



EPISODE 36: Latest on Stephen Smith Investigation Raises Questions, Justice for Grant Solomon + Bowen Turner Case

[00:00:05] **Mandy Matney:** Hello and happy Tuesday. On today's episode, we touch on a few different cases that all highlight the power of speaking up and the very important difference between speaking up and speaking out of turn, meaning spreading gossip before thinking. One thing we talk about is a TikTok video that was sent to me several times over the weekend. In it, a woman excitedly shared a story she heard involving the Stephen Smith case in a potential person of interest in the case, who she says is on the run because of an alleged arrest warrant that's been issued in the case. We looked into this and it appears that the woman didn't do much fact checking before posting her video—and that is a problem. And we are still looking into it by the way. In this episode, we also discuss a case out of Tennessee from 2020, in which an 18 year old man named Grant Solomon was killed. So many of you have sent me that case and asked us to look into it. There are so many suspicious things about Grant's death, so many red flags. And that's because once again, we have a case where there's a man of influence, in this case his father. And there's a system that apparently failed to ask enough questions from the get go. We also talk about the Bowen Turner case. As you heard in last week's *True Sunlight*, the victims in this case said that they were asked by the chief prosecutor to stay silent over the past year, which they did in hopes that the case would be reopened. It is an unusual request. If there's anyone out there who has been asked to stay silent by law enforcement or prosecutors about their loved ones unsolved case, feel free to share your story with us by email at info@lunasharkmedia.com. And just for our Lunashark Premium members, you will learn the importance of contracts with those you're closest with and some solutions to the growing problem of news deserts around the country. As you know, we're big advocates of making noise and staying pesky in the pursuit of getting answers. This is only made possible by our premium members. Let's get into it.

[00:02:34] **Liz Farrell:** Cups up guys. How are you doing?

[00:02:36] **Eric Bland:** Cups up. Good morning.

[00:02:38] **Mandy Matney:** Cups up.

[00:02:34] **Liz Farrell:** Liz Farrell 2:38
Yeah. How are you doing Eric?



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[00:02:40] **Eric Bland:** I'm doing great. How are you guys doing? You guys look great. You're all up, you're bright, you're pretty. Things are going good.

[00:02:46] **Liz Farrell:** Oh thank you.

[00:02:46] **Mandy Matney:** Yeah. Ready to conquer the week.

[00:02:49] **Liz Farrell:** Yeah, that's, I mean, I say that but then, you know, the energy starts waning and then I hit Wednesday and it's it's almost over. So anyway, you know, guys, we have sort of a depressing episode in some ways because and maybe it isn't maybe Mandy you'll lift us out of this, because it's really about like the risks and rewards of speaking up, of having to take matters into your own hands and where does that go and everything that comes with it. And I think obviously, we've all experienced this in the past few years. Obviously, we all have the cover of our profession, which helps. I think when ordinary citizens have to do it, it's just makes me a little bit more depressed about everything, but it has to happen. Like I think people have to speak up. Anyway, but before that, I wanted to talk about a TikTok video that got sent to us yesterday. And I'm a big fan of TikTok, I think everyone knows that. Mandy do you do want to tell us about the video?

[00:03:46] **Mandy Matney:** So several people sent it to me over the weekend, and I really didn't get the chance to open it up and look until last night. And it was a video from a girl who had a decent amount of followers, right Liz? Like 30,000?

[00:04:01] **Liz Farrell:** She did um, well, I think she had a decent amount of likes on it. I didn't actually I don't remember what her followers were but there were a lot of people that viewed it obviously,

[00:04:10] **Mandy Matney:** She had about 20,000 likes on this video and it said "Murdaugh Murders," so okay, I'll watch it. And she said that she was at a dinner party or a dinner with friends and this guy worked at a furniture store with a guy that is...there's an arrest warrant out for him in the Stephen Smith case. But he has stopped showing up to work that was...am I?

[00:04:44] **Liz Farrell:** Yeah.



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[00:04:44] **Mandy Matney:** And the video really bothered me in a lot of ways because she kept saying “and I didn't know what to do with this information, so here” and that really made me mad because the video hasn't gotten to Sandy, I haven't told her about it yet. Again, I just saw it last night, but I honestly don't think it's anything. I'll check my sources again today, do the whole thing. Eric, you haven't heard anything of an arrest? If there was an arrest warrant out?

[00:05:13] **Eric Bland:** Chief Keel would call me and say and tell me that something is being done. I don't know if he would clue it in because he wouldn't want it to go public, you know, for fear that the person, you know, could go run and try to, you know, hide or leave the state. But I would be surprised based on I just talked to him earlier that last week so, I don't know, that would be shocking to me.

[00:05:40] **Liz Farrell:** Yeah, they don't usually tell you you have an arrest warrant out when they're worried that you're going to flee or that you're going to go somewhere so they just they spring it on you like they come and get you.

[00:05:51] **Mandy Matney:** Yeah, and apparently she was saying that this person has fled, and. But what bothers me the most is when you put out a video like this, a. you don't know what that will do with the investigation. If you if you honestly don't know what's going on, going on TikTok is very dangerous. I know that a lot of people don't understand what goes on behind the scenes when we're reporting things but there are a lot of conversations with law enforcement. We had a million of them throughout reporting on the Murdaugh murders, because you have to... law enforcement, you just don't know what's going on in the investigation. So law enforcement needs to...

[00:06:38] **Eric Bland:** They want the element of surprise.

[00:06:40] **Mandy Matney:** Yes, they want the element of surprise and they have to keep some things close to the chest so that they can get, they can corner the person and do a confession of some sort or...

[00:06:52] **Eric Bland:** They triangulate. They, they hit people around that person. So let's say the one person that they want isn't cooperating, they may hit all the people around that person and start making that person paranoid. And that person will do something or do some movements or will go somewhere or will try to move some



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evidence, you know, they're watching that person. And so they're playing, you know, three dimensional chess. And we've said this all along just by somebody going out, they could chill somebody's cooperation, it could make somebody who was willing to come forward not come forward. Or somebody who was going to add something to what they've already contributed to stop. And, you know, we have to have some level of trust in our government, when they're doing criminal investigations, that they're doing them in a way that's going to yield results and yield justice. And, you know, we want to see the final product a lot. But a lot of times we don't get to peek behind the curtain and watch the wizard, you know, work the wheels and pushing the buttons. And, you know, we have to still have some level of trust. Yes, we want to question, yes we have a right to put their feet to the fire, investigation agencies. But at the end of the day, though, we still have to have trust that they're doing their job and we need to let them do their jobs. Otherwise, we can interfere with an ongoing investigation.

[00:08:19] **Liz Farrell:** As the old lady journalist here though, I would say this like one that I don't advocate for journalists working with law enforcement in such a close way as to aid and abet them in their either lack of investigation or their sloppy investigation or whatever. It's, that is a push that is a that is a very fine balance and that's something that we had to strike with Alex's murder case or his murder investigation, because our main goal every time was to keep any sort of force from behind the scenes that was trying to perhaps mess up the case or confuse matters, we wanted to just continue to show that we're going to be paying attention and we're going to call out and we see that there's messy things happening basically. In this case, what bothers me about the TikTok video, is she could have waited. She's like, "I don't know what to do." But you so you had on the one hand, I could put this on TikTok and get the likes or I could call the furniture store and just say hey, listen, this stuff's being said, just like a journalist would. This stuff's being said about this investigation that's happening right now in our state that everybody's talking about that is high profile and apparently your store is being mentioned in connection with it. What's going on there. Now granted, does she have any clout? Can she say she's with the organization? She can say that I'm about to put this on TikTok, this dinner guests that said the stuff that this kid is about to get arrested. Furthermore, though, I would say that people constantly misunderstand and don't know the vocabulary of law enforcement or investigations. So when she hears warrant, let's just say the guy did say this, it's a warrant. That could be a search warrant that could be...

[00:10:05] **Eric Bland:** A subpoena for records.



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[00:10:06] **Liz Farrell:** It could be a subpoena for records. Exactly. It doesn't necessarily mean like, you don't get an envelope in the mail that's like, hey, we're gonna come and arrest you soon. It's just not how it happens so how would he know that is the big question.

[00:10:19] **Eric Bland:** The other the other thing is, what is the veracity of TikTok? You know, you look across the board. Yes, some of them it's good. They show a fastball and a guy, you know, throwing a fastball at 110 miles an hour, but a lot of it is computer animated. You know, they showed the Tom Cruise thing on TikTok and it looked like Tom Cruise was actually saying something that was bad and heinous and it wasn't even him. We do know that during the Murdaugh trial, somebody released a video showing, or a photo showing journalists sitting in the jury box and they said, oh, my god, this is the jury. They showed photographs of the Murdaugh jury, it turned out to be journalists and it wasn't true and it created a lot of stink. You know, do people go on TikTok to create and generate discussion that isn't true? That's what concerns me.

[00:11:18] **Liz Farrell:** Yes, they do Eric. And that brings us to the next point, right Mandy?

[00:11:22] **Mandy Matney:** Well, and it can be used for good like we are trying to really get people talking, again, about the Bowen Turner case and speaking up I got about the injustice in that and a lot of people have reached out and said like TikTok is the platform to do this. Because it's very, it's the best way to get lots of people engaged and involved and sharing and but at the same time, it's very dangerous. And this is a case where I was just from beginning to end of this TikTok video I was just kind of disgusted. And she also never, she said like, I didn't know what to say back to this guy. And it's like, well, what you say back to him is you figure out where he's getting this information, you figure out if this person is legitimate or not, or if he's just making things up. If we went on TikTok every time somebody called us with an absurd story in all of this and somebody that like...she even said like, I don't know this guy. She, there's no credibility whatsoever in everything that she was saying, it's so dangerous to do that.

[00:12:42] **Eric Bland:** Well, Facebook has a, supposedly, a truth department where they either pull something off, or they'll put a disclaimer on it, or they'll ban you. Does TikTok have a similar type of department where they comment on something that is



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known false, or they give some type of disclaimer to say, hey, take this with a grain of salt? That's what...

[00:13:09] **Liz Farrell:** No, they don't. But at the same time, I mean, what would be the purpose? So let's just say okay, she's putting this out there. What was her purpose just to say oh, my god, they're about to find somebody who did something in the Stephen Smith case and I'm the first to know? Is that just what it is? Or is it, is there something else going on here? Because like Mandy said, we get a lot of tips with, you know, we say crazy stories, of course. But obviously, the Murdaugh story itself is crazy so it's kind of, you know, a high bar at this point to jump over to be crazy and that's what we're talking about when we say that word. But how many times are we gonna hear about the mysterious dinner guest talking about the Stephen Smith case and how they have inside information? And it's always, you know, and I'm not doubting it, because we haven't been able to vet it but it seems like there's a trend; it's I was at this dinner party, this wedding, this event this blah, and a person I did not know got drunk and said XYZ about the Stephen Smith case. And he knows because he used to work for PMPED, or he was related to somebody or he's this or that and it's starting to be a little bit too repetitive, where you're thinking, is there some sort of campaign out there, as you saw in the boat crash case, as you saw Greg Parker doing with Mallory Beach's family and with the boat crash case where he was trying to put out that he had hired these consultants to put out this like public relations, this marketing campaign behind the scenes to like get guilt away from him. So are we seeing the same thing happening here? And we have to ask the question, because what a bizarre little video, right?

[00:14:49] **Mandy Matney:** It is. And it's cruel. And I just have to mention that part of it and that people really don't understand this isn't a fun game of *Clue* that we're all playing and trying to get to the end. This is a woman who has been devastated and an entire family that has been devastated and betrayed over and over for eight years now, and desperate for answers and to see her get yanked around by all these people who are like, and giving her little ounces of hope of, oh, there's an arrest warrant. Well, don't do that to someone until we know. Until we know for a fact and I think it was a week ago or two weeks ago, someone reported that there were five suspects that the grand jury was looking at, in particular, and I don't know how you would get that information or not. But Sandy, Sandy called me and said, who are the five? And I said I have no idea like the case is pretty much locked down and that's a good thing. I'm not trying to poke around. I think that they are honestly doing their best right now. But grand juries are supposed to be incredibly secret and I don't know how that



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would get to a reporter. But it's, and then she ended up just heard the sound of her voice like oh.

[00:16:09] **Eric Bland:** Yeah, like cuz I publicly said that there are five to six people that may have information on what happened to Stephen. That's different than five or six suspects. That's a completely different thing. That may be a lady who heard it at a cocktail party, just like you said, Liz. That she heard something, she has nothing to do with Stephen Smith, she's not a suspect. But maybe she heard some information that's relevant. I mean, we, I've gotten phone calls from a guy that was in a general store where kids came in and supposedly they were talking about the Stephen Smith thing you know, he was in there shopping for candy. You know, that's somebody that has relevant information that should be investigated. Is the guy a crackpot? Don't know is he just trying to get himself into a story don't know, but you have to, you know, you if you're in law enforcement, you have to go call that person. You know, I remember there is, in Colombia there was a beautiful young girl named Dail Dinwiddie, who I think was either at the U2 concert in 1997. She was last seen in Five Points. Her parents have never had peace since 1995. They've never found Dail. There's been 1000 tips so can you imagine the yo yo that happens when somebody falsely does, if this is false what this lady did on TikTok, how many times the parents got their hopes up just for closure? And to say, oh, there's a tip out there, and you know, this person, and it just was made up or it was a rumor that was not factually based. These are real life people that are living in turmoil, that are living with guilt, that are living with no closure and to whipsaw their emotions like that is cruel. That's the perfect word Mandy, it's just cruel.

[00:18:05] **Liz Farrell:** Eric, do you know a little bit, do you know enough about the grand, sorry, the state grand jury how that works? When you get subpoenaed to testify in front of it you're not even allowed to tell anyone, right? Except your lawyer.

[00:18:19] **Eric Bland:** Right. You're supposed to, it's, you're supposed to keep it secret. Some people do say that they had been called before the grand jury, but you can't say what you were asked. And certainly nothing that, you know, is shown to a grand jury should ever be released. And you see criminal cases all the time, where the defense says the prosecution is using things that came from the grand jury or the defense, the prosecution says defense are using things that came from the grand jury. It's really secret stuff. That grand jury testimony is secret stuff and it should be secret, because it's an ongoing investigation and you want to get everybody's participation. You don't want to chill it. I mean, if all of a sudden it came



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out Liz Farrell appeared before the grand jury in the Susan Smith case I mean, it would chill every journalist in the world you know what I'm saying? We just want, again, we have to have some level of trust in SLED in FBI and what they're doing, that it will yield to justice. I mean, if we believe in our justice system, yes, we want it open when somebody's on trial we want it open. But a grand jury are impaneled to determine whether there's probable cause to bring charges. That's it, not evidence of guilt, not beyond a reasonable doubt, but just to see, does it rise to the level of an investigation to an actual criminal charge?

[00:19:47] **Liz Farrell:** So Mandy, do you remember in the jailhouse calls when Alex's older brother Randy was talking to him and mentioned something that had happened in the state grand jury? It was either that somebody was going to testify or that they were meeting and there was testimony. And we remember, we were like, whoa, how to see, you know, what's going on? Like, it's a little too much information. I don't know. You wonder, yeah. How does that, how does word get out? Well, there's a few little powerful ways that could I suppose through leaks way above our heads, but yes, supposed to be very secretive, so.

[00:20:23] **Mandy Matney:** Right. And it it also, like, I think you made an excellent point when you said, like, the average person does a terrible job with criminal case terms. Like it could have been a grand jury subpoena and not an arrest warrant and maybe he did take off after that, who knows. But like, it, it's just really, really dangerous when people just hop on TikTok and say what they've heard in a case like this, and also, it's dangerous to name the furniture company without knowing anything, if it's, if there's any ounce of truth to that, because you never know what people will do. You never know if they'll show up there. And if people are crazy.

[00:21:12] **Liz Farrell:** Well beyond that it's a little piece of the puzzle that connects for somebody. So let's just say this is the case, that something happened involving an employee at this furniture company and let's say that the person who knows what happened to Stephen or who did the thing to Stephen knows that so and so works at that furniture store. Then he knows that their investigation is advancing in that direction, right. And he knows that this guy is on the run. So I think that's the kind of thing that we say, and I think it's hard for us because for years we saw in Hampton County, in particular, the fear that people had of coming forward and this is why. It's because word gets out that you spoke with the police or you were talking out of turn at a dinner party, or whatever it is, then suddenly your life and your family's life and your family's, how they bring money into their family is at stake, too, because there's



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a lot of people who owe their jobs to the Murdaughs, by the way. So it's just, when you're talking about crime and corruption, and those two things intersecting, you're not just talking about a simple case of somebody just being brave and coming forward and saying, yes I know what happened. You're talking about just these intricacies that link that keep people quiet. So for this person to put that up there when you're weighing, again, looking at what she was weighing, she was weighing will this get me likes, I know something, I'm the first to know, whatever it is, whatever her motivation was, weighted against what the actual, like, the right thing to do might have been which was, you know, maybe say nothing, maybe, you know, email Eric, and be like, hey, is this true? Email us say, is this true? Call the furniture store yourself?

[00:22:50] **Eric Bland:** Is the juice worth the squeeze? Is the juice worth the squeeze?

[00:22:55] **Liz Farrell:** Is the juice worth the squeeze? Right. Because you don't know whose life you just put in danger, if anyone, or if you're just spreading a rumor for whatever your motivation there is.

[00:23:05] **Eric Bland:** This isn't Columbia, South Carolina. I mean, this isn't Charleston, or a big metropolitan, like Baltimore, Maryland where if somebody's name is associated with an investigation, you know, it just goes over people's heads. This is Hampton County, there's still an uneasiness there. Nobody's walking around, you know, smiling and everybody's just offering things up. Everybody's guarded, you know, everybody feels everybody out. You talk a little bit, you know, you cannot actually see how the conversation could happen. Yeah so you know, the verdict. Yeah the verdict. And you're waiting to see well, the person is either going to say yeah that was a great verdict, justice was done or no I'm not sure that you know, he was guilty and then you know, you how much do you offer up? it's a kind of cat dance, the Kabuki dancing you do.

[00:23:58] **Liz Farrell:** Oh god it's exhausting to think about. That said we have a lot more to talk about with these two other cases that I want to bring up.

BREAK



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[00:24:16] **Liz Farrell:** Okay, the next thing I want to talk about is this case out of Tennessee. It involves an 18 year old boy who was killed. He was found dead underneath his truck and his father is the one who found him. It was outside of a baseball practice, warehouse type place where you could pitch and hit balls. And this case happened in July 2020 and since then, it has gone nowhere. He, the father said on the 911 call that there were three people helping him, that his son was pinned under the truck and then had rolled onto him when he was getting baseball equipment out of the back of the truck. Few problems with that: one, he never kept his baseball equipment in the back of his truck, he always kept it in his back seat. Two, there's nothing on his body that shows that he's been pinned or dragged by this truck. In fact, he was found underneath and in between the two wheels at the front of the car. And since then his mother and his sister have been trying to get him justice. And this case is the Grant Salomon case and lately, there was a let me see, and the reason it came to our attention is, for a few reasons. There's one: there was just a call, another call for justice for Grant, and two is because his father is Aaron Solomon, who was a or is a longtime TV personality and radio personality. And so I just wanted to talk about this a little bit because the family has basically had to take matters into their own hands. His sister Grace and his mother Angie. And they're trying to get the state of Tennessee to pay attention, they're trying to get local police to actually investigate this because there was no autopsy done, there was no investigation by the Highway Patrol. They basically just took the father's word. And this family was embroiled in a custody dispute and the kids had both, including Grant, had alleged abuse at the hands of Aaron. And Grant, who had just turned 18, was talking to his girlfriend and his family about adopting his sister so that he could get her away from his father, because of the dispute between the mother and the father. The mother is a pharmacologist, and you know, had all these horrible things said about her and the court basically felt defeated by the court system and then this happened so right now the attention is on getting freedom for his little sister who lives in fear that her father is going to hurt her. And for his part, Aaron denies all involvement. I just want to talk a little bit about that, because it's sad to me that people have to go this far to get this type, it's not just Sandy Smith out there, obviously and we know that, but to have to go this far to even get basic things, an 18 year old dies, you do an autopsy. Why is that so hard, Eric?

[00:27:19] **Eric Bland:** It shouldn't be. Again, this is the saga of Stephen Smith: low hanging fruit, easy resolution, close the file, got a cause of death, move on to the next crime. You know, criminal investigations are messy. They take time. They take resources. And I'm not saying that every investigator or every detective is just looking



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to close a file, put a cause of death on something and move on. There are very principled investigators out there and very principled detectives that are dogged. And I'm representing James Gleaton, who is a former police officer, former supervisor for the town of Cayce, who would not stop, who wouldn't take no for an answer, who wouldn't keep a file quiet. And he got terminated and I'm representing him in a filed lawsuit in federal court. There are principled law enforcement officers that do justice and want to see justice done. But there are also detectives who have pressure put on them by their supervisors to not have open files. You know this more than anybody Liz because you worked at the sheriff's department. They have to have closed files, they cannot remain open. Or if they do, they go to a different department. They can't sit on your desk and something as basic as an autopsy, this is why we have coroners. This is why we offer up to victims' families the time if they want to do an autopsy, we don't just immediately bury people or do that. If there's suspicion as to the cause of death, give it time. You know, Jewish people are the only people to bury people next sundown. That's what we have to do, it's part of our religion. But Christians bury people a week later or 10 days later. There's time, there's time to be done. And even Jewish people, if there is a suspicion as to death there is an exception about burying somebody 24 hours to the next sun down. So this is particularly troubling. I got a phone call to get involved in this case, as you guys know. And then you also from your *True Sunlight* viewers have, it's been brought to your attention independent from me that this is a case that we should get involved in. You texted me Mandy and said, wow, I heard this from other people. This is something we should talk about. The fact of the matter is when you have a custody fight, when you have parents that are at each other's throats, when you have, you know, recriminations going back and forth, and back and forth, everybody should pause and say, wait a minute is this just a, you know, a coincidental death of a son who was against his father? Who was arguing with his father to say I want to take my sister away from you? And, maybe that son has information, real information that can bring the downfall of this Aaron Solomon, his career, his reputation. That should cause investigators to say, let's slow the clock down. Let's talk and find out how insistent was this young man in challenging his father and his father's behavior? Yeah, it's really troubling to me and I think we were going to try to figure out a way to get involved meaning from a legal standpoint.

[00:30:56] **Liz Farrell:** Liz Farrell 30:56

Yeah. Also troubling is the lack of media, like lack of reporting that has gone into this story just since it happened. Mandy, does it trouble you? I mean, it's an obvious answer. Obviously, it does. But when you find out that this guy is this respected news



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anchor out of Nashville and the clout that comes with that, the connections, the people that he knows, and just sort of the hesitation to report on something involving your coworker, especially if your coworker presumably is saying like, oh, it was an accident, it's a tragedy, you know boohoo, it like, you tend to be a little bit more, you don't want to say that you are, you want to just treat everybody the same all the time but it is hard when you have a coworker within the same walls as you and you're just like but we have this thing that has happened to you know, so I don't know, did you have any thoughts on that when you were looking at this case? Just what effect that might have?

[00:31:51] **Mandy Matney:** Yeah I could see a lot of news anchors around here not doing anything like that but I could see people looking the other way because they don't want to step on that guy's toes. And a lot of people have sent me that story over the past few years. And saying, this is like, this is like a Murdaugh situation in Tennessee, over and over. And I think what bothers me is that at the core of this, it seems like there was a girl who wasn't believed and that's how this whole thing started. And I think that might be the part that really bothers me the most because we see this over and over and over again, young women who are abused by older men who are more powerful than them whether that's their father, their uncle or someone in their life. And it's almost damn near impossible to get the system to believe you and I don't know how to fix that. But the fact that there's these allegations, and then on top of allegations, there's this mysterious death, that is red flags all over the place and I do want to look into it. And I just want to tell everybody who has sent it to me, thank you. I can really tell that people care about this family and I can really tell that a lot of people love them.

[00:33:20] **Eric Bland:** Didn't 25,000 people sign a petition to look into this?

[00:33:25] **Liz Farrell:** Yeah. And like, I think the thing that we want to be clear about too, is that the Attorney General did take the case for a second, right? Like that he did look into it, and then it closed real quick. So without knowing...

[00:33:40] **Eric Bland:** And why did it close? Why did it close? Because you know what, the first thing that comes out of somebody's mouth is? He could never have done that. That's what we see. Like in the Murdaugh situation. He never could have killed his wife and son. Now, if it's somebody in, who may have a background that's questionable and had law enforcement involvement and did time in prison, we have



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no problem saying, wow that person is a bad person. He did that. When we see a crime in the newspaper or we see a reporting on TV we, we feel better, we feel safer. They got the person. He's the guy that killed his wife and kid, but when it's a reputable person, supposedly reputable like Alex Murdaugh, or Aaron Solomon, or somebody else you would say, he could never have done that, I know that guy. He's, he's a nice man, you know?

[00:34:34] **Liz Farrell:** Mandy wasn't there a case? Wasn't there a case you sent me about a father who lined up his sons and shot them to death and one got away?

[00:34:42] **Mandy Matney:** All three of them.

[00:34:46] **Liz Farrell:** These are the same people I wonder who, what did you say? You said I wonder if...

[00:34:50] **Mandy Matney:** If like the same people would say in this case, how could, a man can't kill a son. A man in Ohio literally killed three of his sons and then called 911 afterwards. Little, they were little kids. Horrible. Lined them up. Just the worst, horrible. They're saying that he snapped, I don't know. But the bottom line is that men can kill their kids. Just because a man is a father does not mean that he all of a sudden is elevated to this higher being where he cannot be evil. And I'm really...

[00:35:25] **Eric Bland:** Women can kill kids too.

[00:35:26] **Mandy Matney:** Women can kill kids too. But, but I feel like there's just not...with a man killing his son, society really, really, really rejects that in a way that is different from, I think they're a lot more likely to believe a woman could kill their kids, because we've seen that. It happens. But we've also seen men killing their kids and that does happen. Especially men will kill their kids to save themselves and their reputation.

[00:35:58] **Eric Bland:** Yeah, that guy in Colorado, didn't he stuff the kids in the drum?

[00:36:01] **Mandy Matney:** Chris Watts.

[00:36:02] **Eric Bland:** There you go. My true crime girl.



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[00:36:04] **Mandy Matney:** That was a horrible like, one of the most heartbreakingly tragic cases I've ever...

[00:36:09] **Eric Bland:** The guy looked normal. The guy looked normal.

[00:36:11] **Mandy Matney:** And he was, and he did it he did it all because he was having an affair. It, that doesn't make any sense. Again, like motives don't make sense a lot of times. But we have to just realize that these people aren't in a right state of mind. And we have to, when people show us who they are, we have to believe them. And so...

[00:36:32] **Eric Bland:** Maya Angelou.

[00:36:33] **Liz Farrell:** Additionally, I think we're talking about like, Eric, you use the term normal to describe how Chris Watts looked. And that's all obviously perspective, right? What looks normal to you is different from what looks normal to me, what looks normal to Mandy, what looks normal to somebody, a person of color looks normal to an older person, a younger person. So we all have our scope of what's considered normal and that's who we usually extend the benefit of the doubt to right?

[00:36:57] **Eric Bland:** Correct.

[00:36:58] **Liz Farrell:** That's somebody that we can assign our own values and sort of project our own ethics, our own sort of code of honor onto and say....

[00:37:06] **Eric Bland:** Prejudices.

[00:37:10] **Mandy Matney:** Well, it all comes down to people don't, what you consider to be normal, if you have somebody who looks like Chris Watts in your life, and you think they're a great person, and blah, blah, it'll scare you a little bit more to know that maybe he couldn't be. So like, with Alex Murdaugh I think Alex Murdaugh looked like a lot of people's dads like he dressed like a lot of people's dads, he acted like a lot of people's dads, and that terrifies people to know maybe he could be capable of this. Maybe just because somebody looks like something, it does not mean anything.



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[00:37:50] **Liz Farrell:** I want to go back to the media portion of this too, because I want to talk about a case that happened in Beaufort County real quick, and it involved the son of a coworker of ours, he was killed in a DUI and it was the kid who was driving the car, I say kid he was 23, was driving 130 miles per hour, he was legally drunk and the son of our coworker was thrown from the car and killed and it was awful. And I got a tip around the time, so this kid who, the 20, I keep calling a man, a grown man a kid. This grown man who was arrested for this was, stayed in jail the entire time. He did not take the bond because he wanted to work off I guess, like whittle down the time that ultimately he thought he might get for this. So I got a tip when it was getting nearer to his plea deal and it was from somebody who was doing the right thing. And they said that Judge Carmen Mullen had secretly moved this case from Beaufort County to Hampton County so that the press wouldn't see it. And obviously, we sent a reporter there, she wrote the piece. Me as a columnist at the time I was infuriated, because it was like, here we go. Here's Judge Mullen doing something stupid again. And here, you know, she's, she ended up giving them, do you remember Mandy? She sentenced him to college, basically. And now for his part he was remorseful in court he said the right things he you know, said he was going to basically live the rest of his life for our coworker's son, and he was put on probation for about 10 years, I believe. But the problem here is that our coworker and I don't remember at the time if he still was our coworker or just he, you know, he left at the time, right? So word that got back to us was that he was happy with the plea deal, that his family was happy with it. They wanted this man to go, to be able to repent and move on with his life and do good acts moving forward. To take this and to do good acts.

[00:39:59] **Eric Bland:** Smells like a big civil settlement was done.

[00:40:03] **Liz Farrell:** It's funny that you say that. I don't know, but.

[00:40:05] **Eric Bland:** They stood aside.

[00:40:06] **Liz Farrell:** It's interesting that you say that. But what was hard for me as a columnist, and it's not something necessarily I'm proud of, it's just, I instinctually wanted to write the column that was how dare this happen, right? But then you're talking about the grief that I visibly saw at the funeral that I can see on my coworker's face, on his wife's face, on his other kid's face and just the looks on the



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faces of everyone in that room. And I thought, you know, am I going to be kicking a hornet's nest here for my own personal outrage? What do I do? Do I, you know, do I collect the thought on Carmen Mullen and bring it up years later after Alex Murdaugh kills his son and wife? Do I, like what, you know, there's just no. So it's always weighed on me that I didn't write the column because it was out of deference for my former coworker to not cause him further pain, right. Now granted, my former coworker was not accused of killing his son and placing his body under you know, the kid's own truck, so that's a completely different situation. But the deference that gets paid going back to the benefit of the doubt, his own coworkers likely I would imagine gave him that benefit of the doubt and other news agencies who are used to seeing this guy probably out and about or seeing him on a screen, benefit of the doubt. It's, there's no way this guy could have done this. So all at the end of the day this family is asking for is an honest investigation into this, that asks the questions that seem pretty frickin obvious to the rest of us. How does this kid not have a mark on his body that indicates he was dragged as the father said he was? How does he only have a bruise on his jaw and died from blunt force trauma to the head? Or, yeah, like how he had a bruise on his thigh, his jaw, it wasn't the signs of a body that had been dragged by car or run over by a car. So that said...

[00:42:00] **Mandy Matney:** Yeah, it's extremely disturbing and I think that it's really hard. And Liz and I were talking about this a few minutes ago, it's just devastating to know what lengths most victims have to go through in order to get what they want from the court. Circling back, it's a good, I think that you followed what the victims were doing in that circumstance and what the victims wanted and I think that that was the humane thing to do. It also comes down, weighing public safety like can this kid actually, is this kid a threat to public safety? Is he going to kill other people? And from right now, I looked his name up the other day, and he has not done anything since.

[00:42:49] **Liz Farrell:** No. And there were a lot of warning signs with this kid. Do you remember when we were looking up and it's just his whole family it seems, there were incidences of speeding, it was a lot of speeding and driving, which incidentally, Judge Carmen Mullen is a fast driver. So that's something that just I just made that connection. She yeah, she's a notorious speeder in Hilton Head and Beaufort County. So yeah, that's...the kid had all the right. I mean, whether he meant it or not, I cannot say I'm not in his head but he said all the right things. He did the right thing. He didn't try to get out of jail. He felt like he belonged there. He felt like he did not deserve mercy. He told Judge Mullen I do not deserve mercy. He said and did all the



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right things, right. So I think that was also part of my decision making there. But going back to that TikTok video, when we were saying like, people have to take things into their own hands, the woman in the TikTok video who's talking about the dinner guests. That's not her saying like, there's this corrupt investigation, I'm finding out that this, the law enforcement officers aren't doing X, Y and Z. I didn't know what to do with this information so I'm going on my platform, and I'm telling you, you know, whatever. But that's not what it was. It was just gossip. It was just pure, straight gossip. So the two things I don't want like a false connection to be made between those two things. So people, you see things that are wrong in your community and you do due diligence, you're not just putting things out there. By all means use whatever platform you have access to, to put that word out there because in this case, we have www.Freedom4Gracie.com and it's the number four, 4gracie.com. You can find out all sorts of information about this case in particular and how you can help and hopefully the more attention, seems like it's gaining more and more attention over the past year anyway, but the anniversary of his death is July 20.

[00:44:46] **Eric Bland:** Look, I don't want to have judges that are just literally robots, that are their hands are tied. Every conviction requires this sentence and this sentence only. I want them to be Solomon-like, to have some discretion within fence posts, that if there is that level of contrition and it's a first time person, people make mistakes, but it's a, it's a tragic, horrible, you know, life altering mistake, there has to be some level of punishment but some level of rehabilitation, you know. That's, that's that fence post and I want the judge to use his Solomon-like wisdom. Look, if somebody kills somebody, and he's on heroin, and it's, you know, it just so happens to be a lower socio economic person or a Black person or, you know, some Hispanic or white person has a big criminal record, they're gonna throw the book on him, that person is gonna get 40 years. But if it's a kid from Orangeburg crap, or from, you know, Heathwood Hall or Hamon and you know, he comes from a family just like Paul did of big drinkers of big partying or whatever, and he gets that DUI, boating accident and or the DUI car accident, there should be fence posts, and let's look at that behavior. If it's behavior that repeated itself, sorry you're gonna get the top end of it. But if it's a kid, that is a good kid that just got drunk at a highschool party, and he was a good student and an Eagle Scout and never involved in law enforcement, then let the judge use some of the discretion but have a fence post. Don't just send him to college because that's not a sentence. You got to go to college. What kind of sentence is that?



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[00:46:39] **Liz Farrell:** Well, especially when the solicitor's office. So Eric, the solicitor's office, in this case had a recommendation that was far more than just go back to college. So the judge, Mullen, I shouldn't say the judge, Judge Carmen Mullen, she apparently and allegedly had this case moved out of the docket where it most likely should have been and we were told by a source who was very trustworthy in this situation, who said the reason was to avoid *The Packet* from finding out because *The Packet* wasn't checking the Hampton County Public Index. So she's, it's like...

[00:47:12] **Eric Bland:** It's manipulating the justice system.

[00:47:15] **Liz Farrell:** Everything you said is great and I totally agree with you. Why can't you do that in open court in the area with his peers, you know, what I mean? Like, allow the public to attend if they want to. Allow the public to know about it. So I mean, we instead were rushing to get to this hearing.

[00:47:35] **Eric Bland:** She rushed to get to a conclusion. It may have been a one side presentation, where he had all of his supporters coming in and saying all the right things. Was there a balance, the other side who said yes, but this and here's all this and judge, you have to weigh both sides of it, or is she only weighing one side of it? That's what you're talking about open court sunlight.

[00:48:00] **Liz Farrell:** Yeah. Because like Mandy said, it's not just you know, he killed a very specific person, he killed his passenger, but he's on the road with the rest of us. So hello. You know, it's, we all have an interest in keeping people off the road like that. But back to the Solomon case if you want.

[00:48:16] **Mandy Matney:** The other thing about the Carmen Mullen case that really bothers me is did she afford that same amount of grace and...

[00:48:28] **Liz Farrell:** Generosity.

Mandy Matney 48:28 Generosity. What's the word? Mercy to the people, the defendants of color, to the defendants that don't have a lot of money, to the defendants that don't have any connections in the area whatsoever? And that's the problem it's...

[00:48:47] **Eric Bland:** Speaker 2 48:47



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Or walk into court and don't look like you were I. They dress a certain way, they keep their hair a certain way, who knows?

[00:48:53] **Mandy Matney:** Because what it comes down to is I do think that some people are redeemable. I do think that there are people that can make mistakes, can go through the criminal justice system and can come out learning from it. But I don't think that we need to just be giving that to everybody, every kid who has privilege and power and then not everybody else. That's not fair. And don't do it in secret.

[00:49:26] **Liz Farrell:** Right? I was thinking about this okay, like you and I love upgrades right, like Eric I assume you do too. Love an upgrade like if I can pay to cut the line at Disney I'm going to do it. If I can get the extra foot like the leg scrub at the pedicure I'm gonna upgrade it. Like little things right? But you shouldn't be able to, and I've said this from the beginning with Paul Murdaugh, you shouldn't be able to upgrade your experience with the justice system. You should be able to hire the best counsel you can afford 100 percent. But you should do it the right way. So everything should be done not because you hired X, Y, Z, now you get to go through this other door. You should all, everyone should go through the same door with the same basic, like the same structure should be placed, the same scaffolding of the justice system should be in place, you shouldn't be able to bypass it because you paid a higher price, and that's just my opinion. I know, Eric, you might disagree with that in the sense that, you know, that's what good lawyers do and that's why they get more money per hours, because they're able to get that other door open for certain people. But...

[00:50:30] **Eric Bland:** Well, yeah, I mean you know, lawyers have varying skills and they should be used. But at the end of the day, the judge should use the same analysis whether it's a wealthy person in front of them, or you know, somebody who has a public defender. That discretion that she uses and the analysis that he or she uses should be exactly the same. There may be good lawyers who appear before and make real forceful arguments and other lawyers that mail it in and just say, you know, the basic things, but at the end of the day, she's the one or he's the one who has to make the decision, and don't employ different levels of analysis. It should be all the same.

BREAK



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[00:51:20] **Liz Farrell:** So let's talk about the latest in the Bowen Turner case, another kid with the privilege to purchase his way into a different door. Mandy, you spoke with Dallas Stoller's father last week, and Dallas, unfortunately, did not live to see justice happen in this case. And we're just hearing some really disheartening news in terms of the Solicitor Bill Weeks and what he said to Karl Stoller over this past year. Why we haven't heard a lot from the Stoller family since we last reported on them last year.

[00:51:56] **Mandy Matney:** Yeah. Well, the good news is that the Stoller family said our army succeeded. They bugged the crap out of Bill Weeks to the point where Bill Weeks called the Stoller family in about a year ago in May and said call your people off. We're, we're trying to work here and we just keep getting emails and phone calls from your people saying that we need to do our jobs. Well, we're trying to do our jobs and we just need some space and some time to be able to do that. So Stoller family, we would like you to stay out of the media. Quit it with this Instagram, Tiktok Facebook stuff. And if you do that, we will reopen Dallas's case.

[00:52:45] **Eric Bland:** Stop being pesky.

[00:52:47] **Mandy Matney:** Stop being pesky. Eric, have you ever heard of a solicitor saying that to a victim's family?

[00:52:54] **Eric Bland:** No, no, no, no.

[00:52:58] **Mandy Matney:** And it's really disturbing and I honestly wonder, I was thinking about this today, maybe other solicitors do do this a lot of times, but the families are just too scared to speak out because they have that little bit of hope. Like I was talking to Karl Stoller, and I was like, they're kind of dangling a carrot in front of you and saying, this is what we have. But we need you to lay off of our backs, get your pesky people out of here and...

[00:53:31] **Eric Bland:** Let it die down.

[00:53:32] **Mandy Matney:** Let it die down and we need you to be quiet. And Karl from the bottom of his heart does not think that Bill Weeks means anything mean by this. He does not think that but he just doesn't, he also doesn't think that Bill Weeks understands the level of power that he has in this case and how much that he



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could be able to do. And what was really disturbing is that Bill Weeks admitted to the Stoller family, I screwed up. My office screwed up here, we dropped the ball, we should have never taken this plea deal to begin with. We screwed up here. And so in response to that, Karl said well what about your solicitor that agreed to this deal? Is anything being done with him? And then apparently, Bill Weeks got really angry about that question like kind of how dare you say such a thing. And the other thing that really bothers me about all of this is our pesky reporter Beth Braden tried several times to reach out to Bill Week's office so we could confirm that these things happened or they could deny it or they could say that we are trying our best here, blah, blah, blah. They will not say anything to us. They will not respond and that's horrible. As Karl was saying on the phone the other day, he not only owes, Bill Weeks owes the Stoller family an explanation as to what they've been doing with the case and exactly why they wanted them to be quiet and but he owes the public that too and that's what...

[00:55:12] **Eric Bland:** they elected him.

[00:55:14] **Mandy Matney:** They elected him. And if he can't do his job here, then what else is he going, what else is he going to do? Somebody on Twitter said, I'm shocked that Bill Weeks is doing this, it doesn't seem like his character. Well, again, he's showing us who he is. If he doesn't have the bravery to stand up against what happened here and make a stance. The thing that Bill Weeks doesn't understand is, people want to know that this will not happen again. People want to know that somebody in power is saying this ends right here, this will never happen again. That guy's fired. That guy's done. Here's how we make sure and our protocol is different now when plea deals happen, blah, blah, blah. That's what the Stoller family wants. They know that they know the Dallas's case is hard to prosecute. But again, circling back to why don't we just believe women to begin with? If we would have believed Dallas years ago, she would have been, she would still be alive today. I totally believe that. And this entire case would be different and the solicitor's office wouldn't have the excuse of she's dead. So we don't have a victim. So we don't have a witness and we can't prosecute this case.

[00:56:28] **Eric Bland:** Good job.

[00:56:29] **Mandy Matney:** Does anybody have anything to add to that?



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[00:56:30] **Liz Farrell:** I have a big problem with anything that resembles bribery, when it comes to anything, but specifically I don't when it comes to the justice system, why should anyone ever feel like because I think we've said it 100 times, like, your story is your story. And it's the most powerful thing that you can offer to the world in general and on top of which, when it is connected to a criminal investigation. And there are reasons to tell a victim maybe like, you know, you don't want victims going on Facebook and putting out accusations of so and so did this to me with no foundation or it's difficult sometimes when investigators, when the facts lead them down another path that is not the path that the victim wants them to take, right? There's there are going to be those instances. What we're talking about specifically, a big problem happened here. We're talking about a kid who got the benefit of the doubt because he paid for it. And immediately showed us who he was, immediately proved that that benefit of the doubt should not have been given; it was done secretly or trying to be done secretly. It almost looks like the circumstances were orchestrated to make all of this come together and get him the shiny little plea deal. And then he goes and he violates his probation, predictably. So you're talking about a guy who was accused in three different counties of three different crimes, three similar crimes rather with the similar outcome, which is no, we can't what can we do? Find a different way to prosecute sexual assault cases. And we had a case that I wrote this column and I, Duffy Stone's office, the 14th circuit solicitor, they wrote this long letter to *The Packet*, my newspaper just to tell them how wrong I had gotten this. I'm simply saying find a different way to prosecute sexual assault cases, because it's always going to be you can say it's a he said, she said, it's always going to have questions I guess about forensic evidence and what have you. There's got, they say that it's hard to convince juries, it's hard. The juries want that DNA, the juries want a video to have captured it, the juries want it to be stranger danger and not someone you know; juries just need you to tell the story. They just need you to be able to convince them and tell them the story so they can understand it in their own terms, instead of just giving up altogether. And that's what I feel like Bill Weeks is...

[00:59:00] **Eric Bland:** It's generations of, you know, I don't want to say this as a man, but it's generations of sexism. It's generations of the woman, putting her on trial. Did she come on to the guy and then send him false signals? Was it consensual and then became non consensual, when the guy didn't want to date her going forward? It always historically has been questioning the woman's actions and motives before the men and that's infiltrated into the investigation and into the justice system. And many women have said, if I come forward and I do this, I'm going to be pilloried, I'm going to be put on trial, they're going to get into all my sexual background or



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whatever, you know, what somebody may have done in college has no bearing on what happened in the car. You know what happened did the guy do to her in the car, but it's just it's generations in historical sexism. That's what it is. And you know, here's a perfect example: we spent the last week on that submarine, gone to the Titanic. And they marshaled five different countries and airplanes and boats and everything under the world, hundreds of millions of dollars was probably spent. But there's people who are missing all the time when they go hiking, and you know, are they insignificant? That became a new story because it was wealthy millionaires and the Titanic. I mean, what we have to do as a society is all of us need to start caring. If we all start caring about every murder, or every rape, and we all start asking questions, then everything's going to be equal and investigations will be done equally. But if we show no interest in the, you know, the person down the street, something happened to them and it's not an interesting person or an interesting family, they're not wealthy. They're not known, father isn't a newscaster, the story just dies. So we all have to care. I think like Mandy says, if the army of people in this country start caring about everything that happens, we'll be able to hold governmental people to the fire.

[01:01:09] **Liz Farrell:** Beyond that, the people who do care will feel less burdened. Because there's a lot of burden that does come with caring when you're looking around the room, and you're like, no one else seems to care here, no one seems to be bothered by this. So it'd be nice to have a lot of people that are joining in, and, you know, taking some of the load off of victims, taking some of the load off the people that are helping them and what have you.

[01:01:31] **Mandy Matney:** Right and the people making decisions also need to care. And I do think sexism has a huge, plays a huge role in this. It was three men who struck this plea deal. They're not concerned about rape. They don't know what anything, they don't know what sexual assault is like and they don't, they don't want to take the time to even think about it. And a lot of men just dismiss sexual assault as like, oh, she's being dramatic and oh blah, blah, blah. Until they actually start believing women and start believing that these crimes are life changing and horrific and threatening to society...

[01:02:09] **Eric Bland:** Until it happens to their daughter. Until everybody hates every lawsuit except the one they want to bring, everybody hates every lawyer except their own, until it hits home. You know, I see it all the time in defense attorneys when I have an injured party that I'm representing, oh, that person, they should have gotten back to work quicker, they're malingering or whatever. Until that defense attorney



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has a daughter or wife that gets in an auto accident and then all of a sudden, it's real serious. She is dramatically affected. She's in pain all the time. I know, it can't be documented on an MRI, but I see it, you know, it's no, it's no case until it's their case.

[01:02:52] **Liz Farrell:** That's absolutely right. It's like back pain. It's hard for you to understand back pain until you've had it yourself. So when people are complaining about back pain, you're like, yeah, yeah. But then you have and you're like, oh, my God, I can't even sit down how you know. So I think it's just human nature. And I think that's why it's important that we keep reminding each other when we see things that are wrong. And we do like, I think if we do make that effort to help amplify people's voices when they're crying out for help, I think that that does take off some of the pain. But maybe that's just too much optimism.

BREAK

[01:03:33] **Liz Farrell:** Eric, how important is it for people who have friends and family they get into some sort of agreement to have a contract with them to have like a contract with your friend, a contract with your family? How important is that?

[01:03:45] **Eric Bland:** It is so important. Contracts are discarded and disregarded until you need them. And when I do a contract for clients, they walk in and they just sign their name, and they throw it in a drawer. And they don't spend the time to read it and let me explain it. And what contracts do is they take the personal feelings out of it if there's ever a dispute, you know, I have people that come in, let's say you and Mandy want to form a company and you guys say we're 50/50 and I say now that's not smart. What's going to happen when you guys get into a disagreement? There'll be deadlock. Mandy wants to do something you don't want to do it. You guys can't run the oh, we're never gonna disagree. We've been friends since 2008. We've been through each other's weddings. She's been my bridesmaid. I've been her bridesmaid. Until money. Money will separate people. Accolades will separate people. If somebody's getting all the accolades and Mandy's the one that's doing the behind the scenes work and you're getting it Liz or vice versa, that creates these bad feelings and then you start to question and a written contract eliminates disputes, you know, and we'll talk about contracts maybe later on in detail. But it has a choice of law that the law would provide. It provides that you could choose whether you want to mediate first, whether you want to waive your jury trial rights and go before a judge or you want to go before a private arbitrator. Contracts enable you to put any terms



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you want into an agreement. And there will be disputes. You will have a lot of happy times and in a relationship when you contract with friends. But there will be disputes. One friend will say, look, we've made X dollars this year, let's distribute all the money. And then the other one will say, well, no, I think we need to grow the business, we need to buy another printing machine, or we need to take on more debt, or we need to hire more employees or I need more warehouse space. And this person here wants the money. We just made a profit, I'm paying taxes on all this profit, but I'm not getting the money, you're pouring it right back into business. And contracts eliminate friendships from being broken because they're right there, we negotiated them, each party should get their own lawyer and recognize that they benefit friendships more than they're a detriment to friendships. Well, we remember things differently. You know, we remember what we want to remember. And I would remember, well, I'm the one that came up with this business idea and I'll forget the fact that Mandy was the one that worked it, you know, and jealousies happen and envy happens. And I'm telling you, my grandfather had a saying he said, money isn't everything, two percent is still your health. 98 percent of it's money. And so husband and wives are going to break up over money. Partnerships break up over money. You know, the reason Ronnie and I have not fought in 24 years, is because I think we're in two separate buildings. And I don't have to, he doesn't see my ego every day and I don't see his ego. If we were in the same office, you know, we would be fighting for you know, who's first who's the alpha. And it works. But we have a partnership agreement. You know, if I die, I want my wife to know what the value of my 50 percent interest is in this law firm. How do we value ongoing cases, stuff that I originated are things that Ronnie originated? Listen, when you have a business, you want to know what happens in the event of divorce? Does my wife get to come in and take over the business? What happens if I die? What happens if there's a disability? What happens if Mandy and I have you know, I worked the back end of the business and she runs the front end of the business? What happens if I get disabled? Is it fair that I still should draw the same salary as Mandy? Mandy is going to save but Eric, I don't mind that you're disabled, you will get your distribution from profit but I gotta hire somebody to take your role in the back of the warehouse. So that's what contracts are for, they eliminate questions and they you can't address everything. But contracts can address 80 percent of it. But can you imagine if you don't have a contract, and you have 100 percent of the totality not being addressed?

[01:08:38] **Liz Farrell:** Yeah. That said, I will be getting a prenuptial in my next marriage that you've just convinced me. The second question we have is for the newsroom. Mandy, what is the best hope out there to fill in those news deserts, areas



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of the country where there aren't newsrooms? Or where newsrooms just aren't covering? What do you think some of the best things that people can do there or journalists can do?

[01:09:02] **Mandy Matney:** I think it's supporting independent journalists, supporting people that go to the town council meeting, and will write up a Facebook, whatever. Like there's a lot of pesky people out there in towns across America, that they like to follow their government and write about it and expose what their local government is doing. And so I really think that the hope is not at all in legacy media companies. I hate saying that because I believed in legacy news, media companies for most of my career, but they just have not been able to adapt. And I feel like a majority of, especially newspaper companies, have just found themselves in this hole that just keeps getting worse. And if you support legacy news companies, a lot of times the money just goes straight to the top and doesn't actually support the journalists. So, and this goes off of what you said, Eric, money is a lot. People need to stop pretending like money does not motivate people. And people need to stop pretending like money doesn't change a whole lot. Money is a big part of the problem in journalism, because why? You have to think of incentive. And in this business, the riskier it is, the more stress, the riskier the story, the more stressful the story, and those journalists that are sticking their necks out there and they're afraid somebody's going to come after them, they need to be paid in the right way. And that's, they're carrying the stress load of a lawyer, of a doctor, of a lot of other physicians in society that get paid traditionally way, way, way more. And I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but like, we can't stop, we can't just pretend like oh, we'll just go to nonprofits and still pay journalists crap and the problem will be solved. It really won't. We need to get more systems in place where journalists can be directly affected by their work, and they can earn money properly.

[01:11:33] **Liz Farrell:** Another thing I think that can be done, you know, working with what you've got is find a way to pitch your story to large agencies like *Washington Post* and *New York Times*, because I do think that there, they do go through these fits where they think they're gonna fill a news desert but every reporter out there is looking for a good story. And the way to do it is not to just text them with minimal detail or overload them with a lot of detail, it's just really think about how, like, we've talked about this before on the show that Sandy Smith had a nice, like, get to know the case package really ready for us. And that's not why I mean, like, it did make it easier to understand where the core issues were, and all of that, though. So there are ways if you have something that needs attention and you think it might be



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something that either would be of national interest, or even just something that would be good for a reporter, there's podcasts, there's all sorts of people you could reach out to.

[01:12:32] **Eric Bland:** There's Facebook, it's town square, you know, Facebook, Instagram is townsquare. And if you have a number of people that you follow, or people that follow you or tag you, you know, all you got to do is spread an interesting story or an interesting editorial type of opinion and it'll catch wildfire. You know, it's the student union that we used to have at college. You know, I remember that, you know, in between classes, we would go sit down in the lobby of the student union and you, you can do any, you'd hear everything, you'd hear what's going on with this person, and these guys are dating or this party tonight at the Rathskeller or this, whatever. That's the town square. Well, that's what media is. Now, that's what internet is.

[01:13:18] **Mandy Matney:** Just be factual and don't spread gossip.

[01:13:21] **Liz Farrell:** So last week, we asked people to send us the names of locations that have no transparency or transparency in their system of disciplining lawyers and judges. And we did not have a clear winner, but we have a close response and that was from Jennifer Feldman. So congratulations to Jennifer. Thank you for everyone who responded, Jennifer, we'll be sending you some great merchandise to celebrate your pesky instincts. So thank you and we'll have more questions in the future. And we'll be sharing the results of what we found actually because our pesky reporter Beth Braden is looking into it and she is finding all sorts of differences across the country when it comes to how lawyers and judges are held accountable. Alright guys, cups down. Have a great week.

[01:14:11] **Eric Bland:** Yeah, that was really good. We covered a lot.

[01:14:24] **Mandy Matney:** This *Cup of Justice* episode is created and hosted by me, Mandy Matney, with co-host Liz Farrell, our executive editor and Eric Bland attorney at law aka the Jackhammer of Justice from Lunashark Productions.