



EPISODE 75: Alex Murdaugh Gets To Keep His Secret Money + Brandi Churchwell of the 13th Juror Podcast on the Karen Read Case

Mandy Matney 00:06

Hello and Happy Tuesday. Monday was a long day so bear with me here. Right after I got back from Alex's federal sentencing, I got on a call with Liz to work out some of my irritation. So today's show kinda starts with a short rant slash conversation about what went down in Charleston at Alex Murdaugh's federal hearing. Also, on today's podcast, we spoke with our friend Brandi Churchwell, creator and host of the 13th Juror podcast. We met Brandi during Alex Murdaugh's murder trial when she created what would become the first of her thorough and majorly helpful Churchwell Charts. During the trial, she collected all the facts about the night Alex killed Maggie and Paul and organized them into an amazing spreadsheet showing that the defense's claims about Alex whereabouts and actions didn't add up when compared to what the GPS and phone data were telling us. This chart ended up getting entered into evidence against Alex and we think it really helped in securing that conviction against him. Since the trial Brandi has taken that skill and talent and used it to help bring sanity and clarity to other cases. Today we talk to her about the Karen Read case, a Massachusetts case that Liz and I basically knew nothing about before this interview. After talking to Brandi, we can now totally see why a lot of people are very invested in this case. Our premium members have access to a timeline of who's who in the case, as well as multiple in depth articles. Also, we talked to Brandi about what life in the true crime podcasting world has been like for her and how she has dealt with the onslaught of attention. Premium Members will get to hear our full discussion on that. Let's get into it.



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Liz Farrell 02:03

Cups up Mandy. How's it going better here than where you are? How was the hearing today?

Mandy Matney 02:09

It was frustrating and exhausting. I'm trying to get into a better mood. But going to Charleston driving four hours in a day for Alex Murdaugh, to and from Charleston is an annoying thing to do. And I just feel annoyed and defeated. Even though 40 years is good in the grand scheme of things and good when it comes to minimum and maximum for the crimes that he committed. A lot didn't sit right today with the restitution. I don't like the amounts that are being awarded to PMPED and to Palmetto State Bank. And I also don't like...I just got the feeling that the federal government was giving up and I hope that I am wrong about that. I will be crystal clear about that. But I just got the feeling that they're done now. And I think that all makes me really mad because I just feel disappointed after going to that federal courthouse so many times and each time leaving thinking okay, this isn't redundant, because this is going to lead to other people besides Alex Cory and Russell being charged. And now here we are years later and Alex is the final one to get charged in federal court and they don't appear to be any closer to finding where the money is. Or if they are then I will be happily fooled. But that's just my gut feeling. Leaving today was just like, man, I don't know if this was all worth it. What did you think, Liz?

Liz Farrell 04:05

Well, like you said, I'm actually really happy with the 40 years. The pre sentencing report from the US probations office only recommended 17



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to I think like 21 and a half so Judge Gergel leading up to the said he was going to explore giving him more years and he really did. He almost doubled it, which is fantastic because anyone who is worried that, you know, by some miracle he gets his murder conviction overturned and that the 27 year state sentence that he was given kind of affords him an opportunity to get out of prison in the sense that we, you know. We saw with the Jeroid Price case how lawyers are able to exploit the system to be able to get them a reduced sentence like a drastically reduced sentence for serious crimes. It was possible that we could see you know, there was an option that Alex could get out of prison, you know, say in 15 years or even less if that murder conviction had gotten if he had gotten a new trial and didn't get found guilty again. So this federal sentence provides a really solid backstop, it seems so he'll have to serve, let's just say that the murder conviction is overturned. Let's just say he's found not guilty. And in your trial, he'll have to serve most of that 27 years in state prison, and then an additional 13 years, you know, you know, a reduction. So he's looking at, you know, in his late 80s to early 90s, not getting out of prison, which I think is a good thing, but it is really confusing. Going into this, you know, we had talked about the polygraph and how he had failed that and how federal prosecutors were going to ask for the judge to nullify the plea agreement. But it didn't seem to matter. What did they say, if anything about that, Mandy?

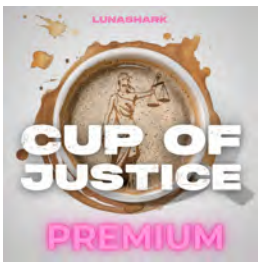
Mandy Matney 05:56

Yeah, at the very beginning, and that was another thing, because there was so much back and forth last week with filings between the federal government and Alex and about the polygraph. They went into it immediately being like, we've worked out a deal that all of that is mute.



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And, but they didn't really say why or what the deal was like, it was just, and then Jim kind of kept, like barely mentioning points that he was like it just for the record, I want to say blah, blah, blah. But even though this is all mute, like he did get a little stab, and that polygraphs are real. But it's like, okay, why does this matter? And I guess I think my my struggle with all of this is a, I'm so frustrated with how annoying it is to cover federal proceedings because of the rules that are so ancient and outdated, that we cannot, it was nice today that I was able to type as I was in the courthouse, but I am so used to having audio as a backup and checking audio immediately with quotes and triple checking everything that I'm reporting, and you just simply cannot do that in federal courthouse and in the federal courthouse. And it's just frustrating, because there's just a lot of confusing things going on. Like for instance, when he says 40 years, he's not saying 40 years, Judge Gergel is saying, counts 123 are 480 months, and that and that is concurrent. And then counts three through six are blah, blah, blah, months, and that is consecutive to the state. So it sounds like a math problem. And there's no, just this is what all that means. And that all is to say that it's hard to determine what all of this means. And the point of everything. I understand the backstop and the backstop is great. But let's be honest, if Dick and Jim were not Alex's attorneys, there would be no need for a backstop. Like there's few attorneys that could get Alex out of that murder conviction. And when Judge Gergel said something today, and this is again, I'm gonna have to go back for this week's true sunlight. And hopefully there will be some filings that I can double check what exactly was said about restitution. But he said a few things like this fine is waived, because the defendant cannot pay it. And God, that part just made me mad like why? Why is that waived? I was just sitting there thinking as long as Dick, Jim and Phil Barber are



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representing this man and as long as there's a whole team of lawyers behind him there, I don't understand how the federal government can also accept that he has all these lawyers who are clearly extremely expensive, yet Alex doesn't have any money to pay the government or his victims or anybody else. And that just seemed to me like an accepted thing that we're all just going to nod our heads and agree to and not a lot of people are talking about. Dick and Jim have to have some idea of where this money went. And I know that there's attorney client privilege, but it seems like the federal government is trying to unlock this mystery and trying to solve this giant puzzle of where the money is. And meanwhile, Alex is getting money from somewhere. And there has to be somebody with answers within his circles. And for right now, it just seems like the feds are just accepting that and they're like, Okay, he can't pay that which I don't understand.

Liz Farrell 09:53

Yeah, it's kind of frustrating because I think we were talking about this with Russell's case. and how he didn't get fined either. And the idea was, let's, let's let his money go toward the victims. And again, we know who the victims are in Russell's case, which is PMPED and PSP. But here, you do remember during the me to movement, one of the things I remember talking to you about this, was the idea that women who settle cases then have to sign NDAs afterward. And then you have a series of NDAs, right? It's just sort of an accepted practice. And that's sort of where we got into the situation that we're in with the me to movement, it's just so many women had to sign NDAs in order to get their settlements settled. And that, therefore, had the problem just over and over and over. I think we need that same thing for irrevocable trusts, because Randolph Murdaugh set up an irrevocable trust for his



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children. And this is money that you sort of wonder, like, where did they get all this money? Because he wasn't practicing in private practice. And he was a prosecutor for most of his career. And so it was buster. And so it was the first Randolph Murdaugh. So how is it that these millions and millions of dollars can be left to the Murdaugh kids? So the irrevocable trust makes it so that I believe there's no no way to get that money civilly. So if you were to sue Alex, that money just simply doesn't count. You can't get out it, but he can certainly use that money to pay as attorneys. It seems to me that if you get caught committing a crime to the especially to the degree that Alex has been caught, there should be a way out that money, that money shouldn't be left in reserve to be able to purchase your way out of the problem, which is exactly what it what it is for, I guess, for his purposes anyway, I think before judges waive fines, because those fines are sort of isn't that it really goes back into the thing, that idea of it is that it kind of helps offset the costs of your the investigation and prosecuting your case. Right. So why not hold him accountable to those fines? By forcing Dick and Jim to disclose how much they're being paid? To understand that better? I think I feel like this idea and I know judge gurgle touched upon it with Russell's case, because Russell wasn't paying, you know, he's several \$100,000, from what we understand a close, you know, almost to a million dollars in debt to his, for his legal representation. Russell is I mean, it seems like Judge Gergel was pro, this idea that like, everyone's entitled to an attorney, which they are, obviously, but the attorney of their choosing which they are, obviously, but then you start to get into this crazy world where people who have stolen money or who are accused of stealing money, are able to use that money then to get out of the charge. And I don't like that there's something there's something that's going to change there.



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Mandy Matney 12:51

Right, right. That's what I was. Yeah, that's what I was getting a lay in trying to, that's what I was working through, in my mind on the way home of like, that's the really annoying part about this, because we know that there are so many less privileged criminal defendants out there who did a whole lot less and because they couldn't afford a better defense. They will they've gotten steeper sentences than there's people who and then it's like, Russell hasn't paid a lot of his attorneys, and but he still got that defense. And that's something that you can't like, undo and take back. You know what I mean? And it's just a really frustrating thing when you think about it. And when you think about how, yes, there are two systems of justice. But every court proceeding that I go to, I realized just how much of a leg up people with money have. And not only people with money, but people with power and influence, that can get loans for lawyers that can tell lawyers, I'll pay you back in two years. Like a lot of criminal defendants just can't do that. They don't have that sway. I think that that was my biggest problem if there's got to be money somewhere and someone is paying Dick and Jim, and we're just accepting that. And speaking of Jim had a very weird thing that he said, and gosh, I wish I had direct quotes because he talked about at the very beginning, how the New York Times had an article in the last week about a crypto currency guy, Sam Pinkman, the crypto guy. And I thought Jim was phrasing it in a way that he was saying that all high profile defendants are getting these super stacked horrible sentences, but the article that I could find that he was talking about, it wasn't necessarily saying that it was just a compilation of different white collar criminals who also happened to be in the news and what they got sentenced and I was struggling to follow what Jim was trying to say

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there because he was like, like that lady Elizabeth Holmes, you know, with the blood.

Liz Farrell 15:13

You know that he likes to quote a major newspaper in his dealings.

Mandy Matney 15:19

As you can tell he's very much well read. Yeah. But still, yeah, he loves his newspapers.

Liz Farrell 15:26

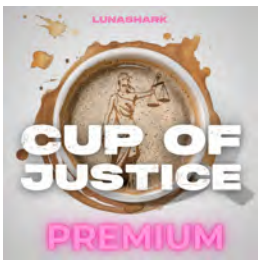
I'm sorry, sitting get Kathleen Parker to write a column about how high profile white collar criminals are getting these supposedly, you know, abnormal sentencing, because then he could have cited that in the courtroom. That would have been nice and neat and tidy for him.

Mandy Matney 15:42

Oh, yeah. Right. And I bet that that's coming this week, how unfair Alex's sentences and how the courts just came down on him because he was high profile.

Liz Farrell 15:53

No. Can we talk about that, though, because didn't Judge Gergel say that this he's hoping that the 40 years also serves as like it's well merited. He's saying that this is well deserved, you earned this, but also I want it to serve as a deterrent to other people like you.



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Mandy Matney 16:09

And he said, specifically attorneys I did like that. He said, a law license should be licensed to do good, not evil. You took advantage of these people and their most vulnerable moments, they put all of your trust in you and you destroyed that. He was very harsh with his words.

Liz Farrell 16:31

And said you'd keep continuing to commit these crimes if you were let out of prison. Now I have no doubt that you, isn't that what he said? Like if you leave here, I know that that's what you'll keep doing.

Mandy Matney 16:42

And I believe Emily said we believe that He's incapable of living in a law abiding society.

Liz Farrell 16:51

Which was...props to her. That's awesome. Good. Yeah.

Mandy Matney 16:55

Again, like if I'm, if my brain was clouded with their giving all this money to PMPED and Palmetto State Bank, and blah, blah, blah, the things that they were saying were great and important. She also said, I don't believe that we don't believe that. The \$6 million went to a drug problem. We don't believe that he was being truthful about where the money was, etc, etc, things that needed to be said. However, the words are very harsh and necessary. However, again, it's just this gut feeling of they've given up and that Palmetto State Bank and PMPED. are essentially protected because they're victims.



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Liz Farrell 17:36

Yeah, and we can get more into that into sunlight because this idea of them being victims is important. We talked a lot about it in the past, but it's just in some ways the prosecutors hands were tied but otherwise they certainly were not one question I had for you Mandy and somebody pointed this out to me and I'd never really didn't really resonate with me but it might resonate with you. Do you know that you might have seen Alex for the last time today in public?

Mandy Matney 18:01

Yeah, I don't believe that.

Liz Farrell 18:08

I have a feeling I mean, I think that he will do something that will necessitate some more hearings and some more but that was sort of the idea that this this was his last big shot at getting that plan B into a you know, still still keeping that on the table. So it's it is possible it's gonna be assuming he just shuts up.

Mandy Matney 18:29

And I would love that but I don't think it's going to happen. I think we're going to move to Plan C and then plan D and I think we're going to be in this never ending Alex Murdaugh hell, but we are in so again, I hope I'm wrong.

Liz Farrell 18:42

I don't think you are though.



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Mandy Matney 18:46

It's just a gut feeling. And yeah, I would love it if that was the last time I ever saw him. But it's I don't think it's looking like that. But we will unpack that and a lot more in this week's episode of true sunlight. And on that note, we will be right back with Brandi Churchwell. Good morning, cops up everybody. We're here with Brandi church. Well, hi, Brandi.

Brandi Churchwell 19:19

Good morning. Cups up.

Liz Farrell 19:21

Good morning. Cups up.

Mandy Matney 19:22

How are you today?

Brandi Churchwell 19:23

I'm good. How are you?

Mandy Matney 19:24

Doing good. We are in New York. And so if there's weird noises around, that's what's going on. There's like a million cops outside the hotel. There was some sort of presidential thing going on. And I had no idea how many President how many like vehicles are involved in protecting the president. Oh, wow. But it's been our I guess, Liz, you're used to this and like DC and stuff, but like, this is crazy.



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Liz Farrell 19:51

Yeah, you would see it a lot. It's kind of exciting, though. I don't know. I like I like to see like there's all these dump trucks like these big heavy trucks that are guarding that Do hotels near us were two of them seem to be staying? And it's like so that, you know, somebody can't run into the building or like, whatever, which is wild. And it's just I like to see that stuff. It's like a Tom Clancy novel. Yeah, it is.

Mandy Matney 20:12

And they really think through, they're like, in case somebody drives into the building, we're gonna put dump trucks here. And so many streets are shut down. It's wild. And we saw Obama yesterday, we were just walking down the street. And he was obviously a very protected vehicle. But it was just cool to see.

Liz Farrell 20:35

So yeah, just randomly. We were just walking and happen to he just happened to drive by in the motorcade.

Mandy Matney 20:41

Yeah, it's pretty cool. Brandi, you're busy in the Karen Read case? How's that going?

Brandi Churchwell 20:48

It's going. It's a crazy one. And it's been very busy. We're getting ready to start trial, you know, in a couple of weeks. So all those last minute, you know, all the last minute motions and everything going and it's been such a wild ride. So yeah, it's been busy.



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Mandy Matney 21:05

And I basically know nothing about this case. I have stayed far away from it purposely because of the things that I've seen you tweet on it. And the things I've seen other people tweet on it. And I'm like, I'm still recovering from all the Murdaugh's madness. I could not.

Liz Farrell 21:21

I am not in the mood to get with somebody named Turtle Boy. So that like after the two and a half years that we've had, like, that works, Turtle Boy, I was like, I think I'm, I don't know, that I can handle.

Mandy Matney 21:34

I'm out. Yeah, I'm not engaging in that way.

Brandi Churchwell 21:39

It's been so crazy, which is kind of why I wanted to start covering it. Because, you know, I saw my very first introduction to it, I saw Wendy Murphy and Turtle Boy on a podcast, just screaming at each other. And it's where they had to be muted. And I was like, this is like this is it was very Murdaughesque, like, you know, the passion behind the fighting. So it kind of made me curious. And so I started digging into it a little bit. And I noticed pretty quickly that there are two very distinct sides. And any of the reporting that you get is going to be either reporting from the Commonwealth perspective, or from the defense perspective, and there was nothing that I could find that was really in the middle. So which is kind of why I wanted to start looking at it, but it's there. You know, John O'Keefe, was a Boston police officer for, like, 16 years. And in January of 2022, he was left to die in the cold in the yard of another Boston police officer who he knew but wasn't really close with. But he



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knew some of the other family members that were in the house. And the Commonwealth says that Karen Read who was his girlfriend at the time, left, they all been out drinking bar hopping. And the Commonwealth says that she was you know, in a fit of rage and hit him with her car, and then left him to die. The defense has a third party culpability defense, where they're saying that it was it was not her it was the people who are in the house. And they're, you know, this family is covering for each other. So it's, it's very, there's a lot of contention on both sides, because it's two very different stories. And the problem is, there's so many problems with both theories that it's kind of hard to know what to believe.

Mandy Matney 23:32

Yeah that seems insane. And super, I think in Murdaugh, it was pretty. I mean, we had just been covering it for so long. So like we knew all the complications and everything. And I mean, is this Boston PD? Yes, this is outside of Boston.

Brandi Churchwell 23:53

The house itself is right outside of Boston. So it's in Canton and one of the Albert brothers is Canton police officer. One of the ones that was in the house is an ATF agent who also has offices in the Canton police office. So the ties that the Albert's and McCabe's have to the community because Canton is a pretty small area. And it's it's one of those communities where like a lot of people, there's a lot of ties to each other and people know each other, but the thing about the outdoors is that there's, you know, so many of them are involved with, you know, different branches of the law enforcement and they're, you know, they have one of the brothers is selectmen. And so they have one of the



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family members is an investigator or she was an investigator for the attorney general's office. So there's all these different connections that they have. So that's one of the things that has kind of fueled some of the conspiracy aspect of it like well, cuz you hear some of the stuff that said, Well, there's no way that this many people can be involved in a conspiracy. But then when you look at it like well, they are all family members and they have so many connections, you know, some people are you believe that that kind of gives it more weight than what they would normally have. So, but it's it's, it's so complicated because there's so many people.

Mandy Matney 25:07

That sounds crazy.

Liz Farrell 25:09

When you say Albert's and McCabe's, who are they? Exactly? The Albert's is where the house where the party was or the house were to happen.

Brandi Churchwell 25:16

Yeah. So the house where it happened belongs to Brian Albert. He's the one who is with him and his wife, Nicole. Brian Albert has brothers who are also so Brian Albert is I think he I believe he's retired now. But he was actually a Boston police officer. And he, one of his brothers is a selectman, one of the brothers is and some of them were there and some of them weren't. But oh, and also his wife, the other the homeowner, her sister, is Jen McCabe. So Jen McCabe is one of the names that we hear a lot in this because she was with Karen, when they went to search for John The next morning, and they found his body. She

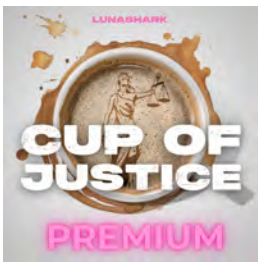


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also has come up a lot because everybody talks about the Google search, the Google search that happened at 2:27am. It came from her data on her phone where it was how long to die in the cold. And it was shown at 2:27am, which of course is hours before they found the body. So that's part of what goes more towards the defense's theory about you know, this is something that they were in on and they knew. So we hear her name a lot to search that Jen McCabe, she was. So she searched. She was there that night. And so a lot of you know, that, of course, was going to obviously bring up a lot of questions. Why would you be Googling that at 2:27am? I think one of the biggest things about this, and I've said from the beginning, I don't know what happened, none of us do because we weren't there. So I've tried to analyze all of the information and poke holes in both sides and see kind of what works the most. But I think that one of the biggest problems with this entire case is that there are so many issues with the investigation. And there's so many conflicting statements, and none of that. There's a lot of things that don't make sense. Like none of the, you know, interviews were recorded. A lot of the interviews, there's they haven't provided any notes or anything that were taken on them. And some of them they interviewed the witness. And then, you know, three weeks later, they would write a report like, well, this is what they said, and turn it in, but then the stories keep changing on the right. So that, obviously is the first thing that kind of, you know, triggers that distrust, like, if there's so many issues, you know, what could be behind it?

Mandy Matney 27:44

Right and that only works for the defendant. Like whenever there's a bad investigation, it usually works in the defendants favor. And I mean, we've seen that over and over. And it is really frustrating when you like,



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get into the nitty gritty of these true crime cases. And, oh, I'm just rarely impressed by the police work that I see. And I don't know if it's just the cases that I examine are the ones that are the most the most messed up. But it's just the initial, like 48 hour investigation, like Stephen's case, the Murdaugh murders case, even, they just make a lot of mistakes. And it's really and again, it's hard. It's also hard because I've never been a police officer investigating a case. So I understand that, like Things are hectic in Canton, it is pretty small, correct?

Brandi Churchwell 28:37

Yeah, a lot of the people have known each other for, you know, decades, like a lot of them went to high school together, and they have, you know, long standing ties. And I've actually compared their family to, like, kind of the morose situation where, you know, they are small town where, you know, they have a lot of connections, and they've known people for a long time. And so, it's, and I'm not saying that the conspiracy is, you know, one way or the other I, but as far as giving weight to that theory, there is potential for it to be possible because of their, you know, their deep ties to higher ups in the area. So, that's one of the things that's fueled it.

Liz Farrell 29:20

It's so weird to hear that, because I'm from Norfolk County, that's my home county. I'm from Brookline, Massachusetts, which is just outside Boston. So you sort of, I don't know if you know anything about Brookline, but it's not very, in like there, there are townies, that's when we call them people who had, you know, generational ties to Brookline, and obviously, I can see where that kind of corruption could come into play because they known each other since the beginning of time,



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but it's just hard for me because I think I always viewed like South Carolina in particular the Lowcountry and Hampton County and the 14th circuit as a particular strain of, you know, familiar corruption or historical corruption that didn't exist in a more diverse area, like Massachusetts, or a more educated area, you know, with a higher socioeconomic status. But I forget that I'm always surprised and embarrassed by my surprise, like how surprised I am at just how corrupt Boston police can be, in certain cases, and how, you know, just watching some documentaries recently, I just, I don't know, I just get shocked. So it's hard to hear. It's like, you know, Cantonese, I've never actually been to Canton, but to hear it in the context that we're talking about, like the Murdaugh's in the same sentence. It's so it's just, it's a little unsettling. I just, I don't know that I, my mind can't like make those two things connect. I want my hometown, my home area to be the one that's perfect. So yeah, I think that's what's happening here. We don't do that there. We did it here.

Mandy Matney 30:57

You just don't want it to be true.

Brandi Churchwell 30:59

I think that there's, you know, the State Police took over the case, because the camp police, you know, with the brother of the homeowner, being a Canton officer, they were kind of conflicted out, plus, it's a homicide. So, you know, or it was ruled a homicide. So they're, you know, it's going to the state police. But that's another thing that has caused a huge stir, because the, you know, Massachusetts State Police is there's, you know, there was a scandal? Oh, gosh, maybe I think it was, I can't remember, I think it was brought out in like 2018 ish, where



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there were like 50 state troopers that were implicated in some kind of fraud or corruption. And now the lead investigator, Trooper proctor is, you know, there's an internal affairs investigation, you know, toward him in relation to the Karen Read case. So it's, it's kind of like, everywhere you turn, there's all these questions. And I, I wonder if there hadn't been bad police work? And if there hadn't been, you know, steps that were skipped? Or you know, whether or not it was intentional or not, if there had been a cleaner investigation with everything done by the book and how it should be done. What some of the things that are being questioned even, would it have gotten to that point where they're even being questioned? Or are we now questioning everything? Because of the level of bad police work and kind of behind the scenes stuff? That's that hasn't. That hasn't been done by the book.

Mandy Matney 32:34

So it was ruled a homicide?

Liz Farrell 32:36

Yeah. Can you talk a little bit about the injuries? And why they determine that it was a homicide? Because I didn't, I don't really know that.

Brandi Churchwell 32:42

Yeah, so this is a big point of debate. So the injuries, there are some autopsy photos that have circulated, but the injuries are from the pictures just from what you can see because there's internal, you know, damage and stuff like that. But just from what you can see, part of what has fueled some of the debate about whether or not this is from a car is because there are on one of his arms, it looks like more like kind of like



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defensive wounds. It's like scratches and abrasions, but there are a lot of them are pretty deep. And based on the pictures now look, I'm not like I'm gonna, I'm sure I'm gonna get mail. Like you don't know that they were deep. You didn't measure them. But I'm saying from the pictures, you know, from what it looks like it they look, you know, it's not just like a little scratch.

Liz Farrell 33:30

Are you talking about like at the scene, so what was initially like what they saw when they found his body, like, what, that's what I want to know first, like what that looked like, and then go into, like what they later found.

Brandi Churchwell 33:42

So when they arrived on the scene, they said that he had he was in their yard. But it was not like, you know, by the front door of the yard, it was closer to the way that their yard is set up. Like if you're looking at the house, they've got a pretty wide yard. And he was kind of off to if you're looking at the house off to the left side. And on that side. There's like a little patch of trees in between their house and the neighbor's house and there's like a flagpole and a fire hydrant and he was in that area. Depending on the report, some of them say it was he was about eight feet from the road, some of them say about 12 feet. So there's different different kinds of variations when they went back to try to figure out exactly where he was they use the dash cam to try to figure out exactly where he was and map all that out. But he was somewhere from what they say between eight to 12 feet back. He had snow on top of him where he had been out in the snow because this time it was one of the biggest blizzards in Boston history that was coming in. It was starting



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around that time or it had been snowing before but it was starting to get heavier around that time. He had abrasions and scratches all on his arm. There was damage done to his head as well, which is part of what they said caused the like his eyes, you know ended up bruised. And so the defense kind of has said that it looks more like a fight. There was some bruising on his hands and stuff to the the defense's theory that they presented was they said that it looked more like dog scratch and puncture wounds. And there was a German shepherd that the Albert's had named Chloe, that has been something that you will hear a lot about in this as well, because Chloe was their dog for I think, like seven or eight years. And then it wasn't long after this, that all of a sudden they got rid of Chloe. So part of what they are alleging is that there was a fight that happened and the dog saw the fight going on and jumped in to help, you know, save or protect the owner. So that's part of it. He also had vomited vape, there was one shoe that they didn't find initially, they found it later after, after the blizzard came through and all that they went back that night and searched again. And then they found the taillight pieces. So there's medical examiner who there's two different medical, obviously, defense and prosecution will always have their own people, you know, to give their opinions. So of course, as in any case, the prosecutor, their medical expert that they have says that some of it's undetermined, but they said that, you know, it is consistent with the car. And then the defense had a separate one who of course, it supports more of their theory. So it's going to be interesting to hear the details of it.

Mandy Matney 36:32

So how does the state alleged that he was killed?



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Brandi Churchwell 36:36

The state says that she got mad at him in a fit of anger and put it in reverse, put her car reversed and hit him knocking him back. And he hit his head, which is that he's got a bad head wound in the back. And that's how he got that. And then she left him to die. Now there was a crash Reconstructionist that they had, who I picked apart in one of my podcast episodes, because it goes against even their own witnesses the way that this one happened. And I think on the last papers, they even left it out because it well, I won't say why. But anyway, it was left on the last papers. But they're reconstruction said, you know, based on some of the car data and other factors, but we don't know what the other factors are, the way that they said it happened and the time that it happened. And all of that is is just not possible based on literally every other piece of evidence that we have. So I'm sure that they're going to maybe adjust that a little bit before they you know, before trial. But they're saying that she could Yeah, they're saying that she backed up into him and then took off originally it was that she hit him when she was doing a three point turn and then left. But see there's there's witnesses in the House who like Jen McCabe and most of her statements, she said that she? Well, in again, there's so many different courts with different conflicting things. But in most of her she's, she'll say that, you know, she, like she saw her and drive away. So if she saw Karen drive away and didn't see her hitting him when she drove away, then of course that brings that question. There was one statement though, that was conflicting that she gave that said or According to the reports that she texted John and then she looked out and you know, again, in in the car was gone. So which which version it is, or which one's going to come out at trial? We're not sure.



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Mandy Matney 38:23

But, so her story has changed.

Liz Farrell 38:24

Yeah, so I'm confused. Uh, what was his actual cause of death?

Brandi Churchwell 38:28

Hypothermia. And let me pull up the exact so as injuries were survivable from what they said, If Yeah, when they got there, they it was blunt impact. Don't let me pull up exactly what it is. Because if if you say one thing with the wrong word on this, yeah, blunt, blunt impact to the head, and then in the hypothermia. So if something had happened to him, and he had, you know, been able to make it to the hospital, you know, maybe it could have been different. When they got there. They did try to do CPR, they ended up taking him to the hospital, but he was pronounced dead at the hospital that morning.

Liz Farrell 39:02

So not to be graphic. But was there blood at the scene? It was like visually, what were you seeing just a man in the snow or...

Brandi Churchwell 39:10

There were apparently like six droplets of droplets of blood. They preserved those with red solo cups to try to, I guess, examine. But that's another one of the things that, you know, there's been a lot of debate over as if this had happened, wouldn't there be? Would there be more blood or would there not? His phone data is also part of kind of what goes into the theory because they based the time of his of the impact that they're alleging from the car on the time that his phone stopped



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recording different location points, but there are steps recorded and there's an answered call showing on his call records after that time. And during that time, that they're saying that 1225 There were still witnesses that were part Literally right behind them at the same house because somebody had come to pick up his sister, but she ended up staying. So.

Liz Farrell 40:05

So what was his relationship? Like with Karen?

Brandi Churchwell 40:09

It depends on who you ask. They had a from everything we said it's one of those are everything we've heard, it sounds like one of those relationships where, you know, good times, bad times, there had been some fighting before they had both accused each other of, you know, infidelity. We do know, we've heard from the Commonwealth documents that there was another person who was in the house, his name is Brian Higgins. He's an ATF agent. And they said that there are like 57 pages of texts that are romantic in nature between him and Karen, it was going on at this time. He also in according to those documents, he gave a statement that said that he had gone over to John O'Keeffe's house to watch a football game just a couple of weeks before John's death. And he said that Karen walked him out of the house when he was leaving. And he said that she surprised him and like leaned up and kissed him. So that has all come out during this. So there's also statements from John's niece and nephew who John's sister and her husband both both passed away. And so he was taking care of his niece and nephew and his so they obviously lived in the home with him. And they in their statement said that there had been some fighting in the home on the security cameras or the footage from that



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night, there's been clips of that, that were released. And they looked like they were, you know, hugging and happy at one point. But there's also voicemails that she left him when she left that are you know, like, I hate you, you know, drunk and yelling at him. So it? It seems kind of like an up and down type relationship.

Mandy Matney 41:49

How long were they together?

Brandi Churchwell 41:50

They were oh, gosh, I? I don't remember exactly. I think that it was they reconnected again. kind of started dating again sometime around COVID. But I don't remember the exact date. But I mean, they'd been...

Mandy Matney 42:03

Okay so like, a couple years. Got it? Yeah.

Liz Farrell 42:06

So as an Irish Catholic, the googling of "How long can you leave a man in the cold" resonates with me a little. Because at the end of a party where people are drunk, and you've had it with your significant other, or a guest at the party who drank too much, and as being whatever, and this is, I'm just gonna say this to people. I don't know anything about the Karen Read case. Like we're literally just learning right now. So I'm not making a judgment on John O'Keefe. Or anyone at the party. I'm just saying when you said that day, Google that my first thought wasn't anyone is trying to murder him so much as they were trying to teach him a lesson of you know, we're like, We're sick of this, like, how long can we leave them out there before he gets hurt? Basically. So is it possible



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that they left him out there to cool off? You know, let's say there was a fight because again, as an Irish Catholic, I will tell you, there are a lot of fights these parties I hate to like play into the stereotype. But there's sometimes are, there's sometimes some pushing around that happens. So I just I don't know if that that just struck me as a potential, let's let them stay out there or he deserves a hit. And then we'll go get them and then, you know, just forgot or something.

Mandy Matney 43:21

Maybe a drunken thought of like, Yeah, let's teach them a lesson and put them in, leave them out in the cold. And then everyone passed out and forgot about it. But I don't know. I think I've never googled that before. Yeah, to be honest. And that is a it's just a weird thing to Google at two o'clock in the morning when somebody freezes to death at night. It's a very that's, that's a wild thing. Yeah. But yeah, it sounds like this case is going to be super interesting. And I'm excited to hear more about it. We're gonna take a quick commercial break, and then we'll be right back. Brandi, I want to talk about how we know you. So what was your life like around the time of the Murdaugh trial and how did you get interested in it?

Brandi Churchwell 44:22

It was a lot less busy, then my life was a lot less busy at that time than it is now. I actually started I got into it because I listened to Murat murderers podcast. That's how I first heard about it. And I was on medical leave. I went through I had cancer. I went through a bunch of I've gone through a lot of health issues in the last few years. So I was on medical leave. I have a lot of damage where it's prevented me from being able to go back to office work or you know, do anything outside



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so I would spend my time I needed somewhere to direct my creative energy and my focus and I started following. I've always been in true crime but I started following it. And when the trial started, everybody, all of the timestamps and all of the data stuff, everything kept coming out. And I kept hearing people say he didn't have time, there's no way he had time. And so needing a place to direct all of my energy, I made a chart. And I went through and listened to every single data timestamp that they gave in the trial, and then kind of mapped it out and made my theories kind of around that to see if he had time and to kind of prove out could have happened and somebody in I was in a Facebook discussion group, somebody asked me to tweet it, and I never tweeted. So I did. And then the rest is kind of, I got thrown into all the craziness.

Liz Farrell 45:40

But it was brilliant. It was excellent work.

Mandy Matney 45:42

It was in as charged for super, super helpful.

Liz Farrell 45:46

You were like an angel from heaven at the time for us, because but you went into the trial, we had done so many things like that, but we didn't have that information until the trial. So it's like we had spent the past two years creating spreadsheets and collecting all this data that we had. And by the time of the trial, the trial, it's like rapid pace. We're getting all this new information day. Yeah, we're doing we're working during the trial. So it's not like you know, off time, you're like, Okay, now I can put all this together. So it was just every question that we were having just naturally had a nice place to like, look, and we can reference it. So it was



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just wonderful. I've just never seen anyone do anything like that. Who isn't one of us like journalists who isn't Mandy, me honestly, like, I really haven't. Even the investigators. I don't think that their timeline was as useful honestly, it was a different type of use. And they enter yours as evidence.

Brandi Churchwell 46:45

I found a mistake. And I found some stuff from SLED. So I talked to, it was it was around the time where the steps that they were looking at the step data and the time data from so when I put everything all together in one I found some some different things. And so I ended up getting in touch with Mandy and she was great, because she was like, Oh, this is so big. And of course, you know, she has ties to the to the AGs. Office. And so she I sent her everything I had and she sent it to them. And so it ended up getting entered into evidence. And so which is funny, because I saw it happen to us when they came back from lunch one day, and I saw it happening and I screen recorded and I sent them into my mom was like mama look like it's you know, it was it was very surreal. It is kind of crazy.

Mandy Matney 47:33

And that's great. I mean, I think in the trial, we were also just being just sent. So like everybody had some sort of an expert opinion on blah, blah, blah. And it was really hard to sort through because every day, you know, dozens of people with Texas, all sorts of stuff. And but I remember yours, we were like actually, this is really helpful. Actually, this is not like a lot and a lot of people just aren't thorough, including frickin investigators. And like me that that has been one thing that Liz and I have always connected on is just thoroughness. And if, if one of us gives



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each other information, it's checked out and triple checked, and it's not going to be sloppy, in that case of the timeline to was just so important. And I don't think people just really didn't want to believe that he did it and tell the timeline started coming out. And until that last sled agent walked everyone through, like, here's where he was here at this time, blah, blah, blah. I know that the jurors, I think the jury said that they were convinced before that. But as far as the public, I just remember that that was a huge shift. It seemed like with public perception. And all of a sudden, everybody it was hard to deny at that point. And yeah, I and I always think about to like, what if they didn't get the GPS data from the car?

Liz Farrell 49:08

Yes. I was just thinking about Mandy and how the guy at GM was a GM or GMC. What was the brand of the car? I can't even remember, was this super bad? Yeah, but one of those OnStar. So the guy at OnStar, who suddenly was able to find the GPS data that they had subpoenaed four years ago, or a year ago, whatever it was, he should get together with you, Brandi, and you guys should do an interview of each other. Because when you think about the trial, when you look at the saving points of where anything that you know, Alex might have been gaining headway on and I don't think there was a lot but it's really, ultimately at the end of the day, those two pieces of information in addition to the Kendall video and that that really solidified his guilt. Yeah, so that would be cool to see the two of you guys talk. Yeah.

Mandy Matney 49:59

Absolutely.



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Brandi Churchwell 50:01

It was crazy when that stuff came out, even like, the time that he was cranking the car. And I was told it's not called cranking anymore, it's starting the car, okay, the time he was starting the car, you know it, shifting it into Drive and stuff like that the things that were so specific, was able to really put like narrow different things down, and especially when he went to to his mom's house, because that one time when he stopped and put it in park in the driveway, and it's crazy how many things he didn't remember, but he remembered that, you know, oh, I remember that I dropped my phone, you know, between the seats. And so that came out is really super suspicious, because there were so many big things that he didn't remember. But he happened to remember that, oh, I can explain why it was in park so that that data was crucial for everything to come together.

Mandy Matney 50:51

Right. And I just can't believe that lake for so long. They said they couldn't get it. And then during the Murdaugh trial, like, right before they presented it, pretty much they were like, oh, yeah, we can get it. And it seems like there should be a more clear cut system with these, especially newer cars, and to be able to extract data from them. And they they did take that car like right after the murders. So it's, yeah, that was just bizarre. And I'm just glad that that was one of those things where like, until the very end, we had no idea what the outcome was going to be. And it could have gone in any direction. But after that you decided to do a YouTube channel. How was that gone? And why did you decide to do that?



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Brandi Churchwell 51:43

Well, it's funny, because I was not a big YouTuber, I would watch trials and set that I was I would never really get involved in the chat and all that normally, I was, you know, like, busy taking notes and stuff. I was watching when after the murder thing. People kept asking me like, well, you know, what, what other trials are you going to do? What are you going to make charts for? So I started making, I was like, whatever, well, you know, I don't have anything else to do. So I made a channel and I started just doing like recaps of, you know, different trials and would put out like videos just kind of recapping the information in the data and, and it went pretty well. And then when the Lori vallow trial started, there was no video for it. So there weren't a lot of people who were it was only the audio that was released. And there weren't a lot of people that wanted to you know, watch it together stream it with with no video. So that was interesting. Yeah. So that's, that's kind of how I got into the streaming part, doing it more live instead of just the recap videos going through and you know, breaking it down as with the whole day, instead of just me talking about it, that it's gone great. I mean, I met about a year, almost a year, now that I've been doing it and it's it's grown faster than I could have imagined it's been. It's opened up a lot of exciting doors. So it's, it's, it's a lot of work. But I love it, it's a lot of fun.

Mandy Matney 53:02

And what's the we've talked about this a little bit, but what's the worst part about being in the true crime space and being a YouTuber and and a woman in as a YouTuber?



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Brandi Churchwell 53:20

The worst part is there are so many people who believe that it is their duty to tell you what their negative opinions are about every single part of who you are and your life and your opinions. And, you know, I expected people to have there's always going to be disagreements and healthy debates as far as opinions or interpretation of information or data or you know, anything like that. But it's this it's the personal the people who feel entitled to talk about you personally. That part has been in the personal attack that type stuff that's been the the weirdest and most kind of frustrating part. And I think as far as being a woman, it's it's crazy how many comments I've gotten, where it's like, okay, well, if you would wear makeup, you might get you know, more viewers or if you know if you didn't have your hair in a ponytail all the time, maybe people I'm like, This is not like a makeup tutorial. This is true crime stuff, you know, so, right.

Mandy Matney 54:23

And did anybody ask like I freaked out on somebody the other day because somebody sent me an answer with a long Instagram message of unsolicited opinion. And I'm tired of getting the... I'm tired. I don't want a long frickin several paragraphs from some person who does not do what I do and has no idea what my life is like to tell me their opinions about my work and my life. I didn't ask for that. That's a rude thing to do. Like, how about you give me unsolicited cheer? I will take unsolicited compliments, give me those all day, but I just don't want to. I don't know why people think that they're helping when they're doing that. And that's like, what?



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Liz Farrell 55:10

I don't think they do Mandy, I think that it is mean, stunning to people who hold themselves back in their own lives, that women would do something without maybe trying to be that traditional version of perfect, right? Like, you know, get your hair done every day and your makeup put on and your outfits like, you know, wear one outfit once and throw it out. Because like, I think we're so conditioned to believe that only glossy women deserve to be out in the forefront of anything that involves like a visual, right? Yeah, Hollywood, what have you on TV, even TV news. And God help those women because they have to put up with so much. But I think it goes always back to the people holding themselves back in their own lives and wanting to do what you're doing or maybe not even wanting to do what you're doing like but to have that attention or that sort of have somebody say the compliments that people say about us to them, maybe this is all subconscious stuff, I think is happening. And I think that they point this stuff out as a way to like say, You're not like you're doing it wrong, and you're doing it wrong. Because if I were to do it, it would be done this way. And I would do it so much. I there's just something so I think everything always goes back to how the person views themselves when they're sharing how they view others. Right? It's it's just that's all it is, is yes, absolutely. Because yeah, there's so many more women and more people who are just deciding to do the thing that that they have a passion for, like Brandi. And I think that when people see that and realize that the only thing holding themselves back and doing what their passion is, or maybe they don't even have a passion, then they start to get resentful of the people who are actually doing the thing, right.



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Mandy Matney 56:54

And they like they want it's like they want to be the gatekeepers that they're afraid of like they want because like when I was debating whether or not to do a podcast, you know, the the fears that are in my mind, or is everybody gonna say? Are people going to say that I'm stupid or think that people are going to say that I'm ridiculous? Are people going to say that they make voice? Or that I'm fat bla bla bla, though those are, you know, in my internal monologue, as we talked about last week? Those are the things that are like, Should I do this or not? And then the people that actually go to their computers at night and do the thing that's like, makes is what makes you afraid of is what is holding a lot of people back. I hope that they don't realize it. Like I hope that their intentions are better. But I think you're right, Liz, I think it's just there. It's all about them and them being unhappy. And it's also just overwhelming. Sometimes the amount of people that are unhappy with their lives and have like the audacity, as we say a lot on our shows to take time out of their days to write a long email and long Instagram message about this is what I don't like about you. And it's just odd. And we need less of those people in the world.

Brandi Churchwell 58:17

Well, you know, part of the reason that I called the podcast 13 Juror is because it's kind of when I first started, when all of a sudden all my stuff started getting spread on, you know, Twitter and social media and all this stuff. Like I went from nobody knowing who I was to all of a sudden people were seeing my charts. So there were so many law tubers, who, and I'm not saying all of them, some of them are fantastic. I know Emily D Baker has been you know, love her. She's fantastic. So she's awesome. I'm not saying that all of them. But there are a few who everything that



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I put together to in that chart to and kind of outlined it, I had my columns were like, this is the data. This is what we know happened. And then on this, I was like, Okay, this is just my personal theory. This is what could have been going on during this time. And it was very clearly labeled, just me speculating, you know, like, based on the data and, but everything that I put together where it showed that there was in fact time for this to happen, and he could have done it by himself. That went directly against some of what the law tubers had been saying on their shows. So the first instinct was to attack me like you don't have credentials, and you don't know what you're talking about. And it's lawyers who, you know, do this. And I was like, it's it's not the the lawyers aren't the one who decide the guilty or not guilty verdict. It's the jurors. So like it I feel like everybody credentials or not should be able to have, you know, discussions about what they think because it's not the attorneys who are the ones that are in there deliberating it's it's the jurors so right.

Mandy Matney 59:52

It's enough. It's enough common sense that wins a lot of the time. It's not like people debating like whatever case law of 1982 Blah, blah, blah, like, that doesn't matter also, yeah, I got real sick of law tubers. And again, Emily knows this. I've talked to her about it. She is like I hate them to talk. When Emily was like one of the first ones to do it and then all of these like bro tubers caught on with her idea, and they hate her because her she's got a bigger audience than most of them combined. And, but I hated during the Murdaugh trial, like random in there, a lot of them are unsuccessful lawyers to that started not Emily, Emily's in a different category. But like, because their law business was not that successful. YouTube was their next thing. And they care more about



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having a giant audience on YouTube, but then they do about actually knowing the law and etc, etc. But there was this one guy, I want to say he's from Kentucky or something, and he knew Kentucky law, but Kentucky law is not South Carolina law. And it's like every bit of expertise that he offered was completely worthless, because it was the law in a different state. And it's like, well, I'm smart enough to know that the law in South Carolina don't have a law degree. But the South Carolina a lot of times is different from law in Kentucky. And you keep applying Kentucky law to those things. He said at one point, there was something that Newman did that was like, absurd and horrible. And a lot of the law tubers don't want to do attack Newman, and it's like, no, we he's actually going within South Carolina law. Everything that he's doing is within South Carolina law. I don't know what y'all do and other states, but I mean, in their common. But I also think that like you said, and we got the same thing. Are they credentialed with Liz and I and like, are they just bloggers? Who are these girls bigoted? Because we were on a different side, we were on like he's 100% Guilty, if he's not convicted than some source and something went very wrong. And meanwhile, like all the other talking heads on TV, were like, it's absolutely going to be a hung jury, or he's either guilty or hung jury. And that's that. And those girls are just silly. And it was nice to be right. Yeah.

Liz Farrell 1:02:22

Do you remember the guy that emailed me to tell me we were mispronouncing Alex's name? He was like, You don't know anything about this case? And blah, blah, blah. And I was like, I'm pronouncing it the way it was told to me, from people who know what you're talking about. Like, yeah, but you know, what I was thinking when, when we



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were talking about the law tubers. I would love. I don't know anything about chat GPT or like, how to use AI really, but I would love to figure out how to use it to create transcripts of all the law tubers, who opine during the Murdaugh case, in particular, create transcripts of that, and then have ai go back and say what ended up being true? And, like, have their opinions like, what how much of their opinions ended up playing out? Because I think that's the thing that like, I feel like in the like, loudness of all of these trials, not just Murdaugh's you have so much like 99% of it is garbage. It's just people out in the wind. And as we continue to investigate the Stephen Smith case, there was a day when we could Google or or use Stephen Smith as a search term to maybe look at like different chat, like different chats that were online to see if maybe people were talking about him. Or if people that we knew had some information about the case what they were doing and deceiving his name ever appear in any you know, things like that. We can't do that anymore, because the internet is so flooded with theories and opinions are ones to hurtful ones too. Yeah. And but you can't get any information anymore like in a traditional us investigating a case, because it's all in and they presented as fat. That's the other thing that drives me nuts. Yeah. Is how many times do you have to deal with people who say that they know something, they want to share it with you, they want you to call them? And it turns out, it's just a theory. And when you don't know what's the theory until you start asking them well, did you know the person who did like no, they don't know they don't this is all just it could have happened. It's so monumental.

Mandy Matney 1:04:31

Like you were saying, Brandi and I also really liked that your chart is the clear column that said theories, speculation, whatever. And then this is



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the facts. The amount of people in society who could not tell one column from another cannot be like, is the time of fact who I think that's your opinion. And it's like you that, oh, there is speculation in their in their theories and God same when you're talking when you're saying LIS about how, especially in the early days, I don't do it near as often anymore and I hate this because I would just get so disappointed and people constantly who would say, Mandy, I have information on the Murdaugh case call me. And it would just be a load of crap like a load of I was thinking maybe If this Man Man Man Man, man, man, man, man, right and it's like so you don't have any firsthand, you don't understand the difference between what a theory is and having an actual tip, which is information that you have firsthand knowledge to and you don't, and you are like a full grown adult and you've gone through life. And you're probably doing fine. But you you don't know the difference between those two things. It's scary. And it's very frustrating.

Brandi Churchwell 1:05:57

That's been really big in the Karen Read thing too, because, you know, and one of the things that's hard about this case is that the defense has put on this third party culpability defense. So the defense is claiming that it's the witnesses. So the people who have adopted that theory as being the one that they believe makes the most sense, and the one they're going for, they are presenting it as fact. And that's so dangerous, because and I keep, you know, trying to tell people like it, whatever side you're on, you're convinced that the other side is wrong. But what if you're wrong? Like, you know, if you're if you're pushing this as, as fact, like, you know, that this happened? Okay, data? Yes, we know that there are we know that they have lied about things, you know, their statements have changed. We know that there's, we can we can look at



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those situations, and those are fact, but we don't know anything other than those. So to present these, as fact is so dangerous, because, let's say if, if Karen did hit him, and they have a way to explain all of the injuries and all of the inconsistencies and all that everything else, if that's what happened, and everybody has, you know, not everybody, but people in that camp have have, you know, said that this is factual for so long that has turned their lives up around and, and vice versa. If Karen is innocent, and this is a cover up, than the people who are saying, you know, she's a terrible person, and she deserves to go to jail forever. Like that's, you know, that is also but there. It is crazy. How many in my inbox are saying, I know, I have information and they'll send me screenshots that somebody else screenshot it on a Facebook group from somebody's cousin's dog walker, who heard about the case it's, and nothing is vetted, but it's like, Oh, I know, this is a fact. Because, you know, when my sister got her hair done, her her hairdressers brothers, you know, cousin that went to high school with somebody else's, it's crazy.

Mandy Matney 1:07:58

And the amount of people I will say, I have gotten a lot of good tips from hairdressers, they know a lot of things. But they do that what they do, I love going to the hairdresser. They know everything. And a lot of it turns out to be true. Yeah. Yeah. It's like every and, and this is your theory. And this is not what this is gossip. This is what you're telling me is gossip. And oh, my gosh, and also the amount of people in those early days of covering Murdaugh, who would call in and say something to me that I had already reported.



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Brandi Churchwell 1:08:35

Oh, yeah, that happens. Like, guess what I found out?

Mandy Matney 1:08:40

I remember I had one woman who was like, did you hear about their maid? I have some information. My my grandson went to college with bluster and blah, blah, blah. Their maid died on their property. And I'm like, I have reported that for years. years. So I am trying not to lose my mind on you right now. But come on, you're wasting time. And speaking of time, and we will be right back. I could go on and on about how annoying people are. But another thing that bothers me when you're when you're talking about people who can't differentiate fact from fiction is reporters who can't do that. And an example of that, Liz, you sent me a story from the state the other day, and there was a part of it that said, prosecutors convinced jurors that Alex Murdaugh didn't or had enough time to go to his mother's house and then kill Maggie and Paul Murdaugh within nine and 10 P am whatever but he the way that he phrased it was prosecutors convinced you remember that, Liz?

Liz Farrell 1:10:06

I do because it was giving away sort of this idea that he may be he personally didn't believe it was possible for a man to speed his way to kill two people hosed off, throw accidentally keep his wife's phone on the golf cart. I don't know what he did. But why did the by the phone ended up at the car, but he didn't think it was possible that it could rush speed faster than he had sped, you know, otherwise, to his mother's house, sit on the bed for 20 minutes, and then head back and then call 911. It's your thinking. Like, I think when people have a problem with that they're thinking logically, as in themselves, they're not



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thinking of themselves as a murderer. In that scenario, somebody who's got a really end a lawyer and a prosecutor, who knows he's got to create that timeline in that small window of time to show that there's no possible way you could do it. So yeah, the way they do that, and they give away their opinion.

Mandy Matney 1:11:01

But it's like, but it's like, it wasn't it wasn't a theory that said that it was GPS data, like you can't lie where Alex was in those hours, they proved that. And they proved that it was possible. It was ever there was no convincing. It was actual data. And again, like there's a data column in there saying, this happened column. And then there's a speculation column. And there needs to be a class in school or something about telling the difference between the two because it makes me very angry.

Liz Farrell 1:11:34

I think that there really does. But I wanted to ask you guys, so we're talking about sort of the comments that you open yourself up to when you do something like this and not being prepared for the cruelty and the unsolicited cruelty that, but what about the Uber fans? Those that's another thing because Brandi neither Mandy nor I were really in the true crime world before this, because we're both journalists. And while we might have enjoyed the odd documentary, Mandy is a huge fan. For sure. Yeah. But there's like a there's a level right? There's different levels that you can enter your membership into the true crime community. And Mandy had recommended that I watched a documentary called they called him mostly harmless. Have you seen that? Yes, yeah. And it was we I wish I'd seen I wish that documentary existed and that were that I had seen it anyway, prior to all of this, because I would have



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understood it better. I did not understand the significance of the Facebook groups. I didn't understand the significance of the Reddit groups and what how moderators view themselves and how the people in those groups like the most participating members of it, how they view themselves in this and how there's sort of a race, I guess, behind the scenes to have the first information or look like you have the first set of information. That was a force I did not expect and I think with the Karen Read case, going back to Turtle Boy, that's like an uber fan. Right that I mean, is that not what we call him? I'm not really sure what to call it.

Mandy Matney 1:13:06

He's definitely a true crime guy. Yeah, yeah. I don't even know if we call them uber vans.

Liz Farrell 1:13:14

Just fanatics. I don't know what you call...

Mandy Matney 1:13:18

Yeah, the true crime world is so weird because there are really great people are armchair detective that's that's a good one, Sam, like there are there are like when we had the Murdaugh Murders podcast, the amount of people with actual helpful expertise, it will have emailed us over the years. And I would send things to Eric, I would send, we would send things to Mark, we would like this lawyer from here says try this, or blah, blah, blah. That's all very helpful and awesome. And in a really great thing about having these giant true crime cases and getting like armies of people behind them. And then I can get just, I think that documentary, mostly harmless just showed how skewed it all can get



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and how interruptive like when everybody's trying to win all these people who have no idea what they're doing, are trying to break news in a big true crime case and are trying to elbow each other out and beat each other. People's lives get affected, and they theorize as if they're playing a game with characters, and these are real people, and they don't stop to think about that.

Liz Farrell 1:14:33

And like the poor guy with cancer.

Mandy Matney 1:14:35

He was alive.

Liz Farrell 1:14:39

Trying to prove to me that he himself is real and alive and that this is his blog, and they're like, I don't know, I don't think so.

Mandy Matney 1:14:46

That part was so like therapeutic because there were just been many times when I got out of all of the Murdaugh Facebook groups before the trial at some point because I was like, there is No extra information in these. Never absolutely nothing helpful. I'm sick of seeing threads about my dog and how offensive I am and how I'm gross and terrible. I'm sick of that. Yeah.

Liz Farrell 1:15:13

Or the emails from the people who are caught up in the politics of it. And they're like, trying to get you looped in like, so. And so's was the



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moderator. But now I am. And I, you know, it's like we haven't I had no idea what you're talking about right?

Mandy Matney 1:15:27

Remember, remember that Reddit girl who would send us like, I do long emails, and she never would tell us her name. And she wanted us to take her completely seriously. And it's like, your name is FlowerGirl44 That's how you're signing that. It wasn't FlowerGirl44. But you're saying that you were signing this as FlowerGirl44? Yeah, I am not, I cannot take the things that you're seeing seriously.

Liz Farrell 1:15:53

That's the thing, though. Maybe they're acting like they're in *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* or like some hacker movie where they're like, have to be on the lam because they've got all this information, and they're being targeted or something. And after seeing that documentary, yes. And they all act like victim, yeah, after seeing that documentary and realizing that like, because ultimately, the true crime fans in that case, ended up I think putting enough pressure on police, but also ended up solving it right. It was their persistence that ended up being able to identify this guy. But the interesting thing about the documentary is seeing the fantasy that sort of pops up around, whether it's the defendant, whether it's the missing guy, or the guy with no identity, a missing person, these people are projecting whatever it is, they're missing in their own life onto this person. So to find out that this guy was not a good person, and they had just devoted all this amount of energy and time and all of that to discovering who he was, was sort of interesting, but I did not I was not prepared for the true crime world. And that I think, has been like the biggest learning, the biggest lesson



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that I've had in all of this is just how because like you said, when you're talking brand new, you're like, I've got to be careful and make sure that I say this in a very specific way. Because you're trying to mitigate that because you know, that you're going to get slammed. And it's it's, unfortunately, going to take up real estate in your brain.

Mandy Matney 1:17:18

Right. Yeah. And it takes you away from doing actual work when people are just hounding you about the way that you phrase something. And, again, there, there is a certain extent of feedback that is okay. I don't ever want my listeners to all agree with me about everything, I want them to be able to disagree. And that is a normal healthy thing. And if, if they don't disagree with if, if they've agreed with absolutely everything that I have said this entire time, then that is a hole that is not the community that I'm trying to build. I want actual people who think for themselves, right? I do not want people to just be like, whatever you say me any, because that would be boring and weird. But on the flip side of that, there's nothing that helps with just criticizing every word and every thing that you do, and doing it over and over.

Liz Farrell 1:18:11

Yeah, well, they become they become sort of hateful in looking at they were looking at me and Mandy has competition I'm sure you get that Brandi were like we're competing against them to be the All Knowing Murdaugh scholar or what have you. And it's like, you're not even realizing that we're not even in the same room as you like this is a different thing what we're doing it's it's journalism.



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Brandi Churchwell 1:18:33

And it becomes every aspect of it too. Like there you know, all of a sudden everybody is a celebrate expert and everybody is you know, like okay you you know sell insurance during the day but at night you're you know, celebrate expert, you know, data analyst or so everybody all of a sudden on the internet is is fully qualified to tell you why you're wrong on the way that you reported on something. And that can be really exhausting.

Liz Farrell 1:19:04

Unless it's right information unless somebody is calling or emailing you to be like hey, just so you know, I I work in this industry and this is actually what it's called, like, Oh, yeah. What it's actually legit. Yeah, that's super helpful.

Mandy Matney 1:19:18

Yeah, we've had a lot of help from like psychologist and people that are people with medical bankers. I love that. Yeah. Different. Yeah. Bankers, people with different like, that's actual expertise that is helpful because it applies in every debt like you. I don't know, banking. I will be the first to admit, I don't know banking. And it does really help when they say like, in the way that it's funny though the people with better information and the people with actual actual expertise, in my experience, approach it so much better approach. The criticism is so much better and so much it's not criticism, or it's not criticism, yet. It's helpful information.

Liz Farrell 1:19:58

That's just helpful information.



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Mandy Matney 1:20:01

But it's just like instead of like, I've had people listen to you, you said this on the podcast and I get why you said that, but blah, blah, but I just want to explain, blah, blah, blah. And it's like, oh my gosh, that's so helpful. Yeah. And you didn't say it in a way that you were like, I am wildly upset with you. And disappoint disappointed, and I'm never listening to your podcasts again, because you phrase this in the wrong way.

Brandi Churchwell 1:20:24

See, I'm the first to tell you like, I am not a very techy person. So when all of this stuff was going on with the 2:27am search, and you know, whether or not it happened, because we can see it on 2:27. But then the Commonwealth they had, you know, one of their experts said that that's not right. But the reason it's there is unknown. So I was like, I don't know anything about this. So I found people who do and so I, you know, created and it took me, it was like learning, like a whole new language trying to understand and comprehend, you know, all of that information, because I don't know anything about it. So, you know, finding those people that actually are able to say, you know, this is what this is. And even when I was relaying that information in the podcast, I was like, I don't I this is not from like, this is the you know, I asked him to explain it to me, like, I'm five years old. And this is the explanation that I got. So even on that stuff, it's like, there has to be this level of like, I'm not telling you it's true. Go research it for yourself. But this is, you know, what was explained to me from this person who has these credentials? Because there are so many things that people will just like, nail you on, if you if they don't agree with you, or they don't like what you said.



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Liz Farrell 1:21:37

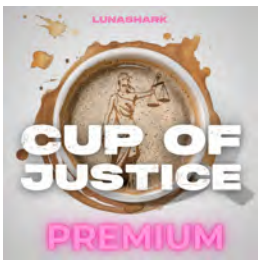
I love what you just said, because you just described journalism, you just described what we do. You talk to experts, yeah. And then you cite your source.

Mandy Matney 1:21:48

You cite how you know something and you don't claim to be the expert. That's the beauty of journalism is like, we're not, I'm not going around saying that I have a medical degree or any sort of medical expertise. But I will talk to the doctor who does. And I will quote him in a responsible way about what he said happened. And yeah, that's what journalism is. But it's just, yeah, it's getting wild.

Liz Farrell 1:22:14

Brandi did you get...during the Murdaugh trial, we would occasionally get people who would accuse us of stealing their theory or stealing their quote, unquote, reporting, because they reached the same conclusion or they too, were on a parallel track. Because the thing is, in South Carolina, as backward as things can be sometimes as untransparent as a peg is it can be sometimes in comparison to other states, we actually do have a lot of information available online. And you know, I think really quickly after the Murdaugh thing became national news, and the online, the armchair detectives were getting into it. They started realize the Public Index is on there. And we can FOIA for this information. And we can get that in this will be published and what have you and we can look up real estate transactions, we can look up all of these things. I think people were starting to realize that there is a sort of an abundance of information and you're in Florida, where you're I mean, it's as backward as that state is you guys have really good



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Sunshine Laws. So it of all things, which is so weird in but so great. Yes. So it sort of open sources, this whole thing, right? It allows all these other people to collect the same information that you as reporters were collecting. The difference is they're not doing that last step. So they're gathering this information from what's publicly available, putting it online with our theory, but they're not doing they think that's what we're doing. They think that we're just gathering this information, and deciding amongst ourselves like, oh, that's what this was, this is what this means now, no, we're actually talking to people who like we just said, are the experts or who would have a theory that's well informed? And then we're incorporating that into how we view the data or what have you. So we would get these accusations? And it would really, it's really less than having to just let things go. Because you just want to respond to every single one of them and be like, What do you like? Do you think that I'm sitting on your Facebook chat and going deep, deep, deep into the comments to look at your sentence that you posted? Absolutely not. Like this is?

Brandi Churchwell 1:24:21

Yeah, it you know, I've gotten a few of those. And I've gotten a few that have, like, there were a couple of people who sent me screenshots of people who are posting my chart saying that, like, look, this is what I did. I spent all this time doing this, and I'm like, that's how I learned to watermark. But, you know, so there was some of that too, but yeah, I had some people who would, who would say, you know, like that, that they're the ones who came up with you know, whatever version of my thoughts that I delivered and, and I actually had somebody who got really mad at me for for stealing. Dr. Kinsey's something or There's something that he said that I should be ashamed of myself for still not



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and I was like, He's my friend. I was like, I love him like I didn't I was like look at the date like it was it was some random part of the theory and when I put it in the chart I was like you know I think that this this could have happened again this isn't a theory part and then whatever that specific thing was he gave that in his reconstruction but the dates like you can see that it wasn't the same she got so mad which I wasn't even mad about that one because I was like you go defend and Dr. Kinsey like I'm here for it. I love Dr. Kinsey. So, but yeah, I've had my share of those two.

Mandy Matney 1:25:32

Yeah, I've had my yeah, I've had my share of people that are like, This person should be mad at you for this. And I'm like, I'm talking to that person on the phone right now. And they're not just stay out of this. Get over it. Yeah. Brandi, this was such a great conversation and for the sake of time, I just wanted to say thank you so much. This has been awesome and where can people find you?

Brandi Churchwell 1:25:54

YouTube channel is [youtube.com/Brandi Churchwell](https://www.youtube.com/BrandiChurchwell) and then my podcast is 13th Juror Podcast. It's available anywhere you get your podcasts this the episodes that are specifically about Karen Read or it's Season Two it's Conspiracy in Canton on 13th Juror Podcast.

Mandy Matney 1:26:11

Awesome. Well, cups down. This was a great show.

Liz Farrell 1:26:15

Cups, cups down.



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Mandy Matney 1:26:30

Cup of Justice is a Luna Shark production created by me Mandy Matney and co-hosted by journalist Liz Farrell and attorney Eric Bland. Learn more about our mission and membership and lunasharkmedia.com. Interruptions provided by Luna and Joe Pesky.

CUP OF
JUSTICE

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