedback for Russell's defense team and some of the seemingly strange decisions they were making, including allowing Russell to upload episode two of Russell TV while the trial was still happening.

[00:27:46] **Eric Bland:** Lawyers can only do so much. I'm gonna be highly critical of Bart Daniel, not so much of Matt Austin because I thought his temperament was perfect. But over the next couple weeks, I'm gonna be very critical of Bart Daniel. But it's very little that a lawyer could change. Bart being better wouldn't have gotten Russell not guilty. But Bart being worse like he was hurt Russ. It hurt him. And I think Bart and the way that he approached



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how he was gonna defend it, making Russ a victim, was the wrong strategy. There was just never any contrition on the part of the defense. I get it that Matt Austin in his close said, look, we accept and agree with everything the government said except it wasn't criminal. But that was too little too late. That wasn't Russ saying it. That was a lawyer saying it.

[00:28:47] **Liz Farrell:** On all our minds yesterday was the idea of what six not guilty verdicts or a mistrial might have meant for the rest of Alex Murdaugh's alleged syndicate.

[00:28:58] **Eric Bland:** So, it was scary for me yesterday because, you know, it changes the whole paradigm. It'll either embolden people like Cory Fleming and embolden everybody around Alex and Russ not to talk or it could be a floodgate. And I think a lot of people woke up today, Liz, very, very nervous and unnerved because this was a resounding guilty. I mean, justice is rolling. There is change happening. No, it's incremental. But if you're Cory Fleming and you wake up this morning, you better start cooperating. If you're people at Alex's law firm and you know some things that could hurt other people, you better start talking. People need to know that at least the federal government, if they put you on trial, you're in trouble. You saw it. Now, will Creighton Waters be able to do the job that Emily and Winston did? I sure hope so. But those two lawyers, Emily and Winston, they're really good. And Bart Daniel was really bad. Now, would it have made a difference? Probably not. But he made some very strategic blunders. Putting him on, putting his client on at the bond hearing to give Emily the ability to say that he lied and he blew his proffer? That's malpractice. Letting him do Russell TV? That was horrible. They knew about it. Don't tell me that they didn't know about that. I don't believe it.

[00:30:43] **Liz Farrell:** We also talked about what happens next for Russell and how long it will be before we see him behind bars.

[00:30:50] **Eric Bland:** What happens over the next six months, obviously, they gotta get a transcript. There's gonna be a notice of appeal filed within 30 days. They'll ask for a new trial. The judge will deny it. And appeals take, you know, two years to go up to the Fourth Circuit. The question will be, he's gonna be sentenced within four or five months. What ends up happening is the Bureau of Prisons, they do an investigative analysis on what type of person Russ is, where he would be better suited. Now, let me tell you what's going to happen.



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What's going to happen is Russ is not gonna get placed in a prison of his own choosing because there wasn't a plea. When you do a guilty plea, you have some leverage to ask the court or the Bureau of Prisons to make you be placed close to home so that your family can see you. Well, in this particular case, the federal government is not gonna be wanting to give any dispensation to Russ. One, he didn't plead guilty. Two, he was not a cooperating witness. Three, he lied on his proffer. So even now, if Russ wants to come forward and be a cooperating witness, the government can't use him because he's burned. He has hurt his credibility because of so many different lies that he's told. He's not a good witness. So if you put him on the stand and he wants to sing about other lawyers or different things about Alex and others, he has no credibility because he's told so many different lies.

[00:32:30] The third thing, and I think this is gonna come out in sentencing, he never mentioned Russell TV at the entire trial. Now, it was mentioned to the judge. She made a motion, I think, out of the presence of the jury about it. But it never came before the jury, Russell TV. She didn't use it. She didn't use it to cross-examine him or to discredit him or impeach him. However, I think in the sentence, it's gonna come up. I think Emily's gonna argue in the sentence about Russell TV, about his arrogance, about him in a way mocking the justice system. So it would not surprise me that he will be placed at a prison a long way from here, maybe in Oklahoma. And that's what I woke up kind of sad about. Because it's his children, you know? What man would be so selfish to place his father and sister in jeopardy, basically destroy a reputation of a bank, or even ultimately potentially destroy the bank, and then leave his children fatherless? I mean, he could have pled guilty and he would've gotten, could have gotten three to five years. Maybe two to four, maybe four to six, somewhere in that range. It's not easy going to jail. But now, Judge Gergel will not show leniency to him. He cannot. He cannot. And you saw by Judge Gergel's rulings and what he said during the trial, he was disgusted with Russ. He was disgusted with the defense. So I believe, no, he is not gonna get 180 years because that's for each crime, zero to 30. He won't serve him what's called consecutive sentences. He'll serve him concurrent. So each of these guilty charges will be compressed down into one sentence, and I believe that sentence is gonna be somewhere between 12 to 20 years.

[00:34:31] **Liz Farrell:** Overall, though, Eric said the day was very bittersweet for him, even though the outcome was one he, like Mandy and I, were hoping for.



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[00:34:40] **Eric Bland:** I felt so good for Gloria Satterfield. I felt so good for Alania and Hannah and the other victims. I felt really good for you and Mandy for all you did. And I felt good for me because, you know, at great personal expense, we took all this on. But at the same time, it is that, you know, you see children and, you know, I love my children and every parent loves their children and just the raw selfishness of Russ really struck me on what he did throughout this trial. You know, justice, it doesn't reward friends and it doesn't punish enemies. It treats everybody equal. And there was a lot of justice that was meted out with that verdict. But, you know, like we talked about all week, you never know what's gonna happen. What I saw is really a despicable man, just a guy that's selfish, that has, you know, no feelings of remorse or, you know, feeling that he let somebody down.

[00:35:54] **Liz Farrell:** And we'll be right back.

[00:36:02] **Mandy Matney:** On Wednesday morning, I spoke with a woman who has quickly become a hero of mine in the last few months: Alania Plyler. As we told you last week, Alania and her sister, who lost their mother and brother in a 2009 car accident, were two of the four victims who bravely testified against Russell Laffitte last week. I asked Alania how she was feeling after Russell Laffitte's conviction.

[00:36:30] **Alania Plyler Spohn:** Oh, I feel like I can take just a deep breath of air. It feels good. I feel like we've just been almost at a standstill for two weeks as the rest of the world keeps moving. But I feel here. I feel present, and it's nice. Hannah and I are doing much better this morning. It was one of those things like in that we knew it was in limbo and I knew that we did exactly what we were supposed to do. And if for whatever reason he was found not guilty, it wasn't because of anything that we'd done.

[00:37:07] **Mandy Matney:** Alania was honest. The last few weeks have made her relive a lot of trauma. This trial, which Russell insisted on having took the victims back to the worst time of their lives.

[00:37:22] **Alania Plyler Spohn:** I will say over the past two weeks, it has definitely reopened some wounds for sure. Like I was telling David, my husband, it's been about eight years since I had relived the car accident dream. I used to have it almost every night. And night before last, I had it. And



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I woke up crying and David's like, what is going on? And I was like, it's back. And he is like, what's back? And I was like, I just saw the whole wreck again in my dream. And it scared me. And I'm sure just because all of those emotions and just repeating that story over and over and over, reliving it, it got to my subconscious and it showed but. So then after hearing the guilty verdict, I was like, maybe I can put that to rest too now. So, last night was fine. I was terrified to go to bed, but I knew I needed to get some sleep. But I did fine last night.

[00:38:34] **Mandy Matney:** But Alania doesn't have resentment or anger in her heart toward Russell or his family. She said something that really took me aback. She said that she hopes that Russell learns empathy through all of this, like she has learned how to empathize with others after the trauma that she has endured.

[00:38:53] **Alania Plyler Spohn:** And I just hope that him being in prison kind of humbles him. I know he'll be upset and I know how upset him and Susie made it out to be, like they didn't get to see their son play football. But put yourself in Alania and Hannah's shoes. Like, gosh, they never got to see their brother play football ever 'cause he didn't make it. And that wasn't because of Justin's choices. Russell missed those and will continue to miss these important roles and holidays and stuff because he put himself in that position. Nobody forced him to. And if Alex was that big of a mastermind, and if he, I don't know, feared Alex that much, then maybe he should have stepped up and told somebody like, I almost feel pressured. This guy is making me do this. Like, I don't think you can run on that hill for too long. I mean, this happened for decades.

[00:39:57] **Mandy Matney:** Alania hopes that Russell learns how to own up to what he did in the past and be honest with himself and his family about this. She hopes that he changes his life, starting with his own family.

[00:40:11] **Alania Plyler Spohn:** So I just think that it's always been about Russell in that family. What Russell wants is what Russell's going to get and it's gonna be his way or no way. And the wife and the children have adapted to that. I just hope that he makes things right with his family. I hope that he gets to relearn Susie and what she likes and doesn't like. I hope he's more honest with her in the coming weeks and year because clearly, they were blindsided by a lot of things. Now, they may be totally opposite and feel like everything that the prosecution put up was a lie or, you know, and still



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support Russell a hundred percent. But at some point, you have to sit back and say, those jurors didn't find him guilty for no reason, you know? So I hope he spends this time with his children. I hope he spends this time with his wife.

[00:41:09] **Mandy Matney:** And as for Alania, despite all of the stress this case has caused her in the last year, she has learned the power of telling her own story. Before this, Alania kept to herself and stayed away from talking about what happened to her.

[00:41:24] **Alania Plyler Spohn:** I never wanted to really share my story because I never wanted people to feel sorry for me. I think we had talked about this before, like, you know, it is a terrible story. I wouldn't wish it on anyone, not even my worst enemy, if I were to have one, because there's just a lot of emotional pain, physical pain, mental pain. Like it affects every aspect of your life. I wouldn't wish it on anyone. But I also, I don't really know how to handle the, I'm so sorry you went through this. God, I wouldn't know what to do if it was me. Like I just kind of freeze because I wouldn't have known what to do either until I was put in that position. But I have learned that that's not the way that most people view me. Like they hear my story and they show empathy, and there's such a big difference in that. I didn't want to use my tragedies as an excuse for anything. I didn't want, you know, it's like I wouldn't wanna walk into the grocery store and say, you know, my mom and my brother died and I need free food or whatever. Like, I just would never want to use them as a crutch, if you will. I felt like when people, the more that people didn't know, the more protected I was of it. But, you know, I've learned over the past year, like no one's out here judging me for telling my story. I'm not looking for handouts or any sort of, anything like that. I'm simply here to say my side, say my experiences. And hopefully, people can be moved by it. And kind of like the lady that I talked to who stopped me in the parking garage after we left the courthouse. She was sharing a little bit about her story and she said that she had days where she felt like she couldn't move on. But after hearing my testimony and the one that you guys recorded on that episode, she said, "That gave me so much hope and that motivated me so much." And that is the only thing that I hope for my story. And it's working. It's doing it. I'm encouraging people who are stuck in that victim mindset to change to like you survived that. And it is okay to share your story that you survived and you overcome it. And just for however long you live, you have that right to celebrate what you've overcome.



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[00:44:11] **Mandy Matney:** And now, the world knows the story of Alania Plyler. The world now remembers her mother, Angie, and her brother, Justin. And that is a beautiful thing.

[00:44:22] **Alania Plyler Spohn:** And it's been truly amazing to see really across the world of what I thought was such a small story — very big story in my life — but small to the world is actually bigger. And my mom and my brother's story, their lives mattered to not only me, but to the rest of the world. And so, that is exciting. Like they're not forgotten. They'll never be forgotten. I will forever sing about them. Yeah, that's my family. And whether they're here or not, I love them. And I won't stop fighting for them.

[00:45:07] **Mandy Matney:** Finally, for this special Thanksgiving episode, we wanted to share a special conversation with you that didn't make it into the last Cup of Justice episode. So Eric, what are you thankful for?

[00:45:21] **Eric Bland:** I'm thankful for our government. I'm telling you the lawyering from Emily Limehouse, Winston, and their team, they could go anywhere and earn a ton of money. And Emily Limehouse is headed for bigger, bigger things. I'm thankful for this team of Mandy and Liz work so very hard and David, you know, programming it behind the scenes. But I'm just really grateful and thankful to the listeners who give us the energy to do this and the grace that they show us and the comments are, you know, so motivating for us. And I feel like we have an army of people that are supporting us. And, you know, if anybody says something like a bad word, you know, people jump at, you know, on those people quickly. I mean, we just have a great team and a great group of listeners.

[00:46:12] **Mandy Matney:** Aw, I love that, Eric. Liz, what are you thankful for?

[00:46:16] **Liz Farrell:** I'm grateful of course for all the listeners. They truly understand what we're doing here and have helped us amplify this incredibly important call for there to be actual justice in the South Carolina Lowcountry after generations of astounding corruption.

[00:46:31] **Eric Bland:** Our fans are great.

[00:46:32] **Mandy Matney:** They're really great people.



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[00:46:33] **Liz Farrell:** I'm also immensely grateful for my friendship with you, Mandy.

[00:46:37] **Mandy Matney:** Aw, you too, Liz.

[00:46:39] **Liz Farrell:** I feel so beyond lucky to have found a friend I can laugh with, cry with, and commit vicious acts of investigative journalism with. The biggest lesson I've learned from our friendship and our working relationship is how important it is to find people in your life who will seek to build you up rather than tear you down; who exude kindness; and who are always there to catch you when you feel like you're about to fall. So thank you.

[00:47:02] **Mandy Matney:** Aw, that's really great.

[00:47:03] **Liz Farrell:** And I'm especially thankful for your wonderful husband who does not get enough credit for how much blood, sweat, and tears he puts into everything we do here. David, you have become an amazing journalist in your own right. And it's been so rewarding watching you catch the same Murdaugh bug that Mandy and I have been carrying around for years. And Eric, you aren't just a ray of sunshine to us. You are a meteor. I'm so thankful for everything you've brought to our reporting and for your expertise and your humor and your incredible drive. And finally, I'm grateful for my family and my friends and for my judgy little dog, Newbury.

[00:47:40] **Mandy Matney:** I also am very thankful for the listeners. I really appreciate you saying that. I was thinking about that all week. Like this would not be nearly as interesting. This would not be, it just wouldn't be what it is if it wasn't for listeners constantly interacting with us, caring about what we do, waiting, anticipating every new podcast, I mean.

[00:48:00] **Eric Bland:** They care about my dog.

[00:48:01] **Mandy Matney:** They do.

[00:48:02] **Eric Bland:** They care about our dogs. They love Luna. They love Coco and Stella. And truthfully, you know, they make me feel good, you know? I just. They made me feel good about myself.



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[00:48:12] **Mandy Matney:** The sweet things. Yeah, they're very, I mean, sweet, kind, encouraging. Like I couldn't ask for better people to be behind us. And speaking of, very quickly, we have a special guest. One of my favorite fans, honestly, he came up with the term "Matney Mafia" of people who support me. And he's awesome. He's a football coach on James Island here in Charleston. Welcome, Jamar. We're so glad to have you. Will you introduce yourself to the audience?

[00:48:48] **Jamar McKoy:** Hi, I'm Jamar McKoy, head football coach, James Island. Go, Trojans. I'm from North Carolina and, you know, I recently moved here a couple years ago with my family to take on a head coaching job in James Island right here in Charleston. Go, Trojans. Go, Trojans. PTI, protect the island, you know, that's our phrase around here. It's not just a motto. We really live by it. And we, you know, one island, we really take care of this island. We love it. So I've been a big fan from day one when Mandy began to tweet about the podcast. I haven't missed the episode. I haven't missed the episode of Cup of Justice nor the Murdaugh Murders Podcast. I have a question that's, you know, been on my mind for a while since listening to it because I've always had the sneaking suspicion that Alex Murdaugh didn't just start these crimes. He's been doing it over a long period of time. Has he opened himself up to RICO charges, the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act, with Russell Laffitte and the whole list of characters? And listening to episode number 68, I heard a new name, which was a doctor, which kinda opens itself up to the medical fraud piece, which is another that goes right under the RICO Act. So has Alex Murdaugh and the cast open themselves up for RICO? Does it meet the standard to be charged federally with the RICO?

[00:50:18] **Mandy Matney:** That's a great question. Eric knows more about the RICO Act than I do. And we've been asked this question a lot and we have not fully answered it.

[00:50:27] **Eric Bland:** RICO charges and RICO cases are very rare. They happened a lot in the nineties with the New York Mafia. And they happen with drug cartels. It's very rare that you do it with individuals because it takes a lot of different elements and you have to pick the enterprise. What is the enterprise gonna be? Is it gonna be the fake Forge when you deal with the Satterfield case? Are you gonna make the bank the enterprise? Are you gonna make a law firm the enterprise? So it's very difficult. In theory, on a 30,000-foot level, you say, yeah, let's bring a RICO charge. They're very, very



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difficult to articulate and prove. The government and most civil lawyers, what they do is they use the word "conspiracy." It basically means the same thing — that different people conspire. And then they use the mail fraud, and then they use the wire fraud. And so, you actually get the same result without having to go through the complexity of the RICO. Granted in mafia cases, it's set up perfectly because you may have the Gambino family or you have, you know, the John Gotti or you have the Scarfo family. And then in a drug enterprise case, you have a drug cartel. This case really I don't think sets itself up for RICO because I don't think you have that one enterprise. It's gotta be an enterprise. So would it be only the bank? Or would it be a law firm? Or would it be Forge? Or, you know, you do have RICO participants in Alex and Russell and Cory and a lot of other people. So I think that would really confuse our jury. And it's easier to just do conspiracy and wire fraud and mail fraud and bank fraud. And I think you're gonna see how they all kind of dovetail and fit in with each other.

[00:52:25] **Mandy Matney:** Yeah, and I mean, but the question also made me think of like, we still don't know how far back this goes and if Alex really came up with it or. I mean, there's still just a lot and how many people were involved and really what it was because we still don't know where the money went and what the enterprise was, like you said. So that was a really great question, Jamar.

[00:52:51] **Eric Bland:** Thank you, Jamar.

[00:52:52] **Mandy Matney:** Yeah, thank you. Do you have any questions personally about us?

[00:52:56] **Jamar McKoy:** If I had a question for the three, I feel like I know you already, you're such cool people. God, what would it be? Okay, I got it. What is your favorite place to dine while in Charleston? 'Cause I know the crew is around downtown now for the trial. What is your favorite place to dine while in Charleston?

[00:53:23] **Mandy Matney:** Another great question because Charleston is like the food capital of the universe in my eyes. Every time I come here, I'm like, I would be a million pounds if I lived in this town because everything, every



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meal I have is amazing. But probably Tavern & Table in Mount Pleasant is my favorite place. Have you ever been there, Eric?

[00:53:43] **Eric Bland:** I have. It's a very good restaurant, Mandy.

[00:53:45] **Mandy Matney:** Oh, it's so good. And it's right on Shem Creek and it's beautiful and I always have such a, it's just a very happy environment. And we've been going to Millers All Day a lot during the trial and it's very good for like lunch. Have you been there yet?

[00:54:00] **Eric Bland:** I heard it's great hamburgers. Now, you're gonna —

[00:54:04] **Mandy Matney:** I mean, you could go anywhere. It's so, Charleston is just so good. What's your favorite place, Eric?

[00:54:08] **Eric Bland:** Well, you know, I do like Magnolias. But if I'm gonna be honest, you know, being from Philadelphia, I cannot get a good cheesesteak in Columbia, South Carolina. And there's a cheesesteak place in West Ashley called Db's, which is as close to Philadelphia as you can get. They have Amoroso rolls that they fly in and their cheesesteaks are to die for. And I also like a place called Boxcar Betty's that serve this unbelievable fried chicken sandwich. I'm kind of a plain guy, so that's the kind of food I like.

[00:54:43] **Mandy Matney:** And Liz, what is your favorite restaurant in Charleston? I know you have a lot, too.

[00:54:47] **Liz Farrell:** I would have to say my favorite restaurant in Charleston after eating out every meal for two weeks, actually there are two. The first was this small restaurant on Spring Street called Xiao Bao Biscuit. They have this amazing dish called okonomiyaki, which is a Japanese street food. Highly recommend. And the burger at Millers All Day on King Street that was right around the corner from the courthouse. That was really, really good.

[00:55:15] **Jamar McKoy:** Those are great places to eat. Good selection. I like to say, hey to all the people on JI that listens to the Murdaugh Murders Podcast, my friends over at Moving the Chains podcast, my daughter, Carmen — love you, Carmen — everybody worldwide — hi, grandma. Hi, mama. Love you guys. Hope to see you soon.



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[00:55:38] **Eric Bland:** Take care, Jamar. We love you.

[00:55:39] **Mandy Matney:** Yeah, thanks, Jamar. I love it.

[00:55:42] **Jamar McKoy:** Hey, keep up the good work. We support you. Don't let negativity slow you down. You just, it's just noise in the background. Keep doing positive work. And thank you.

[00:56:03] **Outro:** The Murdaugh Murders Podcast is created and hosted by me, Mandy Matney, produced by my husband, David Moses. And Liz Farrell is our executive editor. From Luna Shark Productions.

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