



EPISODE 03: Team Murdaugh Gets Called Out And The Jeroid Price Situation Gets Worse

[00:00:03] **Mandy Matney:** I don't know how long it will take for us to have one system of justice here in South Carolina. But the good news is that I think I know how to make it better and maybe one day fix it. I'll give you a hint: pesky does it. My name is Mandy Matney. This is *True Sunlight*, a podcast exposing crime and corruption previously known as *The Murdaugh Murders Podcast*. *True Sunlight* is written with journalist Liz Farrell and produced by David Moses.

[00:00:53] **Mandy Matney:** June 7, marked the two year anniversary of Maggie and Paul Murdaugh's horrific murders. And I was just thinking about how much has changed in the last year. One year ago, we were sitting on the edge of our seats waiting for murder charges against Alex Murdaugh. For months, we had heard charges would be coming and by the time the anniversary rolled around last June, it was hard to stay hopeful. We knew of the evidence stacked against Alex at the time, what was taking so long? What if our sources were just stringing us along all of this time for the fix? I mean, this when I say that I never pictured us here in just one year, with Alex Murdaugh and prison serving two life sentences for the murders of his wife and son. The fact that Alex was charged with murder last July was a big deal in and of itself. But now that he has been convicted, and Russell Laffitte has been convicted of six felonies and Cory Fleming pled guilty to a federal charge, well, we are in a place where we never thought we would be. And while trying to change an entire system at times feels impossible, and most days feels incredibly frustrating and slow, I think that it's important to look back on times like this and remind everyone that systemic change is possible.

[00:02:30] **Mandy Matney:** I hope that Paul and Maggie can rest easier now knowing that their killer, the man who wrecked so many lives through his abuse of power and deception, has been exposed in the sunlight and brought to justice. And I hope that those who are still being manipulated by Alex Murdaugh, eventually come to terms with the truth: that he's an immoral monster who deserves to be exactly where he is right now. And speaking of people being fooled by Alex, let's talk about what's going on with Dick and Jim. This week, Eric Bland and his law partner Ronnie Richter filed a giant firebomb of a response to Team Murdaugh's ridiculous motion for relief from Alex's May 22 confession of judgment in the Satterfield case. As you know, Alex is being sued by Nautilus in federal court. Nautilus is the insurance company that agreed to pay nearly \$4 million in their negotiated settlement with Alex and against Alex in the Satterfield case. Just listen to how screwed up those words are. Anyway, Nautilus wants their money back and out of nowhere Alex filed a



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motion that was like, I lied about how Gloria died so the settlement is fraudulent and never should have happened. Go get your money from the Satterfields. Reminder: the Satterfields never got a penny of that settlement. But that hasn't stopped Alex and his team from twisting the truth and hoping their supporters will carry their water for them and repeat their lies online, which of course they have. Whether or not Gloria was knocked over by dogs had nothing to do with those settlements. It is, was, and always has been about the theft of the original settlement.

[00:04:33] **Mandy Matney:** So despite Dick and Jim maintaining that Eric Bland got one by them with this confession of judgment, the negotiation for it actually started in October 2021. Soon after Alex's arrest in Florida on charges that he had defrauded the Satterfields. The confession wasn't executed until May 2022. So that's how many months? Almost seven. Almost seven months of back and forth with Eric and Ronnie and the receivers about every little word contained in that confession, but we'll get to that in a second. After Judge Newman twice denied bond to Alex, Team Murdaugh apparently manipulated the Supreme Court—which had put Judge Newman in charge of all of Alex's criminal cases—into allowing them to have yet another bond hearing in front of Judge Alison Lee. Team Murdaugh walked into that hearing like it was a mere formality. In that hearing his team used the promise of this confession in the Satterfield case as evidence that he was sorry for his actions and taking responsibility for them, even though he offered the family the least amount of words to qualify as an apology. Nevertheless, their little plan did not work. In fact, almost every little plan these fools have ever had in the past two years has backfired. Tremendously. It would be funny if it didn't constantly result in them popping back up and reapplying their makeup like Goldie Hawn and Meryl Streep in *Death Becomes Her*.

[00:06:12] **Mandy Matney:** Anyway, you can add Bland Richter's response to that list of backfires because boy did they call out Dick and Jim's behavior in this one. The filing is 127 pages, most of which is receipts. It's a great read, so if you have time to delve into it, we highly recommend it. In the meantime, we want to share with you our favorite moments from the filing, because it's nothing short of a vibe. First, the entire response was done in golf-related metaphors. Neither of us are golfers and typically we don't have too much use for sports analogies. But Ronnie and Eric committed themselves fully to this and it was great. Okay, moment one: Ronnie and Eric are the adults here, and they let the court know it. Referring to Alex's motion as a "spoiled child who is over indulged and undisciplined." The response outright calls



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out Team Murdaugh for needlessly wasting the court's time for unnecessarily causing the future victimization of the Satterfield family. Moment two: they are not letting Dick and Jim off the hook at all. As part of their response, Ronnie and Eric have filed a motion for sanctions asking the court to send a strong message to Dick, Jim and Alex, that they can no longer abuse the court system the way they have been. Then, Ronnie and Eric paint the court into a morality corner. No sanctions, they say, is tantamount to sanctioning Dick and Jim and Alex's behavior. In other words, the court's response to this better be epic and it better leave a mark on their behinds. Moment three: all of the sick burns. I mean, y'all, they were not one bit polite and I am here for that. Let me share just some of the passages that we marked because they were major LOL moments. I'll have David read this one.

[00:08:28] **David Moses:** "The motion suggests that it raises novel issues. It does not. It raises nonsensical issues. If the motion is novel, it is only novel in the sense that it is the by-product of a disgraced former attorney with the time, depravity of mind and sheer balderdash to have concocted it. Moreover, the motion is nothing more than a continuation of the mockery that Murdaugh has made of his prior profession and the administration of justice itself."

[00:09:01] **Mandy Matney:** And here's another favorite.

[00:09:03] **David Moses:** "This point is twisted even by Murdaugh standards ..."

[00:09:07] **Mandy Matney:** And another good burn.

[00:09:09] **David Moses:** "Perhaps this filing will remind Murdaugh to amend his Federal pleading to deny the validity of the confession if he at least wants to be consistent in his lies."

[00:09:20] **Mandy Matney:** And one more of my favorites.

[00:09:23] **David Moses:** "While it is possible that the attorneys for Mr. Murdaugh did not realize the downstream damage that could be caused by their counseling Mr. Murdaugh to give the \$4.3 million confession to the Satterfields, the fact that they were admittedly outmaneuvered on the legal chessboard does not create a basis for relief."



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[00:09:48] **Mandy Matney:** Let's all take a second and picture Dick's face when his paralegals told him that part. I can hear the angry stomping of grandpa shoes and the old timey curse words being thrown around Dick's office from here. One of the key arguments from Alex's insult of a motion last month was that Big Bad Bland Richter had tricked them and pressured them into the confession of judgment and that Dick and Jim only went along with it because they had quote, bigger fish to fry. Aka, Alex's murder charges, which did not exist at the time of the confession of judgment by the way. And let's talk about the timing of a confession of judgment. Alex tried to use it as evidence that he is not the monster he appears to be during his January 2022 bond hearing. Was he using it again as a monster shield in May 2022, when the writing was on the wall for him about the murder charges? The answer to that is probably. Let me just say this, we make references sometimes about Dick and Jim and the Murdaugh family, PR teams and the headlines they've been able to secure over the past few years. But there's something we have not talked about before, and that's the idea that Alex's PR team might also have been suggesting Dick and Jim's next moves in the courtroom. Because that is how big of a joke their defense has been. Okay, there's just a few more Bland Richter burns that I want to share. Here's a really good one.

[00:11:25] **David Moses:** It is the rare litigant that would point to his own error as a basis to escape his admitted liability. But this is Alex Murdaugh.

[00:11:33] **Mandy Matney:** Beautiful, right. And finally...

[00:11:37] **David Moses:** We apologize for the length of that sentence, but it is reflective of the depths of the rabbit holes that Team Murdaugh would urge upon this court.

[00:11:50] **Liz Farrell:** Now, moment four: the weaponization of Dick and Jim's faulty logic. Ronnie and Eric were like Dumbledore and Snape in this thing, just sending those Death Eater spells right back at them. Let's talk about this a little because Ronnie and Eric raised some really important points in their response. The first is how clearly they they spelled out Alex's main argument: "Through a twisted application of Murdaugh logic, the point Murdaugh seems to make is that if he lied about the dogs, then the insurance companies never should have paid him the money that he stole, as a result of which he should be relieved of the confession of judgment that he gave the Satterfield boys some years later because there never should have been a Gloria



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Satterfield wrongful death claim and recovery in the first place — and, of course, Murdaugh gets to keep the stolen money.”

Ronnie and Eric’s filing points out that technically nothing Alex has told the court before this has been about the dogs killing Gloria. First, in settling with the family Alex never admitted fault for her death. No court filing mentions the dogs having killed Gloria. In his murder trial when Alex was supposedly coming clean about his thefts, neither Alex nor his attorneys ever said, actually, the dogs didn't kill Gloria, when Tony Satterfield was testifying.

[00:13:13] **Liz Farrell:** Ronnie and Eric wrote in a footnote, “obviously they thought it beneficial at the time to have the jury believe that Murdaugh had made restitution to the Satterfields when they accepted the testimony without challenge.” Next, Ronnie and Eric pointed out that Nautilus' decision to settle was solely an economic one. That ultimately Nautilus' own list of reasoning shows that the decision was based on Alex and Cory’s influence over Judge Mullen and Judge Buckner and on the 14th circuit having plaintiff friendly juries, and not about “dogs.” They noted that Nautilus had conducted their own investigation and, “negotiated for a resolution that included the stipulation that Murdaugh had done nothing wrong.”

[00:14:02] **Liz Farrell:** And this is where they included an epic footnote: “not to be dense,” they wrote. “But it has not been our experience that insurance companies pay out millions of dollars in claims without first performing an exhaustive investigation, obtaining opinions from their counsel to determine whether there is coverage under an applicable policy and making calculated business decisions to settle that may or may not have any bearing on actual liability.” Then Ronnie and Eric pointed out that Alex had admitted from the start that he wasn't there at the time of Gloria’s fall, but that there were two witnesses: Maggie and Paul, who both said for the record that they heard the dogs and saw the dogs in proximity to Gloria and oh, look at that Alex killed the only two witnesses to Gloria's death in what Ronnie and Eric are calling the “greatest spoliation of evidence in the history of the court.” Ronnie and Eric also addressed Dick and Jim's assertion that Eric was playing fast and loose with the confession of judgment by referring to the money as, “monopoly money” in an email to them. This is something Eric has gotten called out for online. But surprise, surprise, Dick and Jim took Eric's words out of context. After Dick and Jim pushed back about confessing to the full amount of the theft, Eric was basically like, “come on, guys. What are you doing here?” Here's what Ronnie and Eric had to



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say in a footnote: “what Bland was referring to was that he doubted that assets could be located to satisfy the judgment. Still, judgments are good for 10 years, and you never really know what fortune may come to a judgment debtor. In other words, Eric was saying to Dick and Jim, stop quibbling over dollars and cents. Another good point, Ronnie and Eric pointed out to the court that it was Alex’s confession of judgment in the Satterfield case that immediately led to his disbaring, which happened without an investigation. That is how significant Alex's admission was in the confession of judgment. The State Supreme Court was basically like thank you for that, our work is done.

[00:16:12] **Liz Farrell:** Ronnie and Eric noted that Alex—though he has now admitted to lying about the dogs and is maintaining that he gave that confession of judgment in error—has, to their knowledge, not contacted the Supreme Court to alert them that the confession should not have been used as a basis to disbar him. And yet another good point, Ronnie and Eric pushed back hard against any notion that this confession of judgment was an attempt to put them at the front of the line of victims. And they scoffed at Alex's assertion that he wanted to rescind his confession of judgment in an effort to protect his other victims. I mean, does anyone besides his love letter pen pals and the seven people who defend him in an echo chamber on Twitter believe that Alex is doing this out of concern for his victims? It would be funny if it weren't so perverse. In their response, Ronnie and Eric cited emails that showed that this confession of judgment would not and was never intended to put them at the front of the line of the victims. And they pointed out in the slickest of ways that Alex should know what it looks like to use a confession of judgment as a way to jump the line because that is exactly what it looked like he was doing with his brother and former law partner in October 2021. When Alec tried to beat the clock on the receivership and confessed judgment to debts he allegedly owed those two men. Ronnie and Eric were like that is what it looks like when you're using the court system for your own buffoonery.

[00:17:48] **Liz Farrell:** Finally, my favorite point of all, Alex’s “same tired dialogue” about his opioid addiction, impeding his judgment at the time of his confession in the Satterfield case. In their motion for relief, Alex’s attorneys made reference to Alex's drug habit, as if he were addled during this time period. And as if Eric had been taking advantage of that to push this through. But Ronnie and Eric had some words to say about that. Actually, they're Alex's words, his own words to Judge Lee at the time the confession of judgment was first announced to the court in his effort to



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get bond. “Murdaugh told Judge Lee on video that his head has never been clearer and that he is off of drugs, is exercising, and is healthy. Those must have been some powerful drugs to have rendered Murdaugh incapacitated for the 10 months or so, when he entered rehab and presumably stopped taking drugs and the time he finally executed the confession on May 27, 2022. But we digress.” Is there anything more satisfying than watching a narcissist and his arrogant team get flayed by their own weapons? Not that we know of. Oh, wait, there's one thing that might be; Ronnie and Eric now plan to depose Dick and Jim. On *Cup of Justice* this week, we jokingly asked Eric if we can get hired as his paralegals so that we can be at that deposition. Obviously, that's not going to happen...but we might just make some suggestions for questions.

[00:19:30] **Mandy Matney:** Now, I have a lot of questions for Dick and Jim, starting with just, “why are you doing this?” I would love to see them actually forced to answer honestly about how much money they're receiving for Alex's absurd defense and where that money is coming from. But what really sucks is that I'm not even convinced that Dick and Jim would even be worried about lying in deposition because there is no system to police them. I have to say this again: Dick Harpootlian pointed and presented a firearm at the prosecution in court, on live TV, and joked that shooting them would be tempting. He's made overtly offensive and outlandish comments in court, and he has faced zero repercussions from the South Carolina Supreme Court and the ODC. This is how you create monsters like Alex Murdaugh, by the way. You let them get away with rules that no one else can break, over and over again. So obviously, if I was Eric, I would ask as many questions as possible to find out where the money is. We will keep you updated on that drama, and hopefully, news of the deposition in the near future. Ronnie and Eric's filing was made Tuesday afternoon, and they gave Dick and Jim the chance to withdraw their nonsense motion for relief and it appears that Dick and Jim decided that this was the better route, I guess. The big question is why? Why did Dick and Jim advise Alex to reverse course on the confession of judgment? All of this had to be foreseeable to them, right? It had to be foreseeable to such amazing legal chess players as everyone—except us—claims they are. That Ronnie and Eric weren't just going to let an attack against the Satterfield family go. So what is happening here? What is the move? Are they using all of this to distract from something else?

[00:21:42] **Liz Farrell:** We'll be right back.



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COMMERCIAL

[00:21:48] **Liz Farrell:** Speaking of distractions, we have a quick update in the Mallory Beach boat crash case which is still set for mid-August. There have been several filings in the past few days in the civil conspiracy case, which is an offshoot of the original boat crash case. A trial date has not yet been set for that. One thing we want to remind you about is that Cory Fleming's attorney Debbie Barbier and Russell Laffitte's attorney Mark Moore are the attorneys for gas station owner, Greg Parker. So Greg is being represented by the attorneys of two of the very few publicly named co-conspirators of Alex Murdaugh and by a man named Ned Tupper, who is a Beaufort attorney and a former judge who is very close with the Murdaugh family. So what is happening there? We'll discuss the latest updates in this case in a future episode, but we wanted to take a second to talk about the abject cruelty that has been associated with Greg Parker and his attorneys from the very beginning of this case.

[00:22:48] **Liz Farrell:** First, there's a brutal and slanderous online campaign attempting to discredit our reporting and attorney Mark Tinsley's character, which continues to this day. Then there's the way the Beach family has been treated, and the way anyone who defends the Beach family has been treated. And the thing is this, all roads seem to lead to whatever it is that Parker's attorneys don't want us to know in this civil conspiracy case. To that end, these attorneys have filed another motion asking the court to remove Mark and now his co-counsel from the case. The motion is a lot like Alex's request for a reversal of his conviction of judgment in that it is hot-nonsense balanced on very thin rails of narrowly interpreted facts taken out of context. Their main contention is that the Beach attorneys only filed this civil conspiracy case as a strategy to get more information about Parker in the original case. As you know, the gas station Parker's Kitchen has fought hard in that original case not to be held accountable for the sale of alcohol that they illegally made to Paul, who was just 19 at the time. It's not clear why this gas station owner believes that Mark Tinsley would need a second case to gain any information when the facts are so clear in that original case. It is illegal to sell alcohol to minors, and the law defines people under age 21 as minors when it comes to alcohol. The law also recognizes that the reason laws are needed in terms of giving alcohol to minors is because minors can't make smart decisions when they are impaired by said alcohol.



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[00:24:26] **Liz Farrell:** Like I said, it's simple and as people who know Mark Tinsley, we can say there is no world in which he would subject the Beach family to more pain and trauma by filing a second lawsuit for funsies. Again, we'll talk about all of this more in the future. I bring it up now just to remind you about what's happening and because I never want to miss an opportunity to mention that gas station owner Greg Parker appears to have looked at the Murdaugh case and thought to himself, whoever their attorneys are, sign me up. And then let's try some Murdaugh-y tricks. We hope that Judge Bentley Price, who is not an alumni of University of South Carolina School of Law, by the way, will continue to see through their nonsense and show the state that he's one judge who is not going to stand for the kind of nonsense that has historically been allowed. At some point something has to give. We keep seeing blatant examples of rich narcissists taking advantage of our court system and worse, our court system allowing it to happen. They have been weaponizing our system for years and they'll just keep doing it until someone is brave enough to say stop. The problem is, are there any judges brave enough to do something?

[00:25:46] **Mandy Matney:** That brings us to the real thing that we want to talk about today: Judge Casey Manning and State Representative Todd Rutherford. On Sunday, Ema Rose Schumer, a reporter at the *Post and Courier* newspaper, published a story about a lawyer asking a judge to reduce the sentences of two convicted murderers. Sound familiar? Not only is that reminiscent of the Jeroid Price case and the "Manning-Rutherford plot," whatever it is. And I'm calling it a plot because it was done in secret. There are also some familiar faces here. One, the attorney doing the asking is Andy Savage. Remember that guy? Andy is the attorney who was brought to Sandy's attention in June 2021 as someone she should hire to represent her family in Stephen's case when it came to media requests. Andy is also the attorney who barred Sandy from talking to the press, i.e. telling Stephen's story and getting it out there. But he's also the attorney who spoke to the press himself without first warning her. Also, Andy is the attorney who hired Steven Peterson, the private investigator who is not working on Sandy's behalf, yet has continued to publicly offer wild conjecture about Stephen's death as if he has the insider word. As it relates to this current issue, Andy Savage asked Judge Bentley Price to reduce the sentences of Matthew Fischer and Harry Duffy. Fischer was 16 in 2015 when he stabbed 17 year old Lucas Cavanaugh to death in Mount Pleasant, which is just outside of Charleston. At the time, Fischer maintained that he stabbed Cavanaugh because he was defending himself during a feud over his girlfriend. But a week



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before Cavanaugh was murdered, Fischer had talked about killing him i text messages. In 2017, Fischer pleaded guilty to manslaughter and was sentenced to just 18 years for Cavanaugh's murder. Harry Duffy of Berkeley County killed his 49-year-old wife, Mary Lou Czaskos Duffy and his 20 year old stepson, Jason Czaskos in 1997. Two years later, he pleaded guilty to voluntary manslaughter and was sentenced to 40 years in prison.

[00:28:15] **Liz Farrell:** We bring up this story for a few reasons. One, it's pretty galling that this hearing was held in the aftermath of the Jeroid Price secret sentencing reduction. These guys are so confident in this system that they created and then cultivated that they're just like "Ooh fun. Let's give it a whirl!"

Two, at least they held a hearing. At least Judge Price and Solicitor Scarlett Wilson's office did the right thing by conducting the public's business in public.

Unlike solicitor Byron Gibson, Judge Manning and Representative Rutherford, who did it all behind closed doors. Three after the Jeroid Price case became public and Governor Henry McMaster ordered an accounting of how many similar sentence reductions had occurred in the past few years. A list was published with the names of those whose sentences had been cut and a disturbing trend emerged: Judges had been sitting on motions to reconsider sentencing for years in some cases. Now, there are two things to know here.

[00:29:13] **Liz Farrell:** One is that Jeroid Price was released under an untested interpretation of a 2010 law that allowed solicitors to seek a reduction in sentencing for prisoners who had provided substantial assistance in criminal matters after the fact of their original sentencing. That law seemed intended as an incentive for prisoners to alert law enforcement to criminal activity that they learned of behind bars. So let's call that the Substantial Assistance law. Most of the names on the governor's list were not those who had received sentence reductions under that new law. Instead, they had their sentences shortened after the judge who sentenced them was asked to reconsider their original decision. This is a normal and rote part of the sentencing process. A defendant is found guilty or pleads guilty, is sentenced and then has 10 days to file what's called a Rule 29 motion for reconsideration. 10 days, or if new information comes to light that could affect their sentencing they have a year after that information came to light. What is not normal or rather what should not be normal is judges sitting on those motions for great lengths of time. There is no deadline for judges to rule on reconsideration motions. But Solicitor Scarlett Wilson told the *Post and Courier* that they should be heard within a matter



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of days or weeks, not months or years. According to the *Post and Courier*, Wilson is asking for time limits to be imposed on post-trial motions. She told the paper she is working with defense attorneys and the state legislature to come up with a better system than the one we have. Now, she's also looking at a system that tracks these motions and that requires judges to at least schedule these types of hearings within a time limit.

[00:30:58] **Liz Farrell:** Okay, so real quick...according to the *Post and Courier*, a few important things happened during the hearing. The first is that the victims' families were dragged back into the courtroom and right back into the fear that their loved ones' killers would be released early. We commend them for going. It is no small burden but we know it had to have helped foil any hopeful expectations Andy Savage might have had about the outcome of the hearings. The paper quoted the mother of Lucas Cavanaugh as begging with the court and saying, "please, we were doing so good and now I can't believe we're here talking about this again. It's very unfair." Similarly, Jason Czaskos' father said, "why are we here having our lives financially and emotionally disturbed again, ripping our emotions and quality of life apart once again?" According to the paper, he brought a photo of his son and a photo of his son's gravesite to the courtroom. That is the hell victims are put in because of lazy, politically motivated or permissive judges who sit on motions for years, oftentimes allowing high-powered defense attorneys to call the shots. To delay proceedings until the media has cooled off, until a new solicitor is elected, until the original judge has retired, or until they get an opportunity to slip one past the victims. We are a state that does what's in the best interest of privately paid defense attorneys and not in the best interest of the victims or the public. And I have to say, we are sick of having our criticisms of defense attorneys as being taken as some sort of endorsement of innocent men and women going to prison. This system was not built for public defenders, okay. And we are not advocating against innocent people getting a rigorous defense, ever. Also, to be clear, Judge Bentley Price was not the original judge in those cases. That judge retired but had that original judge done his job in the days and weeks after these sentencing, this stress and fear would not exist now. Judge Price, for what it's worth, denied both motions. Neither man had their sentences modified.

[00:33:08] **Mandy Matney:** So let's get back to that list that we talked about earlier, the one that Governor McMaster ordered after the Jeroid Price case came to light. The one that politically suited his outrage at the time, but the one that will likely be



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left on the floor because until we see meaningful action and evidence of a robust investigation, it's all just another stunt for people like Henry McMaster and Attorney General Alan Wilson. Why do we think this? Because they've given us no reason to think otherwise at this point. And because so far what we're seeing with this list, there are questions that need to be asked at the top. Lots of them. For instance, let's talk about the Laborn Allah case. Yet another suspicious decision by Judge Manning that involved solicitor Byron Gibson, and yet another one of his good lawyer-legislator friends Seth Rose during Judge Manning's final year on the bench. The Allah case is interesting for several reasons. While we were working on this story, the state newspaper published a story that clearly explains what's at issue in the Allah case. I recommend that you take a look at that story. It also includes an interview with Allah's victim in a 2000 armed robbery that he committed in Colombia. That victim was key in this case. So the crime took place in April 2000 and Allah was arrested one month later. He was found guilty in 2002 for his part in the home invasion, where a man and his son were robbed and a gun was put to the head of a 10-year-old boy. Allah was charged with first degree burglary, kidnapping, armed robbery and assault with intent to kill. He was around 28-years-old when he was sentenced. He received life without parole for the burglary charge along with concurrent sentences of 30 years for armed robbery and 10 years for assault with intent to kill. His kidnapping charge was subsumed by his life in prison sentence.

[00:35:23] **Liz Farrell:** Now, while awaiting trial, Allah was in jail. Back then it was the Richland County Detention Center and now for unfortunate reasons that I'm about to tell you, it is officially called the Alvin S. Glenn Detention Center. It is officially named the Alvin S. Glenn Detention Center because in September 2000, a man named Alvin S. Glenn, who was a prison guard, was taken hostage by some inmates and brutally murdered there. It's a sick thing what these inmates did to Mr. Glenn. Mr. Glenn had worked at the jail for five years. He had served in the US Army retiring after 30 years, and he was 59 years old at the time of his murder. Before his death, there had not been a prison guard murdered in South Carolina since 1937. According to reports from the time, that is a 63 year record. On the night that Mr. Glenn was killed, he was the only guard in a wing that housed 64 inmates. Little did he know that a group of about seven inmates had been planning their escape. Three of those inmates—a murder suspect and two armed robbery suspects—overtook Mr. Glenn and they handcuffed him using his own handcuffs. They tied his feet together with his belt and then they beat him and strangled him to death. They broke his ribs and damaged his spleen and his liver. Then they left his body to go open up several



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locked cells using his keys. In the meantime, some inmates tried to save Mr. Glenn by administering CPR.

[00:36:59] **Liz Farrell:** The three inmates who had assaulted and taken part in the murder of Mr. Glenn tried to escape by stacking plastic tables in a courtyard and getting up onto the roof of the jail. They jumped to the ground, two of them breaking their ankles, and they scaled a fence that had barbed wire on it, but they were caught before getting over the final fence. So those three inmates had help and other men were charged in the conspiracy. One of those men was, you guessed it, Laborn Allah. He was charged with attempted escape and conspiracy to commit a crime. Those charges were dropped six years later in 2006, when he was already serving a life without parole sentence. The state story does not mention Laborn Allah's connection to the murder of the Alvin S. Glenn, but it does contain a number of quotes from state representative Seth Rose, who, like we said, is a known friend of solicitor Byron Gibson, as well as a comment from solicitor Gibson, who, as we said, was also involved in the Jeroid Price release. Now, what's irritating us as journalists is that our researcher Beth Braden had called Byron Gibson's office on May 23 to get more information about Allah's sentence reduction and ask questions like "who was Mr. Allah's attorney in this?" and "could we perhaps get this victim letter that played such a crucial role in his sentence reduction?" And they were decidedly unhelpful. Rose told the state that he informally represented Allah in his request for release. He also patted himself on the back for doing this the "right way." But this was not done the right way. Far from it, because guess what, there is no law that exists that allows a solicitor, a defense attorney and a judge to just decide on their own that a convicted felon's life sentence should be reduced—and then poof, it gets reduced. According to the state newspaper, Allah's family, with the help of State Representative Rose, approached the victim in Allah's armed robbery and asked him to help them in securing Allah's early release. So one question you might have right now is, does Allah deserve to have his life sentence reduced to 30 years?

[00:39:15] **Liz Farrell:** Well, first, let's talk about Allah's efforts to free himself. As we said, in 2000 he was named as a member of the Alvin S. Glenn conspiracy to escape. After getting sentenced for the 2000 home invasion and other various drug charges, Allah made various applications to the state to have his case looked at again. In 2017 Judge Casey Manning denied Allah's application for post conviction relief in a 15-page opinion. Interesting, right? So while Allah was trying to get out of prison, he



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was also getting into trouble behind bars. In 2015 he got in trouble twice for his role in staging some sort of unauthorized act. In 2017 he got in trouble over the use of the cell phone. In 2020, he got in trouble twice for creating a disturbance and once over the use of a cell phone. And in 2021, he got in trouble over possessing some sort of narcotic. And then a year after that, along came Seth Rose, Byron Gibson and Casey Manning. Now, Byron Gibson's response to the state regarding what authority he had to initiate and execute this deal was: show me where it says I can't do this. First circuit solicitor David Pascoe, who worked for the Fifth Circuit during the time and was the original prosecutor on Allah's case, made some good points about this in the state newspaper. He said that even if it can be done, doesn't mean it should be done. So okay, there are major concerns here. If an order like this is allowed for Laborn Allah, then that sets a dangerous and untenable precedent. Do we want to live in a society where convicted felons who are serving their time behind bars can have their families and a state legislator approach victims and put implied pressure or explicit pressure on them to help in the prisoner's release?

[00:41:05] **Liz Farrell:** I want to be clear about this, the victim in Allah's case told the paper that he had prayed about this and talked with his now-grown son about what to do here. And ultimately, they decided Allah deserved a second chance. But, a. that second chance was not theirs to give and b. that second chance is not something they on their own initiated, it was suggested to them. So again, Mandy and I spent years covering the Murdaugh family and have spoken at great length about the informal and implied pressures that people have told us that they felt from that family over the years to help them when they came calling. This little arrangement that Gibson, Rose, and Manning created allows for and rewards exactly the thing we want to put an end to because of the effect it has had on our fellow citizens in South Carolina. What happened here is not okay, and should not be the way we move forward with our justice system.

[00:42:03] **Mandy Matney:** We'll be right back.

COMMERCIAL

[00:42:03] **Mandy Matney:** It is sometimes surreal to sit here and think about all the ways the system continues to reward the powerful by allowing for unorthodox things like this. And yet, we see no consistent outrage from the guys at the top other than first circuit solicitor David Pascoe. Pascoe has been consistently vocal about the



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wrongs that he sees across the board and thank goodness for that. But now I want to talk about Justin Lennard Jones, one of the seven defendants who Judge Manning signed a sentence reduction order for in December 2022, his last month before he retired. I have to mention this because it's odd. This same judge released Price right before he retired, also made seven other sentence reduction orders in that month. According to the report compiled by the Department of Corrections at Governor Henry McMaster's request, which was by the way, when they were scrambling to figure out how the heck a convicted killer walked out of prison 15 years early before his sentence was up, and they were like, hmm, maybe we should ask SCDC how often this thing happens. That is what this report is. So Judge Manning is one of 49 circuit judges in South Carolina, and yet he signed eight of the 27 orders in those 16 months, seven of the 27 orders. A whole fourth of them were signed by Manning the month before he retired. That's a little odd, right. SEDC's report lists 27 sentence reduction orders between January 2022 and April 24, 2022.

[00:44:04] **Mandy Matney:** Like Jeroid Price, Jones was represented by state rep Todd Rutherford, and he too got a December sweetheart deal from both Judge Casey Manning and solicitor Byron Gibson's office. Jones is only 29 years old, but a quick look at his record shows that he has been in and out of jail since he was a teenager. Jones pleaded guilty to strong armed robbery and attempted murder in 2015. It appears that he was sentenced to 12 years in prison but got out sometime in 2019. That is not even five years later. In December 2019, Jones was back in the system, arrested on three drug charges including crack possession and manufacturing a controlled substance. He was let out on a PR bond that day and apparently given an ankle monitor. But that did not keep him out of trouble. As we've reported before the ankle monitoring system in South Carolina is trash. Check out episode 40 on the Bowen Turner case for more on that, but it's a part of the reason why Russell Laffitte has two ankle monitors. The federal government decided that the state's ankle monitor was so ineffective that they ordered him to wear one of theirs as well. The monitoring is run by private bond companies, and there's no financial incentive for them to report breaches of the house arrest because they literally make money off of these guys not being in jail.

[00:45:39] **Mandy Matney:** So in September 2020, Jones—wearing his ankle monitor—was arrested for two weapons charges and again was released quickly on a low bond. And in October 2020, Jones was arrested again and charged with removing, destroying or circumventing electronic monitoring. A charge I have



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honestly not seen before. This time, he was given a \$5,000 bond and spent a whole two days behind bars. But wait, there's more. On December 31, 2020, Jones was charged again with cocaine possession, and again, got a \$5,000 bond. Do y'all see that revolving door swinging? Okay. On March 26, 2021, just three months later, Jones was back in jail again, this time for a weapons charge, a stolen pistol charge and a cocaine charge. You would think that the court or the solicitor's office would have taken a look at this guy's arrest record and said hmm, illegal drugs, illegal weapons, something bad is going on here. But they didn't. And from what the arrest warrant says, they should be grateful that Jones didn't kill anyone on April 29, 2021. On that day, according to the Columbia Police arrest warrant, Jones—still wearing that pesky ankle monitor—broke into someone's home and shot a victim twice in the back before he fled. The victim identified Jones to police and get this, his ankle monitor placed him at the scene when the shooting occurred. So I guess it was good for something. Finally, after this incident, Jones was denied bond and spent the next year and a half in the Alvin S. Glenn Detention Center where Alex Murdaugh joined him in October 2021. Like Alex Murdaugh, Jones hired an expensive lawyer-lawmaker for his slew of charges in 2021.

[00:47:53] **Liz Farrell:** In October 2022, solicitor Byron Gibson, who counts State Representative Todd Rutherford among his friends, dropped four charges against Jones: two for weapons, one for drugs and one for his ankle monitor. Just dismissed them. That left Jones with five outstanding charges. So far all of this is fairly normal in the justice system. Sadly, repeat offenders get passes all of the time. Officials miss warning signs all of the time, but here is where it gets weird. On December 12, 2022, Justin Jones pleaded guilty to second degree burglary, attempted murder, unlawful carrying of a pistol and manufacturing and possession of drugs. Casey Manning sentenced him to 15 years in prison. Per usual Rutherford, as Jones's defense attorney, submitted a motion to reconsider the sentence. The request was nothing special. Rutherford's motion to reconsider specifically requested a hearing on the matter. The motion second part, further arguments and documents will be presented at the hearing in this matter. It does not say what new information Rutherford had discovered that might change Manning's mind about Jones's sentencing, but his motion was filed on the 14th, two days after the sentencing. Journalist Beth Braden FOIA'd the Richland County Court for all the documents related to Jones. To find out more information she reached out to the transcript office and criminal records office at the Richland County Clerk of Court as well as the Fifth Circuit Solicitor's Office in an attempt to confirm that a hearing did in fact take place.



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The Solicitor's Office said they do not have calendars that go back that far and referred us back to the clerk of court, meaning Byron Gibson's own office claims it does not have a record showing whether or not a hearing took place six months ago that resulted in a significant change to one of their cases. It is a simple question that should have had an immediate and clear answer. But no, that's not how these things work. The transcript office for the Clerk of Court, which the solicitor's office had sent us to, also sent us back to the records office.

[00:50:06] **Mandy Matney:** I just have to say this huge shout out to Beth Braden for hustling for these answers. I'm so excited for the fire that she's bringing to our team. Beth has filed a transcript request with the court reporter who was working with Judge Casey Manning's court on December 12 and 28th, the day that Jones was sentenced and the day that his sentence was reduced. If a hearing took place in open court, the court reporter will be able to provide a copy of that record. In the meantime, we just have the documents that the Richland County Clerk of Courts office gave us after Beth was super pesky. And according to those documents on December 28, Manning signed an order that said the court had found two facts to exist in this cause. The first was that Jones had pleaded guilty to second degree burglary, attempted murder, unlawful carrying of a pistol and manufacturing in possession of drugs on December 12, which was just 16 days earlier. And second, that Jones had been sentenced to 15 years by him. That's it. That is all the reasoning that the honorable Casey Manning gave about why he had reduced Jones' sentence from 15 years to six. He literally just lifted two facts and called it a day. And by the way, Jones could have gotten 30 years for the kidnapping charge alone. Again, Jones showed this state, showed Casey Manning's court that he could not be deterred. Nothing was going to stop him from what he wanted to do. Not an arrest, not another arrest, and not another arrest and a conviction after that. And not an ankle monitor either. I have to say this again, he shot another person in the back and admitted to it. And still judge Manning was like because of these two facts literally just a restatement of what he was charged with and what his sentence was, he deserves to have his bond reconsidered? why the public deserves answers on that sooner than later. The public deserves to know where the Jeroid Price case stands because he is still at large. On Wednesday afternoon, Beth reached out to SLED for an update on the case. A spokesperson said that they have no new information to share unfortunately, and Beth also reached out to the South Carolina Attorney General's office who issued this statement I will have David read.



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[00:52:44] **David Moses:** The Attorney General's Office is carefully reviewing the Department of Corrections records and evaluating all our options. Regarding the Jeroid Price case, Attorney General Wilson and the office have taken the matter seriously from the beginning. It's why he immediately petitioned to have Judge Manning's order voided and a bench warrant issued for Price's arrest. Attorney General Wilson felt it was so important that he made the argument before the South Carolina Supreme Court himself. We are waiting to receive the Supreme Court's order and reviewing all available options at our disposal. Any tips regarding Price's location, go to local law enforcement, SLED, the FBI or US Marshal Service.

[00:53:29] **Mandy Matney:** They raise a good point: where is the Supreme Court order that voided Judge Manning's order? It has been six weeks since their ruling and the public has not seen an explanation. Chief Justice Donald Beatty needs to get on that soon because his hands are not clean in this. And the more time that passes, the more corrupt the system looks. There are rumors that we haven't been able to confirm but I feel like we should say out loud that claim Beatty is close with at least one of the officials involved in the Price escape. And maybe, just maybe, he is avoiding taking actions to hold those accountable because of political reasons and not because of the law. Judge Beatty owes the public an explanation either way. Here is the thing: there are big shiny billboards all over the state of South Carolina, with Jeroid Price's wanted picture on it. Paid for by government money. The billboards should remind everyone in this state, this is what government failure looks like. This is what a system ran by defense attorneys who moonlight as lawmakers looks like, this. How many lives do we have to endanger before we fix this? how many more victims? There was a tiny bit of hope there for a minute that change was going to come when McMaster and Alan Wilson got involved and at least they pretended like they wanted to get to the bottom of this. But it's been over a month, and unfortunately, other political party hot button issues like abortion and immigration have taken over their agendas. I'm not going to lie, I got angry this week. As it felt like our whole team was pulling teeth just to figure out if these sentence reduction orders were legitimate or not. The government should be giving us these answers. They should be doing everything in their power preventing another Jeroid Price situation from happening again. A majority of the 27 inmates whose orders were reduced, including Allah and Jones are projected to be released within the next few years.



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[00:55:53] **Mandy Matney:** The clock is ticking, and we cannot afford to have another oopsie violent criminal released from prison and we all pretend to repair the damage with billboards like Alex Murdaugh, Jeroid Price is a product of a broken system. If Attorney General Alan Wilson and Governor Henry McMaster actually care about public safety and actually care about repairing the public's trust in the system, they have got to get to the root of this by holding those responsible accountable for their actions, not just sweeping it under the rug and going on to the next hot button issue. So our True Sunlight army out there, we have a challenge for you. Keep the pressure up, make lots of noise about this on social media and elsewhere. Tag McMasters' office, tag the Attorney General's Office, email them, write them, call them. I can tell you one thing: both of these men care about their political future and we need to show them that so many of us care about fixing the justice system. I'm including links to contact both offices in the description. We have so much more to share about Judge Manning's last acts as judge and we will update you in a future episode. So stay pesky, stay tuned and stay in the sunlight.

[00:57:47] **Mandy Matney:** True Sunlight is created by me, Mandy Matney, co hosted by journalist Liz Farrell and produced by my husband David Moses. True Sunlight is a Luna Shark Production. Right Luna?

EXPOSING CRIME & CORRUPTION