



EPISODE 21: Attorneys At War - Part One

Mandy Matney 0:00

I don't know what the end game is for Alex Murdaugh's defense team, but I know that Dick Harpootlian and Jim Griffin are working hard to silence the truth tellers in this case, and I don't think that the good old boy playbook is going to work this time. My name is Mandy Matney. I've been investigating the Murdaugh family for more than two and a half years now. And this is the Murdaugh Murders Podcast.

Alex Murdaugh's "Bulldog" defense attorneys, Dick Harpootlian and Jim Griffin, have apparently launched a war on Satterfield family attorney Eric Bland. While this might seem like a distraction to some, it's important to take a deeper look at these recent moves by Dick and Jim to figure out what exactly is going on here. So Dick and Jim have done a lot of doubling down in the Satterfield case recently. It started on November 17, when Dick and Jim officially began representing Alex Murdaugh in a lawsuit filed by Gloria Satterfield's two sons. Again, Harpootlian and Griffin did not have to represent Alex in this civil case. They chose to enter into the arena after Eric Bland revealed a shocking paper trail showing Alex Murdaugh's alleged involvement in the despicable scheme to steal millions of dollars from his dead housekeeper's family. Dick and Jim filed a shocking motion on November 17 that asked the court to dismiss the lawsuit against Alex Murdaugh because other parties have already compensated them for this. To Eric Bland, this was a clear message that the good old boys were starting a war ...

Eric Bland 1:49

But I love it. This is exactly what I want. Battlefield lines have been drawn between Harpootlian and Bland and Richter.

Mandy Matney 1:57

So just two days after that motion was filed, Alex Murdaugh was hit with a whopping 27 charges related to financial crimes. If you remember, we did a special breaking episode on this and Eric was quoted a lot.

Eric Bland 2:10

It was the right thing to do. You changed the world. You, you're taking a guy off the street that was not just harming one person. He was harming a lot of different people.



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Mandy Matney 2:24

That episode apparently struck a nerve among the "Bulldog attorneys" because a day after it was published, Dick and Jim amped up their war on Eric Bland and launched another missile. On Monday, November 22, Dick and Jim filed another shocking motion and this one was seeking a gag order and other sanctions against Eric Bland.

Liz Farrell 2:48

This motion asked the court for three things: a gag order against Eric, an order to have Eric pay Alex's attorneys' fees for their work related to the motion, and for the court to refer Eric to the Office of Disciplinary Counsel. Dick and Jim maintain that their client will not be able to get a fair trial because of Eric Bland's public comments, which generally speaking have called out the system for protecting Alex and served as a counterpoint to whatever narrative is being put forth by the Murdaugh camp on any given day. The gag order motion included six pages of Mr. Bland's quotes to the press. While Dick and Jim do throw in a few quotes that appeared in mainstream publications, most of the content they object to was taken from FITSNews.com and from the November 21 episode of this podcast in which Mandy and Eric reflected on how each has played a pivotal role in bringing the Satterfield scheme to light. This was not surprising. From the beginning, FITSNews and this podcast have used our extensive resources to vet all information before publishing it. In other words, we didn't publish a certain fairy tale about a person of interest in a double homicide being targeted by a random shooter on a rural road because our sources knew better. Again, the core argument of this motion is that Eric's comments have compromised Alex's chance at a fair trial. Left out of the motion is this: Dick and Jim have both portrayed their client as guilty on national television and as of right now, there are several writers speeding their way through book deals about Alex Murdaugh, a handful of documentary producers speeding their way through filming about Alex Murdaugh, and there have been several news specials about Alex Murdaugh. If a judge does issue a gag order against Eric Bland, will this be the thing that gives Alex a safe space and allows for a jury that has never heard of him or her never formed an opinion about him? Or will it simply stop someone who refuses to play by the good old boy rules from speaking out when he sees something wrong?

Mandy Matney 4:38

After this motion was filed, we talked to Eric Bland and asked him what he thought about this ...



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Eric Bland 4:44

You know, this is full contact litigation. Everybody's got to wear pants. Nobody wears shorts in this kind of litigation. So, you know, they obviously feel like they're losing in the court of public opinion. Not only do they know they're losing in court, in the various courts, but I think they feel like they're losing in the court of public opinion. And so they view what I am saying as an additional basis of how their client is getting hurt. And truth be told nothing I have said could hurt Alex nowhere near what Dick Harpootlian, his own lawyer, has said, both inside and outside of court. He said that, you know, he knows he's committed these financial crimes, and that he's going to go away to jail. I mean, what more prejudicial statements can be made than your own lawyer saying that or your own lawyer, lawyer confessing to your crime, like he did in the bond hearing for the Labor Day shooting matter. So nothing I say could prejudice any proceeding. Also, there's no danger of prejudicing a jury because this matter is five years away from being tried. So there's no jury to prejudice. And I have a right, not only to ask for victims and witnesses to come forward, which they have, which I get information every day, very relevant information, but I have a right to correct the record that Dick Harpootlian or Jim Griffin have painted both publicly or in court filings, such as that he's a 20-year opioid addict. That's not an explanation for a crime. It certainly hasn't presented, prevented him from being a successful trial lawyer or that, you know, he didn't represent my client, Tony Satterfield, which he did, or that you know, he has all these difficulties, which is preventing him from doing the right thing. Dick said he wanted to do the right thing. He was coming back to make all these financial wrongs right. Well, he seems to be doing is rewarding his family and friends, such as Johnny Parker and his brother, but doing nothing for the Satterfields. He hasn't even said an apology yet to the Satterfields let alone trying to right the wrong that he's done. So I just viewed it as this is a litigation tactic that they're trying to do because they're losing in the courts and in public opinion. And, and the public is not going to like me being silenced, because I'm providing them with information. This is a very public case, where our justice system is on trial, where the fairness of our system is on trial and the public wants to know, you know, who are the victims, and nothing I have said has been proven untrue. And I feel like that if there's not sunlight on this, and it gets dark, then that's when strange things can happen.

Mandy Matney 7:50

And something strange did happen in this case after the motion was filed. So shortly after the gag order motion was filed, Bland received a letter that's said Dick Harpootlian had filed a formal grievance with the South Carolina Supreme Court Office of Disciplinary Counsel. Essentially Harpootlian is trying to go after Bland's law



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license, claiming that he violated the bar's Rules of Professional Conduct for pretrial publicity. I spoke with Eric after he received this letter ...

Eric Bland 8:33

Well no, they're going after my law license. I get it. Like I said in my statement, lawyers ... They argue the facts. No facts? They argue the law. If there's no law, then they pound the table and they try to divert. I can't help it that they don't have a real good defense for Alex. You know opioid defense isn't a defense of stealing. It's nothing. Insanity, maybe. But opioid defense, all that is is a mitigation factor in some kind of sentencing. But it doesn't excuse the crime. You know, like I said before, they could get Melvin Belli and F. Lee Bailey and Jack Swerling, Pete Strom and have 50 of the best lawyers in our state, Ron Motley from Motley Rice, and put him at the table. They're not going to be able to convince anybody that it's OK to steal from clients and your partners and your family. I'm not a guy that's going to be intimidated. Dick knows that. But they're just, you know, they're going for the, it's a headshot, they're going for the jugular, you know, I can respect that they're doing it. I think it's a BS move. And I think it's a move of a guy that doesn't want to win it on the dance floor. But hey, I can understand why he's doing it. He's losing.

Mandy Matney 9:40

So I noticed on Twitter that several people asked to hear from a member of the South Carolina Bar Association who was not Eric Bland. So for this issue, I talked to South Carolina attorney Lauren Fox, who told me that this lawyer wars scenario is not normal at all.

Lauren Fox 9:58

Attorney-on-attorney war like that? That is a pretty rare situation. That's one that I'm trying to rack my brain about such a public feud in the state's profession. Granted, I'm only coming up on what is like year eight of practice, but I'm having a hard time thinking about such a public task set out because that's what you do. If you're filing a grievance with ODC of that nature, that means that you are setting out to destroy an attorney's career, that you are alleging that they have done something so wrong, that they should lose their law license. I'm sorry, I can't think of one.

Mandy Matney 10:53

I asked Lauren if Eric violated any rules of professional conduct. Specifically, he's been accused of influencing the jury pool in this case.

Lauren Fox 11:03



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I mean, frankly, it looks like a temper tantrum on paper. I have yet to see where I have found any conduct of Eric's to be questionable from a PR perspective, from a professional responsibility or ethical perspective. I've seen no behavior that raises my eyebrows. Frankly, I think that your outlet is the only one that is even covering this. So are they insinuating that you have captured the audience of an entire state? Well that makes y'all pretty powerful, doesn't it? You would think that if you're truly tainting a jury pool that this would be blasted on every mainstream media outlet, online, TV, etc. So I don't buy that argument at all.

Mandy Matney 12:03

Now it's funny that Lauren said this, because I have been recently racking my brain thinking back on the last few months and how we got to this point with Dick and Jim. And I have to say I had a lot of respect for Dick Harpootlian before September. We have to remember that Dick and Jim were not always this sloppy and brazen. In 2019, when Dick and Jim represented Paul Murdaugh in the boat crash criminal case, both lawyers maintained a sense of dignity while working on that case. And Liz and I were honestly impressed by Harpootlian.

Liz Farrell 12:38

The first thing that struck us about Dick back in 2019 was how thorough he was in his motion for discovery. Mandy and I are both professional writers so obviously, we tend to notice how well something is written, or how poorly. We've both read our fair share of legal documents in South Carolina, and let's just say they run the gamut in terms of the effort that is put into them. The motion filed by Dick made it clear to us the huge difference money can make in the courtroom. Not only was it well written, it was intimidating in a way neither of us had seen before. He had accounted for every molecule of evidence that might exonerate Paul, and there was a definite bullishness to it. He was looking around every corner and saying boo before anyone else could beat him to it. His power practically jumped off the page. Then there was our first in-person encounter with him during Paul's bond hearing. Paul looked nervous and like a little boy that day. Maggie seemed scared and absolutely out of it. And Alex enters the courtroom like a boisterous small town politician, acting as if he were there to greet people at a ribbon-cutting for a plumbing supply company, rather than at a criminal proceeding for his son, who was accused of killing someone. Alex's fake and buffoonish presence filled the room. He seemed intent on leaving no oxygen for anyone to breathe, never mind saying the name "Mallory Beach." Then there was Harpootlian who stood in stark contrast to everyone else there, including the judge. He had the serious and seasoned air of a world class surgeon, someone to whom deference is automatically given. He was in complete control of that



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courtroom. Back then, like now, Mandy and I were very much on the lookout for any signs of corruption in how the boat crash case was being handled. That day we truly felt we were watching the Broadway version of something that had been scripted and rehearsed far away from the public eye. Harpootlian was the master of his universe, and everyone else was there to please him or at least not incur his wrath. It was the same Harpootlian we saw in the months between Maggie and Paul's murders and whatever happened to Alex on Labor Day weekend. Both Mandy and I had heard from a variety of sources that Dick was coming in hot behind the scenes and using his positional power and political access to his client's advantage as expected. In those months, Dick Harpootlian and Jim Griffin seem to be doing what they do best: quietly tending to the facts behind the scenes, rearranging reality to fit their narrative, leaking tidbits to the press that painted their client as a victim and waiting for the public to stop caring about the double homicide investigation.

Mandy Matney 15:02

But as their client unraveled in the public square after the September 3 alleged shooting incident, it appears like Dick and Jim unraveled too. Remember the week after the shooting? Harpootlian and Griffin shelled out a false narrative repeatedly to the media. And during all this time, FITSNews appeared to be the only media outlet holding these lawyers to account and calling out the lies.

Liz Farrell 15:29

That's why this gag order motion says a lot about what their frame of mind might be. Again, Dick and Jim are used to being the masters of their universe. When it comes to the media, Dick, in particular, is the Golden Corral of off-the-record tidbits. He invites reporters to gorge off his cheap buffet of information so that when the juicy steak comes off the grill, no one notices. It's very difficult to be a master of any universe when you can't get certain people to read from a carefully crafted script. They can't control Eric Bland, but they certainly can control how the mainstream media regards him.

Mandy Matney 16:20

On September 15, the world saw a different Harpootlian, who appeared on the today's show to represent his client. During this interview Decart Boolean admitted on national television that Alex Murdaugh used money from the law firm and his clients for personal use.

Dick Harpootlian 16:40



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It was uncovered that he had perhaps one eye, perhaps he had converted some client and law firm money to his own use. Tip again spent most of that on opioids.

Mandy Matney 16:51

The interview was a disaster for Harpootlian. He also told the today's show his client would be arrested soon, which is a really odd thing to say. And then he tried to claim that him and Griffin were independently investigating some individuals who may have murdered Maggie and Paul Murdaugh. I wonder how well that investigation is going. And we have to mention Paul Murdaugh, is Deckard peatlands former client, he represented him in the bow crash, and now he's representing the only known person of interest in Paul's murder. Looking back on this, what has he done to bring awareness and attention to solving Paul and Maggie's murders. In fact, he's done the opposite. We've seen a series of distractions from Dixon summer. Why is that and then the Hampton bond hearing happen? What we didn't know at the time was a dick harpoon Atlassian was starting to come undone, and he was showing it before this bond hearing in September harpoon Atlassian looked around and checked the room looking for me when I wasn't there, he made a disgusting comment. In a poor attempt to discredit me, Dick joked that I my boss's alter sexual ego, and asked if I really existed. This is especially funny now, because they mentioned my name 12 times and their latest motion.

Liz Farrell 18:15

Good attorneys go to war for their clients. Dick And Jim, as we've said many times before, are among the best in South Carolina. So while much of this can be looked at as dig and gem or just going to war for Alex, we do have to point out that there are rules of engagement, especially when it comes to ethics. There are some obvious ironies here that dick and Jim are launching their latest battle with Eric Bland on the ethics front. Theoretically, is it ethical for an attorney to seek to humiliate a reporter he doesn't like in front of our peers, as depicted? Is it ethical for an attorney to antagonize a reporter over Twitter, as Jim Griffin did to Mandy in October? Is it ethical for state senators to use their positions of authority and access to make demands of state agencies in order to gain advantages for their clients? And was it ethical to tell a today show reporter on national television that your client is guilty of stealing and lying? If that last move was strategy then this raises a question: how deeply screwed is your client that your best option to defend him is to unsolicitedly tell the world he's guilty of an awful crime?

Mandy Matney 19:22



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It's clear we're witnessing a pattern of strange behavior by Decart Boolean it's pretty clear that DEC is losing in the court of public opinion, which apparently upsets him as an attorney who is used to playing the media like a fiddle but the question now is if Dick has enough power to win at all, an actual core will a gag order be placed in the case could Eric Bland be silenced?

Eric Bland 19:57

So something happened

Mandy Matney 19:58

last week that concerned us and we need to talk about it.

Liz Farrell 20:03

On December 1, we learned that Judge Bentley Price had reassigned the Satterfield case to himself. The case had already been assigned to Judge Mark Hayes and attorneys from both sides. From what we understand how to prove that assignment. Judge Price reassigned the case to himself, because if he does say so himself, the case is a quote unquote complicated one. We don't know much about Judge Price, except that he's young in his 40s. He tried several times to become a circuit court judge before finally being Alex in 2019. Before that, he was a part time municipal judge in Folly Beach for 12 years. And he's apparently known as a judge who tends to favor defendants. We also don't know what prompted judge price to volunteer himself for this case, but it happens soon after dick and Jim called for their client to be dropped from the case for a gag order to be placed on Eric Bland for sanctions against Eric for a referral to the Office of Disciplinary Counsel and for their attorneys fees to be paid. And this is definitely concerning. It makes us wonder what the end game is predicting. Jim, why are they fighting so savagely in a case where the plaintiffs have been so demonstrably abused by their client? Clearly, they want to minimize the damages their client might owe? As a reminder, Alex is a defendant in at least seven civil cases right now, the more cynical among us might say dick and Jim want to minimize the damages Alex has to pay because there needs to be money left over to pay dick and Jim, I think we can also safely say they want to minimize any prison time Alex might get but as the charges against Alex mount, it's becoming more and more clear that dick and Jim are going to need more thumbs to plug the holes in that dam. The other question we've been asking ourselves is whether this has become a war of egos. Sometimes it seems like Dick and Jim aren't fighting for their clients so much as they are for their own reputations to be reclaimed. The good ol boy system relies on the ability to play games in the dark in the dark Bulldog attorneys can misuse the typically secretive disciplinary process to



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exact revenge on their opposing counsel and pressure them into pre-emptive silence without anyone being the wiser. That is until the opposing counsel throws on the lights and tells the world what is happening. That Alex Murdaugh has a challenging jury seeing ahead of him is a foregone conclusion. But by his own measure, Dick shouldn't be worried. He himself offered the attorney some tips on his courtroom practices in a 2013 profile of him in whistleblower laws.com. Here are three of his top five tips. They tell us a lot about who Deke is as a lawyer.

David as Dick Harpootlian 22:30

Pick a jury not based only on your clients profile, but also yours. If the jury hates you, they usually won't like your client. This has caused me to gravitate towards unattractive people on juries. They don't feel threatened by me and are disdainful like attractive people in the courtroom. One of my frequent opponents when I was the DA paid me the most eloquent compliment, she said, Harpootlian is like a dog marking his territory in the courtroom. He pisses in every corner and invades your space as frequently as he can. It makes the opposing attorney anxious and anxious. Throw away the script, there was nothing more boring or unproductive than to follow a script, checking off the points you want to make to prove the elements of your case, the jury wants a narrative, a story An entertaining yarn full of conflict, emotion, sex, violence, yelling, weeping, etc. You get the idea. That means you have to have a general idea of what you want, but let the examination flow naturally see the witness up to confirm fact A and fact C, then box them into B the jury will understand where you are going. Remember, these are unattractive people who watch a lot of TV and read most of their evenings. They have lots of imagination.

Liz Farrell 24:00

So yeah, seems like Dick already has his jury strategy all sealed up

Mandy Matney 24:10

Maybe the strategy is bullying and intimidation. He tried to bully and intimidate me, which did not work. Now it seems like he's trying to bully and intimidate Eric Bland, which isn't working either.

Eric Bland 24:26

It's a bully. And the way you know you got to deal with bullies. You got to slap them down. He's not going to intimidate me. I mean, I'm 59 years old. He's not going to intimidate me. I'm just going to put my nose down and out lawyer like I did and follow the rules of professional conduct which I don't think I'm violating. If you know, on the one with you got SLED to bring the charges.



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Mandy Matney 24:50

And Eric admitted that this case is so different from every other case and that sunlight has been required in order to get justice.

Eric Bland 25:00

If I would have filed this lawsuit, and it just sat in darkness of a file cabinet in Hampton County, do you really think we would be where we are today? Honestly, do you really think that five different, culpable, potentially culpable parties would have ponied up over seven and a half billion dollars? Do you think I would have been one of the factors in Corey Fleming losing his law license? Do you think that Alex Murdaugh would have been charged in the Satterfield member? Do you think he would be behind bars for the last month and a half if I just filed a lawsuit and was sued in the color of darkness and I never said a word. Come on.

Mandy Matney 25:39

In fact, Eric Bland filed a bombshell Amendment and the Satterfield case this week, adding Bank of America to the list of defendants and accusing the bank's employees of enabling Alex Murdaugh's money laundering. The lawsuit is packed with shocking accusations and another paper trail of astonishing checks, which we will analyze in another episode and see FITSnews.com For the latest on those checks. There's one more thing that we have to talk about. Like Murdaugh is scheduled to appear in court this week for a bond hearing on the 27 latest charges against him. But this time a different judge judge Allison Lee will preside over the hearing. This has raised several red flags among those watching this case very closely. Why because judge Clifton Newman was handpicked in September to handle all criminal matters related to Alex Murdaugh. But last week, the South Carolina Supreme Court issued an order stating that the current responding Judge of the state grand jury will handle initial bail matters for Alex Murdaugh on charges that were brought by the state grand jury. While we have been told that this move is standard procedure, we have to wonder if this is a part of Dick and Jim's plan, Judge Lee has a reputation of giving bond to violent criminals. Having a judge who is known for leniency presiding over all the matters related to the state grand jury for bail could be beneficial to the Murdaugh camp. However, we did ask several sources close to the investigation if this even matters, and according to our sources, even if Lee grants bond on Friday, Newman's decision would stick and Alex Murdaugh would remain behind bars. But if you'll remember, Alex's attorney recently filed a habeas corpus petition asking the South Carolina Supreme Court to reconsider Newman's decision to keep Alex in jail. So are they trying to get another judge to rule that Alex is not a danger so their petition



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gets a better chance again. What is the end game here? We will find out so stay tuned

and one more thing we are super excited to announce that the Murdaugh murders podcast Instagram page which is Murdaugh murders pod that's Murdaugh murders pod all one word. And Facebook which is Murdagh murders podcast are up and running. Check the links in the description for those on Facebook and Instagram. We will share the latest updates on the case. We'll post teasers of episodes before they drop. We'll post exciting announcements about the podcast and you'll see pictures of Luna, the real boss of the Murdaugh murders podcast and my childhood best friend Ali Pavlich has worked so hard on our social media, and we're very proud of it. So please go to those pages and give us a like, we really appreciate it. And we're really excited to get these communities started. Both of us want to say thank you to the real journalists, the true tellers and the freedom fighters out there filing FOIA requests exposing powerful people and holding up the fourth estate. You are making a difference in your community and in 2022 We want to support investigative journalists however we can. We want

David Moses 29:09

to hear from reporters, armchair detectives, and savvy super sleuths because we are going to give you a voice in 2022

Mandy Matney 29:17

Ideally, we're looking for stories where true crime and corruption collide. Please visit [Murdaugh murders podcast.com/truth](https://murdaughmurderspodcast.com/truth) to submit your story and learn more about this project.

David Moses 29:31

If you have truth you want to expose visit [Murdaugh murders podcast.com/truth](https://murdaughmurderspodcast.com/truth) to submit your story. There's so much to unpack in this case and Mandy works tirelessly to expose the truth but the truth is she works hard and she does get tired if you believe like I do that Mandy is the best in the business and I'm a little biased visit [Murdaugh murders podcast.com](https://murdaughmurderspodcast.com) and click the support the show link to learn how you can help Leave a five star review. To offset the haters refer an advertiser and get a finder's fee or advertise your company product or service we can geo target across the globe and find the right audience to suit your needs. Help us get Luna some treats so she doesn't interrupt the show as much. And absolutely subscribe to [FITSnews.com](https://fitsnews.com) Mandy and Will are revolutionizing journalism and your subscriptions are invaluable to that mission. Plus, you get awesome content every day.



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Mandy Matney 30:29

And don't forget to leave a five star review unless you're going to be nasty and talk about my vocal fry. The Murdaugh murders podcast is created by me, Mandy Matney and my fiance David Moses, produced by Luna shark productions

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