



EPISODE 07: 'Just Unreal': Online Hate and The Unsettling Reality For Victims and Influencers

[00:00:02] **Mandy Matney:** I don't know why some people choose to spend so much time attacking, harassing and maligning victims, journalists, influencers and content creators online. But I do know that I have seen enough to know that this is a dangerous behavior, not only to individuals but to the justice system as a whole. I have seen enough, I have had enough and it is time to do something about 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 LUNASHARK Media.

[00:01:06] **Mandy Matney:** Well, this is our 100 scripted episode between the *Murdaugh Murders Podcast* and *True Sunlight*. And that my friends is a big deal, especially considering all of the people and systems that have tried to stop us. Here we are, I'm more proud than ever to say that we dug deep, held no punches and fought the good fight for more than 100 episodes. I have been thinking about this two year journey that we've been on a lot, especially since things have gotten increasingly dark in the past few months with the online harassment and accompanying anxiety and depression that it caused. As we discussed at length in this week's *Cup of Justice*, which by the way, please listen to that if you haven't already, concerns with online harassment came to a head in the last week. So David and I finally had enough and we filed a police report on Monday. I have been wanting to do this for years, but I haven't had it in me to take the steps and actually do it. I wanted to file a police report a long time ago, when a troll emailed me pretending to be my dead brother. I wanted to file a police report when another troll who obsessively harassed and maligned me and other victims showed up at a charity event, I believe, to intimidate me, or it sure felt like it. I wanted to file a police report when I got a series of texts from a stranger who made it clear that he hated me for my reporting and he knew exactly where I lived. I could go on, but I think you get it. Each of these times I did tell law enforcement about what was going on. But I never actually made the step of driving to my local sheriff's office to say I need to file a police report, something happened to me. Why? Because I was terrified of making this situation worse. I was terrified of being told that I was paranoid, that I was crazy for worrying about these things, that I was making a big deal out of nothing, that I was just being dramatic. These are the same worries so many women have when considering whether or not to report domestic violence, harassment, threats, and especially sexual assault. You so badly want to be believed about the very thing that is stealing your joy and consuming your life. I was in a fragile state this entire time and felt so alone in all of this, that I couldn't bear the thought of working up the



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courage to file a report and then to be told I was trying to make something out of nothing and that nothing could be done. I can't imagine what sexual assault victims go through. But strangely, I immediately felt better when I walked into the Beaufort County Sheriff's Office and the man at the front desk recognized both of us and seemed to be a fan of the show. Before I could explain why I was there he said thank you for what you are doing. And let me ask you one question, did you have any idea back in 2019, when you were investigating the Murdaughs, that it would lead to all of this? I was caught off guard, but I thought about it and said absolutely not. I then joked that I probably wouldn't have continued my investigation had I known the earth that would be shattered in the low country going down that path. I thought about all of the public officials who have been exposed, all of the charges that have been filed, all of the lawsuits. I thought about all of the victims who have gotten a taste of justice or the truth about their cases. And I thought about all of the horrific, unbelievable corruption that we've uncovered. Would I do it again, honestly? Absolutely, if I had to. But I really don't want to. And if I could go back, I wouldn't change much. But I would change one thing that I want to talk about today, I would have changed the way that I dealt with online harassment, which was mostly by trying to avoid it and processing it a lot on my own. So many of my closest friends had no idea what I was going through because it was so hard to explain without sounding insane. Because what was happening was absolutely crazy and mind blowing. I've maintained some sense of normalcy with my friends in the last two years, and that normalcy is sacred to me. I hardly ever talk about the podcast, or my work with my friends, because it's just hard to relate to. And where do you even start? How do you explain to a friend you've known since high school that there is an entire group of people on Reddit who are dedicated to hating me and everyone I love? And how do you do that without making your friends feel like it is putting them in danger too? Like if I started to tell them about how people stalk my photos, zoom in on every detail and make up horrific lies to fill in the blanks, I honestly wouldn't blame my very private friends, especially the ones with children, for wanting to distance themselves from me. It made me feel toxic for something that I had no control over. And it made me feel even more alone. So I mostly stayed quiet about the harassment in hopes that they would get bored and go away. I didn't want to bring any attention to them whatsoever. Trolls want attention, everyone said. Don't let them win. But trying to ignore this level of online harassment is like allowing a mosquito to bite you and those you love over and over and over again, instead of squishing it because you are bigger and better than that mosquito to begin with. It drives you mad and the bites, they still hurt, even if it's just from a stupid mosquito. So Monday was about taking the first steps to exterminate the bugs that are biting me and those I love. And man,



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did that feel good. I won't go into details about what happened in the last week related to online harassment in a lawsuit that I'm now facing. Again, we covered that all in this week's *Cup of Justice* and I highly recommend you listening to that episode. But if I could do it all again, I would have started filing police reports about the harassment much sooner. I would have spent more time and energy practicing what I preach and being pesky, more time taking legal action, speaking up and speaking out against this and connecting with other people who are going through the same thing to put an end to this madness. How can I tell victims to stand up and fight for themselves when I wouldn't do it myself? Well, today we want to tell you a story about a mother who, in the wake of her son's death that she believed was a murder, fought the good fight against online harassment and corruption and mustered up the strength to do something about it like I should have done a long time ago.

[00:08:33] **Liz Farrell:** Before we get into it, we wanted to share a quick update about former fugitive Jeroid Price whose capture was announced right as we were finishing up with today's episode. This past March, Price was released 15 years early from his 35 year sentence for murder after State Representative Todd Rutherford, who was his attorney, and Fifth Circuit solicitor Byron Gipson struck a secret deal with retiring Judge Casey Manning and we have covered this a lot on the show. A month after Price's baffling release, the State Supreme Court rescinded Judge Manning's order and ordered law enforcement to apprehend Price who, shocker, had gone on the lam. He has been on the run for the past few months. He was arrested Wednesday by the FBI and the New York Police Department in an apartment in the Bronx after a tip came into SLED from someone in South Carolina. You probably remember that Price's release happened without a hearing that included the family of his victim, 22-year-old Carl Smalls Jr. Just one day before Price's capture, Carl's parents—Carl Sr. and Lillie Smalls— had released a nine-page letter they had written to the state's Office of Disciplinary Council calling for Rutherford to be disbarred, calling for sanctions against solicitor Gipson, calling for a reprimand for Judge Manning and calling for Rutherford's and Manning's court records to be released and examined. While Price's capture is great news, the Smalls family's letter must be addressed. We applaud the Smalls family for taking a stand and we hope that our state officials, namely Attorney General Allen Wilson and Supreme Court Justice Donald Beatty, do the right thing and hold everyone who made Price's early release accountable. Okay, now let's get into it. You've heard us say before, just how important it is for victims to make noise. Like Mandy said, it's not an easy thing to do. It takes a lot of bravery and



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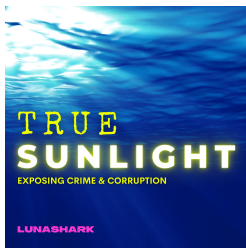
can involve a lot of self doubt and a lot of setbacks. Oftentimes, when the absolute worst has happened in people's lives, and they have very little left to give. We saw that bravery in the Dallas Stoller case and the effect it had in calling attention to the injustices that were being done to her. First we saw that bravery from Dallas and from Chloe Bess, who were harassed—sometimes by adults—for having the audacity to go to the police after being sexually assaulted. The extreme harassment Dallas faced tragically contributed to her accidental death in 2021. We saw that bravery continue when the Stoller and the Bess families took matters into their own hands and brought much needed sunlight to the dubious secretive deal that was being struck between the defendants, Bowen Turner's legislator attorney and the prosecution, to keep Bowen—who had been accused of three rapes in three counties at that point—out of prison. We've seen that bravery in the Mallory Beach case as the Beach family continues to press forward and demand accountability of those who fueled Paul Murdaugh's drunken boat crash, which led to their daughter's death. For four long years, they have been targeted and tormented by online commenters whose sole motivation seems to be to shake their resolve in pursuing their legal cases against Parker's gas station. And we've seen that bravery from Sandy Smith, who from the very beginning had to stand up to bullies, to long held cultural norms in Hampton County and to a corrupt system that bent over backward for certain people just so she could get some basic answers about her son's death. Sandy has been treated horribly online, including by those who claim to have come into her life to help her. She has been falsely accused of committing crimes and she's had private family information disseminated to the world. You might hear us say this over and over so we apologize in advance if it gets annoying, but we feel like we have to say it so that you understand that we understand that that online criticism is not the same thing as harassment. We are not saying that criticizing someone online or sharing an opinion is immediately considered harassment. It's not. Nor are we discouraging people from expressing their opinions in a way that is authentic to them. What we're talking about here is the relentless targeting of a person, whether it's a victim of a crime, a journalist, a blogger, whoever, with hateful messaging and lies in the hopes of silencing them. It's a thing you guys, it's widespread, and this doesn't have to be the world that we live in. So there are two motivations that we can see here. Clearly, one of them is to silence the victim, the journalist, the blogger, etc. In our opinion, that is the main motivation. But there are different reasons attached to that motivation. The bulk of online harassment across the board seems to be coming from people who are jealous that other people are getting attention and are in the spotlight. That other people are doing something whether it's calling for action, offering a solution to a problem, or simply sharing their stories or opinions, and that



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other people may be getting money as a result of the attention they're getting or the work that they're doing, whether that's through GoFundMe type accounts or civil suits or being featured in documentaries or being paid through sponsorships. And so these tyrants use that person who is getting that attention as a way to latch onto the spotlight maybe. By being a contrarian who pushes the limits, they're carving out their own little niche at the expense of their own humanity and with little regard for ethics and the law. One case we want to talk about today is out of Meridian, Mississippi. It's one that many listeners have shared with us. So in February 2014, a 21-year-old man named Christian Andreacchio was found dead in his apartment from a gunshot wound to the head. His case was immediately labeled a suicide by law enforcement and basic investigative work was ignored completely, done sloppily and allowed to linger inconclusively. And that's a problem because the circumstances surrounding Christian's death did not seem to point to suicide. The gun he supposedly used to shoot himself did not have his fingerprints on it, which is weird. In fact, the gun appeared to have been wiped clean. There was a void in blood spatter, meaning there was no blood in the area that one would have expected to find it when considering the force and the direction of the gunshot. Meaning, it appeared that something or somebody had been standing in the way at the time Christian was shot. There is so much to this case that still needs to be looked into and we plan to do this. We will be covering this case much more in depth as Christian's family continues to fight the system to bring his killers to justice. Today, we want to talk about what happened after Christian's family began bravely speaking out publicly about the lack of support they were getting from law enforcement and from the prosecutor's office. We want to talk about what happened as they continued to speak out about the acts of retaliation they received from their own governments as a result of their public calls for action. Christian's case was covered locally, but gained national attention in 2019 when it was featured in the first season of a podcast called *Culpable*. With that came online scrutiny which the family accepted, until that criticism began to cross the line in all those ways we've been talking about. We spoke to Christian's mother Rae Andreacchio this week about what it was like in the years after Christian's death.

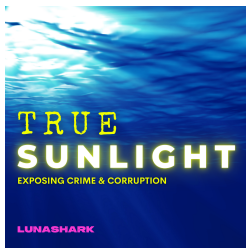
[00:16:21] **Rae Andreacchio:** You know, it's not just my family, I know that I know it's been multiple families, because I have people contact me when we were going through some of the things we've gone through saying the same thing happened to us and you're already dealing with losing a family member or a close friend, or, you know, whoever the person is that that you're involved with. And then you're also,



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many of us, fighting to get something done about it. And you're dealing with all that, and then you have things and people who are totally unrelated, you don't know them, you don't really know why they're even involving themselves. And in our case they, of course, went after other members of my family and my other children and myself, and so it, you know, then becomes a thing of trying to protect your, in my case, my living children, not just Christian. And so that was the reason why, you know, I fought back was because it was I tried to ignore and ignore for a period of time and you know, people will lose interest and they'll they'll quit and then it just came to be the longer you ignored, they would ratchet up the sensationalism of whatever they were saying to see if they would get a reaction that way. And you know, it became very hurtful and, you know, defamatory. So we I just said enough, enough. This is something's got to be done.

[00:18:06] **Mandy Matney:** One of the loudest critics of Christian's family was a Michigan woman named Karen Yax, who goes by the name Critical Kay on social media. Sound familiar? Soon after the murders of Maggie and Paul Murdaugh, we got a fast lesson about the world of true crime and the political in-fighting that sometimes exists among those who seem to want to stake a claim in that particular story. We learned that discussion groups get set up and administrators get chosen and sometimes those administrators have opposing missions, we learn that some Facebookers and Redditors see themselves as true detectives or journalists and are locked into unspoken races to solve the crime. We learned that there is even a counterpoint component, a contrarian group who seeks to absolve the accused and malign the accusers, who position themselves as the holders of the real story as they post misinformation about the case and ask questions that seem designed to mislead people. We also learned that people get paid by interested parties to take down victims or anyone who dares to speak out publicly about wrongdoing. The true crime world is a community, when it's good it's great, but when it's bad, it is vicious. In the Murdaugh case, Critical Kay's voice was one of the loudest almost from the start. I wasn't at all familiar with the super sleuth true crime world in June 2021. And I remember being shocked to search Facebook one day and find several groups dedicated to the Murdaugh murders, including hers. As a curious journalist thinking these groups might have some good leads and angles, I joined every group I saw including Critical Kay's. But soon after joining, I noticed Critical Kay's theories and posts on the Murdaugh murders were not at all like the others. They lacked logic, basic knowledge of the case and Hampton County and also they really lacked sympathy for anyone involved except for the Murdaughs. In fact, I looked back on



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texts that I sent to Liz in June 2021 and I said things like who was paying this woman? What's going on here? With screenshots of Critical Kay's absurd posts mostly pointing blame at the boat crash victims and anyone besides Alex Murdaugh. Critical Kay positioning herself as a neutral party not afraid to be devil's advocate greatly contributed to several false narratives in the wake of the Murdaugh murders. It was odd looking back on those screenshots that I saved from June 2021, now knowing what we know of Alex Murdaugh's attempts to tell police that the murders of his wife and son had to do with the boat crash that his son Paul was in.

[00:21:11] **Alex Murdaugh:** I did then believe it was the boat wreck. And I believe now that the boat wreck had something to do with it.

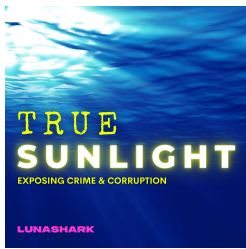
[00:21:15] **Creighton Waters:** Alright, so we've got random vigilantes because of the boat wreck.

[00:21:21] **Alex Murdaugh:** Not, I don't know that they're random vigilantes.

[00:21:23] **Creighton Waters:** Well, you just said it wasn't the family or the kid or the kids or the family of the kids in the boat wreck. So you're saying it's somebody off of social media, and you don't have any evidence of that do you? You just believe that and was telling that jury that as you're trying to explain the lie that you told for the first time yesterday isn't that right?

[00:21:39] **Alex Murdaugh:** No sir that's not right.

[00:21:41] **Mandy Matney:** Well, I found it particularly disturbing that Kay was pushing this narrative along with Alex. In one post in particular, she said that it had been brought to her attention that Mallory's relative is quote, a bit of a wild card, and some are suspecting him in the murders of Maggie and Paul. That was never true. Why would this woman from Michigan wanna terrorize the family of Mallory Beach like that? Other things I noticed looking back on posts from Critical Kay in the early days, how she oddly pushed a narrative that seemed to perfectly align with team Murdaugh. For instance, one post said, quote, I have a couple people close to the Murdaugh family reach out to me to express frustration with how the media is portraying them. I have to say this because I've seen this case after case and the Murdaugh's have been described to me as good, hardworking, loving people who have many people who love them. The post also said, quote, I am being told that Alex



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Murdaugh is a good man who loves his family and there is no way he harmed them. Wow. So that was a weird one to unpack. We've lost count of the number of people that we've spoken to who knew the Murdaughs, well over 100, probably in the hundreds at this point. Not one of them has described Alex Murdaugh as a good man. And no one, for the record, has told me that the Murdaugh family as a whole are good, hardworking people. A lot of people have described Alex as a father who was proud of his family and family name. And they described him as someone they have a hard time imagining killing his son because of how much they thought he loved him. But not a good man. A lot of sources have described individual members of the Murdaugh family as quote unquote, good, but never the family as a whole or their history. And if someone would say that, considering the amount of not good things I know about Alex Murdaugh and his family history, I would find out who this person was that said this and what they had to gain from the Murdaughs. Because the thing about people in power is that they are going to be nice to some people because that is how they stay powerful. Alex was nice to plenty of people who could do things for him, but he stole and took advantage of those who were vulnerable and that was well documented. So here is the difference between a lot of these sleuth true crime folks and actual journalists: journalists do not publish everything that we have heard from the gossip mill. We publish very little of it, actually. What we publish is thoroughly vetted, questioned for intention and credibility, and backed up by multiple sources. We don't just hear that Alex Murdaugh is a bad person and then run with that. You hear it over and over and over and you see it for yourself in documents before you publish anything. What these sleuths and some true crime content creators are doing is taking information from sources that could very much be from a PR company that is pushing a dangerous narrative and rolling with it. Or sometimes I've seen them just make up a lie based off of one photo and spread it across the internet. Essentially, good sources close to the situation and good vetting are what separates us from the Critical K content creators of true crime.

[00:25:42] **Liz Farrell:** In the years since the murders, Critical Kay's main focus continues to be on maligning us and others who have been covering the case, maligning the boat crash passengers, maligning attorney Mark Tinsley who is leading the fight for civil accountability in the case. And Critical Kay's main achievement seems to be promoting spurious theories that take the blame away from Alex Murdaugh, Paul Murdaugh and Parker's gas station. If Critical Kay's followers defend those she seeks to malign, she often kicks them out of her group. If anyone questions the accuracy of her information or the appropriateness of her



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posts, she often kicks them out of her group. Her arrival on the Murdaugh scene was baffling to us. What was her interest in this case? Why was she spreading so much demonstrably false information and why was she so vicious and cruel to the victims? Christian's mother Rae Andreacchio can relate to our confusion. Before the Murdaugh case, Karen Yaks, aka Critical Kay, had attached herself to the Andreacchio case and with an audience of 17,000 listeners to her webcast, began to make false assertions against Rae who is a medical provider in the mental health field. In 2021, Rae Andreacchio filed a federal defamation case against Karen. This past spring a judge granted Rae's motion for a default judgment because of Karen's ongoing refusal to participate in the case. Currently, Rae is awaiting a ruling from the judge on what monetary damages will be awarded to her. We spoke to Rae's attorney Matthew Wilson about the complaint he filed on his client's behalf.

[00:27:16] **Matthew Wilson:** In a nutshell, what the complaint alleged was that this particular defendant had a webcast and where she was was discussing in depth of this particular case, and in doing these podcasts or webcasts, the defendant alleged first one of the things she alleged was that my client had a pattern in history of bribing people and getting people drunk and getting young people drunk in order to get people to change their stories about what happened to her son, which in and of itself is outrageous. But then she, in another conversation she had with some Mississippi residents, she made the implication that one of my client's alleged patients, and we you know, because of HIPAA, we can't say whether this person truly was a patient or not. But allegedly, this person is one of my client's patients, this is now deceased person, and that the defendant stated or made the implication that, you know, here my client has a client that died of self harm and she had a son that died of self harm and of course, the way she arranged those words, you walk away with the impression that she's trying to communicate the message that my client had something to do with the self harm of her son and the self harm of a patient and that was just representable. Because that impugned not only her reputation as a medical provider, but it also made it like, you know, my client had something to do with her son's death. When you start arranging those sentences in a way that people walk away with an impression with the implication that my client had something to do with the death of an alleged patient and maybe even her own son, we can't, we can't tolerate that, okay. And the thing that really, really just made this put the salt in the wound was there was this one dialogue that she had with one of her followers where this defendant started to talk to my client saying, I know you're listening to my show, mentioning my client's name. I know you're listening, and you're not ignoring



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me. And then she goes on to say, I'm a powerball. You've never met a mother fill in the blank like me before. And I'm thinking to myself, what audacity. You know what I mean? That is just unreal.

[00:30:37] **Liz Farrell:** What Matt is referring to as from an April 2021 episode of Karen Yaks' webcast in which Karen said this, according to the lawsuit. Here's David,

[00:30:37] **David Moses:** You're not ignoring me Rae. You are very well aware of me. And you know that I have taken up for Dylan and Whitley. I am a force to be reckoned with. I am a power ball. You never met a mother effer like me, Rae.

[00:30:53] **Liz Farrell:** Dylan and Whitley are Christian's friend and ex-girlfriend who say they found Christian's body. And as we said, victims' decisions to go public about their loved ones' case to demand justice is not an easy one. It's often a last resort.

[00:31:10] **Rae Andreacchio:** Ironically, we were told by the chief of police at the time, was Chief Devos, and we had a meeting with him and this, of course, is several years down the road of me running around and kind of chasing after all the different agencies. And we met with him to say, you know, look, this is what we have. We believe that this is whether it's a cover up, or whether it's just incompetence or negligence, we feel like, you know, this needs to be investigated further. This, you know, again kind of laid out what we had. And, you know, his comment or his was that the DA wasn't going to do anything. And it didn't matter if we had a confession that the DA was not going to pursue this case. And he kind of nonchalantly said, you know, if I were you I would get some media coverage. Now, I doubt he really thought that we would do that or that we would be able to do that. And, you know, luckily, the attorney, you know, knew someone who knew someone and we were able to get the first article that was in *Mississippi Today*, which was a digital newspaper. And I did really the first, it took that many years where nothing had been ever put in the paper, nothing had ever been said. And they did this *Mississippi Today* article, our story, and I didn't really expect that much. You know, I was hoping it would at least put some pressure on the police department to at least listen to us and the DEA to say, hey, they do have enough to reopen now so for y'all to investigate, and it was just a few weeks, I don't even know if it was a few weeks. But it was a very short period of time that *Crime Watch Daily* contacted us and said, well, we have people who kind of monitor for the stories in smaller communities and or smaller, I guess, papers and they contacted us, said we'd like to do the story. So of course when *Crime Watch* did



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that well, then, it got more attention because that was more of a national publication or media source. And it kind of snowballed from there.

[00:33:47] **Liz Farrell:** The much needed attention was a double edged sword, though.

[00:33:51] **Rae Andreacchio:** But I mean, really, we didn't want media attention. There's a lot of people of course, that will tell and you hear this I'm sure with your coverage of the Murdaugh case, or other cases that you may have done. You know, the other side or people who are against you will say, oh, they just want they love the attention. They're just doing this for attention, or fame, or whatever. Believe me, I would love for my name to never have been out there as a part of, you know, I wish this case had never happened because then I would, you know, the Christian would be here. I pray that any day of the week for all this stuff that has happened.

[00:34:31] **Liz Farrell:** The family knew they needed to forge ahead, that this media attention was critical to getting justice for their son.

[00:34:38] **Rae Andreacchio:** But you know, you don't, the only thing you have is to put pressure or and public attention on the local authorities. And you know, there for a while, it does help but if you don't get something done and you don't get them moving quickly, after that kind of media attention well then, you know, it's kind of just like anything else, everybody moves on to the next thing. And so they're always looking for another pressure point, another, you know, okay, we've done this. So what's the next thing we can do? That because we got this done when this came out. So if we get something a little bit bigger or a little bit more attention, well, then maybe we'll get it moved a little bit further. And we have been able to move kind of the case along a little bit at a time with each, you know, kind of media coverage it has received. So again, unfortunately, that's what families I don't think that most families want to get on TV and have to go through talking about this over and over again, and crying and showing your emotions and things that most people want to do behind closed doors. They don't, you know, I don't think that normal person wants to do that on national TV. But you sacrifice that to try to get something done for your child's, you know, case.

[00:36:09] **Mandy Matney:** Again, this isn't about negative opinions, this is about something so much more dangerous and destructive.



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[00:36:17] **Rae Andreacchio:** I don't expect everyone to be on my side. I don't expect everyone to say, you know, agree with me on everything. And it's not like I hate you or I don't, that you know, I'm against you if you have a different opinion, as long as you're respectful with it and as long as you agree that that's your opinion and that, you know, that anybody could be wrong about that. But it's when I mean, there's been plenty of people that I'm sure have done episodes that have raised questions and things that I didn't agree with, but that, you know, again, that's their right, their, I don't care. I don't, their opinion does not change Christian's case. Their opinion doesn't change my belief, or many people's belief or actually just the facts. It doesn't change facts. So I don't really care if people agree or don't agree on other media sources. But when you begin talking about, you know, things that you don't have facts about, when you start talking about, you know, degrading or downgrading or trying to humiliate Christian, my son, Christian or whoever's family member it is in that situation, again, I think that that line is crossed. You can be respectful and disagree and that's perfectly fine. But you don't have to sit there and drag up every, you know, make up things.

[00:37:57] **Liz Farrell:** Now Critical K and others like her would say that they're simply trying to present the quote other side of the story. This is how Kay describes her mission in Christian's case, according to the lawsuit. Here's David again.

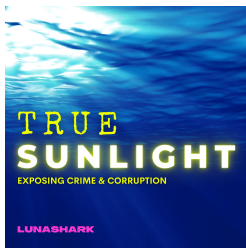
[00:38:09] **David Moses:** First thing I want to say is if Rae, ie the plaintiff, wants to try this case on social media as she has attempted to do since 2017, I am happy to oblige her. Right, I am happy to oblige her. And until now, she has really dominated the narrative about this case via intimidation, bullying, outright lies, and I sort of set the groundwork for that the other night, and I am going to continue to lay that groundwork and continue to provide proof of the things that I claim that she has attempted to control the narrative via intimidation, bullying, lies, bribery, getting people drunk, getting young people drunk, et cetera, et cetera. And that is very troubling to me. But she has truly dominated the narrative, her, her family, her brother, her children, and it's time for the other side to have their say. It's time for the other side to have someone who takes up the mantle for them.

[00:39:23] **Liz Farrell:** The problem here isn't that Critical Kay wanted to tell the other side of the story, it's that she didn't actually do that. Instead, she seems to have told the story she wanted to tell. According to the lawsuit, Critical Kay spoke with two



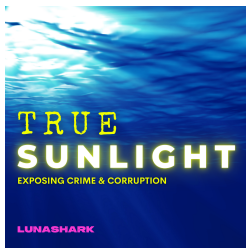
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sources about someone she claims to have been a patient of Rae Andreacchio. Kay asked them to confirm that this person named Hayes Mitchell was in fact a patient of Rae. Here's how that went down. "Defendant: wasn't Haze also treated by Rae? Matt Miller: I don't know that. Defendant: Dylan, wasn't Haze was Haze treated by Rae? Dylan, we know you were. Dylan swearing in: I was told through someone else at some time that may have happened. I'm not 100 percent sure. So I can't vouch for it. But I am sure there is somebody in my group that if this is true, can vouch for it. Matt Miller: Yep." You heard that right. They told Critical Kay that they don't know. And here's what she did with that information, according to the lawsuit. "Defendant: it seems to me that that is something that I've heard that Haze Mitchell was also treated by Rae and that is what I need people to understand. There's a whole host of young people here, specifically teenagers and young adults who have been treated by Rae in this community via her workplace. They have been treated both counseling wise and medically by Rae and some of these people who have been treated by her counseling wise and medically have gone on to be accused by her of being involved in this. This is how far her reach goes. I really do believe that Hayes was treated by Rae and Haze now dead with a drug overdose and he was treated by Rae. He was he's dead also by self harm. So she has a son that is dead by self harm and she has a patient who is dead by self harm." Critical Kay was told by two sources right then and there that they did not know whether Rae had treated this patient, but she was determined to tell the story the way she wanted to tell it apparently. Not the way it was told to her. The facts were presented to her and she ignored them and instead insinuated that Rae might have had something to do with those two deaths. That is inexcusable. That is duplicitous. And anyone following Critical Kay is supporting that kind of tactic and that kind of abuse. There are a few things to note about the federal defamation case against her. One is that Karen moved to have the case against her dismissed. In that motion, she downplayed her audience reach and referred to her blog as quote marginally interactive. She also claimed that her webcast was not widely heard in Mississippi because the people of Mississippi already knew the facts of the case and would therefore have no need to listen to her webcast. She also told the court that she was not rich like the plaintiff and would therefore be unable to travel to Mississippi from Michigan. She sent her motion via overnight mail and listed her return address in Michigan but the post office paperwork attached to the envelope showed that Karen actually mailed her motion from Honolulu, Hawaii where she had traveled for vacation. This did not help her case later on when she refused to participate in hearings due to economic constraints. For her part, Critical Kay contends that this case was bogus and designed to harass and terrify her. But here's the thing, it didn't seem to terrify her at all. Because as this was going on in



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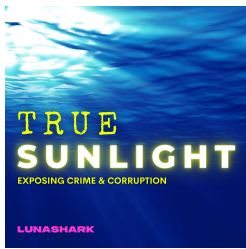
her life, Critical Kay had taken up the Murdaugh fight and continued with her pattern of taking up for the quote other side while conducting herself in the same ways she was alleged to have conducted herself in this case. When and how does this kind of thing end? How can victims of injustice speak out while also protecting themselves from those who seemingly have no boundaries when it comes to what they're willing to say online? Like we said, there are dangerous consequences to this kind of harassment and we applaud the Andreacchio family for saying enough is enough. The more we look into online harassment, the more disturbed we are by what we're finding, because again, this is not the world any one of us should want to live in. The despair and loneliness that comes as a result of this kind of targeted harassment cannot be overstated. Both Mandy and I have experienced it. It's been difficult to explain to people what being subjected to harassment is like because putting it into words almost flattens it. Makes it seem manageable and like something that bothers you only because you're sensitive or have thin skin. But the more research we've done, the more we're finding out how widespread this issue is. We will not stand for the stifling of victims' voices. Their voices, the ability to tell their story, is sometimes the only power they still have left. But we also won't stand for the stifling of reporters' voices or the voices of bloggers and other influencers. In May longtime blogger Heather Armstrong, who some call the original mommy blogger, died as a result of self harm. Soon after her death, news reports came out that she'd been ruthlessly and relentlessly harassed by people who followed what is referred to as an anti fan website called GOMI—or Get Off My Internet. The systematic hatred and harassment was seen by her friends as a factor in her decision to end her own life at 47 years old. The site is primarily a place for people to share their hatred of various bloggers and influencers and podcasters, almost all of them women. But the hatred goes beyond just commiseration with like minded people and it goes beyond just that one site. There are pages upon pages of what are called snark forums on Reddit in which quote, anti fans not only share their distaste of people, they create a community that becomes frothy with one-uppance where they take their mutual dislike of someone and put it into action. A story in *The New York Post* published shortly after Heather's death included several quotes from other mom bloggers who not only saw the organized cruelty that came for Heather, but they have experienced it themselves. Deborah Cruz, a blogger on motherhoodthe truth.com, told *the Post* quote, I've been told my children should die. But Heather got it really bad and she was more fragile than the rest of us. But she was more successful, too. People are jealous. She had an empire she built on living her truth and as it grew, some people were like, why should she have that? Mandy and I have reflected on that statement a lot this week when we asked ourselves what is driving this online terrorism. Blogger



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Jenna Anderson, of *That Wife Blog*, told *The Guardian* in 2016 that followers of GOMI reported her to Child Protective Services. Quote, they were pursuing efforts to have our children taken away because they had read about us on GOMI and that was enough evidence to prove we shouldn't be able to have our kids anymore, she told the news agency. The organized cruelty and harassment experienced by bloggers is long established. The anti fansite people coordinate efforts to put their hatred into action. They share instructions with each other on how to create and manage fake social media accounts and then use those accounts to force sponsors to drop specific writers or influencers. They study photos of influencers and bloggers on vacation and call the hotel or the Airbnb where they're staying to falsely report them for using drugs or making too much noise or things like that. And the victims of this abuse seem to suffer alone because of how insidious the harassment is. We don't think anyone should suffer this alone ever, whether they are victims of crime or victims of injustice or content creators. No one should be subjected to online harassment that crosses the line from opinion sharing to what is essentially terrorism that seeks to silence their voice.

[00:47:24] **Mandy Matney:** So, what can be done about this? We can all help each other, we can report the harassment when we see it online. We can report pages for this kind of mental warfare where people are encouraging each other to act upon their dislike of a person. We can also send kind messages to people we see getting harassed and let them know that they aren't alone. And we can stop following the people, pages and websites that engage in this behavior or who seem to report it. A lot of this hateful content seems to live on Reddit. So please send an email to contact@reddit.com and tell them enough is enough and look for specific language that we will post soon on social media for a call to action. But the biggest lesson, however, that I have learned in all of this is that we all have to start sticking up for ourselves and for each other because there is so much power in the army of good hearted folks listening to this podcast right now. I've learned that inaction when it comes to dangerous behavior is no longer a choice for those of us who want to make the world a place where victims feel comfortable to tell their stories and where journalists feel empowered to tell victim's stories. Or at least, I want a world where there are consequences for those who participate in this. I had a major turning point in this fight this weekend when I posted that the Reddit hate group going after us, dubbed Luna Snark, was finally shut down thanks to a group of super pesky and brilliant women who reported their harassment hundreds of times to read it to a point where they could no longer ignore it. After connecting with a few women who



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have gone through similar struggles, I've realized that there is nothing I can do to convince the trolls to stop terrorizing me. I could shrink and disappear but they would claim victory and go on to the next victim. But this is no longer about me, it's about stopping bad behavior and stopping people from hurting others like they hurt me. So it is time, instead of shrinking, that we get bigger and louder. We are currently combining forces with other skilled investigators and attorneys so that we can change this system of abuse that endangers women just by trying to do their jobs so that if anyone is considering becoming a Critical Kay, or a GOMI, or a Reddit snark troll, they will fear the consequences like anyone considering committing a crime. And the companies facilitating these hateful conversations will consider the repercussions so that they will think of Rae's story and Heather's story when they make their rules of engagement, and they will choose safety and sunlight over dark money and nameless faces. It is time that we force the system to stand up for women, for victims, for kindness, and I hope you all will join me in this endeavor. Stay tuned, stay pesky and stay in the sunlight.

[00:51:10] **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 LUNASHARK Production, right Luna?

EXPOSING CRIME & CORRUPTION