



## EPISODE 92: 'Enough is Enough': The Big Problem With The Justice System And How to Fix It

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[00:00:00] **Mandy Matney:** I don't know how long it will take to fix our justice system in South Carolina. But after hearing from so many victims and advocates this week at the statehouse rally, I am more hopeful than ever that change will happen, and I hope you are, too. My name is Mandy Matney. I have been a reporter in South Carolina for more than seven years now. This is the Murdaugh Murders Podcast produced by David Moses and written with journalist Liz Farrell.

[00:00:45] On Tuesday, about a hundred people gathered at the South Carolina Statehouse to talk about something really important: victims and how they are often pushed to the side in our justice system. A few weeks ago, when I was first asked to speak at the Victims Matter Rally by attorney Sarah Ford, who you might remember as the victim's attorney in the Bowen Turner case, I hesitated to say yes. I am an introvert, and I've always hated public speaking. Honestly, when it comes to most events, I would rather be at home in my sweatpants next to Luna and David. The pandemic made me more of a recluse than I'd like to admit. The Victims Matter Rally was on a Tuesday, which is typically our busiest workday of the week, and it was in Columbia, which is about three hours from us. This is what my inside voice was saying as I was trying to make up excuses for not facing my fears and committing to a public event. I knew this event mattered, and I knew it was at the core of everything we are trying to do here at MMP. Lucky for me, Sandy Smith snapped me right out of it. She said, "Anything to get Stephen's story out there, we should do it." Then, she said one of the sweetest things anyone has ever said to me when I asked her if she wanted me to speak at the event. She said, "I want you up there next to me because I feel like I can do more when I'm next to you." I can barely get through that sentence without shedding tears. Why can't more people be like Sandy Smith? I had no idea what to expect on Tuesday, but I took so much comfort knowing that our supporters would show up, and they did. I was full of gratitude seeing over a hundred people in front of the SC Statehouse on a Tuesday morning when I know most people have work. I hugged so many fans who told me they rearranged their workdays just so they could show up to support the mission. And I met some amazing college students who are friends of the show and working as volunteers for victim-centered charities that were there. I got choked up as I stood on stage between Dallas Stoller's family and Sandy Smith, and we looked into the crowd and read the signs. "Justice for Stephen Smith." "Justice



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for Gloria Satterfield." There was even a sign that said "Impeach Judge Carmen Mullen." It was like staring into a sea of pesky people, and it was a beautiful thing.

[00:03:19] Sandy and I were both wearing green in honor of Stephen, which is his favorite color. And as we were making our way to the stage to speak, a woman who was also wearing green stopped us. "Who are y'all wearing green for?" she asked. I pointed at Sandy and said, "Her son, Stephen Smith. He was killed in 2015, and she still doesn't have answers." Curious, "Who are you wearing green for?" I asked. She said she was wearing green for her nephew, Damion Green, who was also killed in a rural South Carolina county in 2015, like Stephen. The solicitor's office just dropped the case this year, she told me. I almost couldn't believe it. There were two victims who were murdered in South Carolina in 2015, whose supporters wear green as they continue to fight for justice in 2023. It reminded me of the enormity of the problem. Sandy and I both wanted to learn more about Damion Green's story, but we were being shuffled to the stage. Minutes later, Damion Green's mother, Delores Boyce, was called to the stage to talk about her son. Unfortunately, like the Bowen Turner case and the Jeroid Price case, her son's story is another painful reminder of everything broken within our system. Here is Delores.

[00:04:42] **Delores Boyce:** Good morning. As Sarah stated, my name is Delores Boyce, and my son Damion Melvin Green was murdered August the 6th, 2015. I am a person of faith who worked my son's case alongside my family tirelessly. The justice system as a whole failed me and my family. We trusted a system who let us down to the point where in the end, the faith in the judicial system doesn't exist to me because it doesn't work for victims, only accused criminals or high-profile victims. It took SLED and the solicitor's office four years and three months to call me and my family in to inform us that warrants would be issued in this case.

[00:05:44] **Mandy Matney:** Damion was murdered one month after Stephen Smith was killed, and it took four years for the solicitor's office and law enforcement to arrest his killers. Like Stephen, Damion was young with a bright future ahead of him. Damion was 24 when he was killed. He was a senior at Voorhees College when he was murdered. When I first looked into Damion's case, it reminded me of looking into Stephen's case back in 2019.



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There were very few articles written about Damion's murder. In fact, one of the only articles I could find written on the case was by TV reporter Shawn Cabbagestalk in 2019. It was on the four-year anniversary of Damion's death. The headline said "Mother searching for answers after son found dead in home in 2015. And just three months after that article was written, two men were arrested in Damion's murder. I have to point this out because I have a hard time thinking that that's a coincidence; that all of this time passed without any coverage, and suddenly, three months after an article sparked renewed interest in the case, two arrests were made. Victims should not need headlines for their cases to get justice. But unfortunately, even after the arrest, the road to justice was a hard one for Green's family. His alleged killers were let out on bond, an increasingly dangerous issue here in South Carolina and across the country. And the trial, like so many others, was delayed for years due to backlog. Then, things got worse.

[00:07:26] **Delores Boyce:** In February 2023, we were notified of a bond hearing. The defendant's lawyer, the state's — nope, the defendant's lawyer announced that the state's primary witness was dead. The bombshell was dropped. The solicitor's office sat on this case so long not one but two witnesses died seven years apart. I have never been given a legitimate answer on several things in this case, and it's sad. We will call to the solicitor's office in February 2023 to let us know that without the primary eyewitnesses, the case would be dismissed.

[00:08:14] **Mandy Matney:** Green's family went through all of those years searching for answers, and they'd been left with nothing. They didn't have the luxury of getting a high-profile lawyer with connections. But luckily, they had the South Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, the organization where Sarah Ford works that organized the event on Tuesday. They helped her with not only legal work, but validation. This is a common theme with victims who I have worked with. They fight these battles alone, and after so many years of being ignored and gaslit by those in power, they start to feel alone. Delores, like so many other victims who attended on Tuesday, knows that she isn't alone and that her story is not over. She wants to continue to fight for other victims and to change the system.



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[00:09:06] **Delores Boyce:** Things seemed wrong early on during this case, so I sought help through SCVAN. And I would like to take the opportunity at this moment to thank them for the countless hours that they have helped me and given me confirmation that my thoughts were correct. The judicial system is broken. Victims are barely included in the process. The system is designed for accused criminals or high-profile victims. I left broken and without even an apology. It is my prayer that this system gets fixed. It is my prayer that there needs to be no bond for accused murderers. And also, when these murder trials come to court, that there are someone, a mutual party, that's able to sit in on these trials and make sure that victims are getting what they deserve, making sure the judges are not violating our rights, ensuring that we get a fair chance to allow our family members' legacies to live on because at this point, we are failed. We are being failed terribly through the justice system. Thank you.

[00:10:24] **Mandy Matney:** And she's right. The justice system is failing victims every day in South Carolina. That was so apparent on Tuesday. It seemed like every time I turned around, I met another person with another heartbreaking story as a reason why they were there. But out of all of the stories of systemic failure in South Carolina — besides the Murdaugh story, that is — there is one that always will stick with me: the Bowen Turner case, the case that propelled victims advocates to hold the first ever victims rally last year. I know y'all have heard Dallas Stoller's story, but I want you to hear it again through her father's beautiful words.

[00:11:08] **Karl Stoller:** Good morning. Before I begin, I would like to thank Sarah Ford and her staff at SCVAN for having me here today to speak. More importantly, I would like to thank you all for being here this morning. Your presence gives me hope — hope that the majority of my fellow South Carolinians are ready for change and ready to fight for victims. Our family's story begins on a fall night in October of 2018. On that night, our daughter Dallas Hayes Stoller attended a party in Bamberg County, South Carolina. On that night, she became a victim of sexual assault. Little did I know this would be the beginning of the end of our beautiful daughter as a little over three years later, she would succumb to a self-inflicted injury. Dallas was a beautiful young lady with loads of potential, a bright future, and a heart as big as the world itself. After that fateful night, I watched a system — a system I so



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strongly believed in — aid in destroying our child's life and severely injuring the lives of two other young ladies who are also victims in this case. I watched the Good Ole Boy system start its engines and work its magic for a well-connected defendant. I watched as a third young lady became a victim exactly 41 days later at the hands of this defendant while he was out on unmonitored bond for the sexual assault of our daughter. I watched as a sitting South Carolina State Senator stood in a courtroom in Orangeburg County, South Carolina and publicly slut-shamed this young lady.

[00:13:28] **Mandy Matney:** That would be State Sen. Brad Hutto, who appeared to use his position of power to strike a secret and slimy plea deal with the solicitor to help his client Bowen Turner avoid prison. It was a reckless act endorsed by a judge who relies on legislators like Hutto to remain on the bench. Surprising to no one, Brad Hutto was not one of the few lawmakers to show up at the event Tuesday. We'll talk more about how problematic our lawyer-legislator system is when it comes to victims rights, but the Stoller case is the example of how rotten that system is and with horrifying consequences.

[00:14:10] **Karl Stoller:** I watched the deputy solicitor of the Second Judicial Circuit drop our daughter's case because she was no longer here to face her attacker. Lastly, in April of 2022, I watched a circuit court judge allow this defendant to walk away with a five-year probationary sentence for assault and battery first degree, no sex offender registry, and an ability to have his record fully expunged once he completed the terms of his probation. That, my friends, is what justice for victims looks like here in South Carolina. Out front in the public eye, our courts, some solicitors, some attorneys, etc. say openly, "Victims matter." They argue this whole lawyer-legislator thing and the way we appoint our judges has no impact on justice for our victims. They argue we are only making noise because things didn't work out for our daughter and other victims. I say they are very wrong. We have been silent for exactly a year now. We have been silent because we were asked to be. We were told our silence would allow the Second Judicial Circuit's Solicitor's Office to take a second look at Dallas' case, admitting privately to a degree they had made mistakes regarding her case. Well, folks, this is what our asked-for silence has earned us so far. To date, we have received one call from their office, and it appears, based on that conversation, we are no further along than we were a



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year ago. That conversation has left us with even less hope anything will ever be done.

[00:16:12] **Mandy Matney:** So one year ago today, Bowen Turner was arrested for violating his probation and was charged with public disorderly conduct. He was sentenced to 10 to 14 months in prison and will have to register as a sex offender when he's released. I checked on this and Turner could get out any day now, and we will be on the lookout for that.

[00:16:34] **Karl Stoller:** I want to say publicly how very proud I am of Dallas' sisters, Brette and Karlee, for taking on this fight on behalf of not only their late sister, but also fighting for all victims in our state. Their passion for this fight has ignited a flame in me and I pray has done the same for you all. I pray their courage has given you the courage to say publicly, "Enough is enough;" that you are no longer willing to accept things as they are, and stand ready to fight alongside us to ensure victims are no longer victimized by our system. I implore each and every one of you to fight for real change. Remember evil knows no boundaries. Evil cares nothing about the balance in your bank account, where you live, how well you were raised, who you know, or what you believe your social standing is. I'm saying no one is exempt from becoming a victim when evil comes knocking. I pray evil never comes to visit you. I pray none of you have to feel or live with what we have to. However, if you do become a victim, I pray together we have made positive change and future victims will be treated with compassion and understanding, not be treated the way many victims are today and not have your rights violated. In closing, I want all our representatives and senators to know we are fighters and no longer will accept things as they are. I've taught my girls to stand up for those who cannot stand up for themselves. I've taught them to stand up for what is right. Always remember a strong person fights for themselves. A stronger person fights for others. We, as a family, are stronger people and will continue to fight for our late daughter Dallas and all victims. We will be silent no longer. Justice for her. Justice for Dallas. Justice for Chloe. Justice for all. Thank you.

[00:19:06] **Mandy Matney:** Dallas' story is one that weighs heavily on our hearts and on the hearts of our listeners and everyone who understands the "why" of this. Why did it end up this way? Because the system is built to protect those who can afford to pay the powerful for help, and the system



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protects the powerful in general. The corruption in our justice system is the result of people seeking personal gains financially and professionally. And while the problems aren't always related to lawyer-legislators directly, this system that rewards them is where the rot starts. That's why it was so refreshing to hear from an unlikely ally in this: South Carolina Rep. Joe White, who represents part of Lexington and Newberry counties. Rep. White spoke during the victims rally about a bill that he is sponsoring in the House that is seeking to change the way judges are elected in our state and essentially decentralizing lawyer-legislators' influence in the process. Here is Rep. White.

[00:20:14] **Rep. Joe White:** First, I'd just like to thank you for the opportunity to speak this morning. When I decided to run for statehouse — by the way, I am the oldest freshman ever elected to the South Carolina statehouse. I was 76 when I ran, and I'm 77 now. My number one issue was judicial reform, and I'll say this about judicial reform: victims will never be treated fairly by any bill that's passed to help victims until judges are selected properly and they are fair judges. We are the only state in America that elects our judges the way we do. That should tell you that we're not doing it the right way. We have a Judicial Merit Selection Commission consisting of 10 people — five of them are appointed by the Speaker of the House, five of them are appointed by the Senate. Out of that 10, eight of them are criminal defense attorneys. You have to go through that committee to get approved to be a judge in South Carolina. That means that those eight criminal defense attorneys have to approve who their judges are going to be, who they will plead cases in front of. That is a wrong system. Out of those eight criminal defense attorneys, six of them are also lawyer-legislators who sit either in the Senate or in the House. They have more power than any of us will ever have.

[00:21:42] **Mandy Matney:** Six out of the 10 people who decide who our judges are in South Carolina are lawyer-lawmakers. And one of those lawyer-lawmakers is Todd Rutherford. You know, the defense attorney who managed to get his client, a convicted killer, out of prison 15 years early with the help of Judge Casey Manning and Solicitor Byron Gipson. Have I mentioned that Price is still on the loose and there is now a \$30,000 reward for tips leading to Price's arrest? SCDC says that the money is technically not from taxpayer money — wink wink — but is from seized asset funds AKA public funds that could have been used elsewhere. Meanwhile, none of the



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public officials who helped with his release have faced any consequences. But like White said, the problem is that we need more people, not just those who have been victimized by the system, to care about this and make noise.

[00:22:48] **Rep. Joe White:** When I ran for office, I told everybody, we the people can. But what I've learned, a reporter asked me about a month ago, what have you learned in your first month at the statehouse? I said, well, you know, we're taught when we're kids that America is a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. What I've learned in a month is that government here is of the powerful, by the powerful, and for the powerful. It is up to us. And I always — I'm not Trump, but I like to address the media because if the media would bring attention to how we do this in South Carolina, the media could get it stopped. Unless and until we, as the people, raise enough Cain, we're not gonna get this thing stopped. Here's the problem.

[00:23:35] **Mandy Matney:** I was really glad White said this about the media. It's like he took the words from my mouth. We will talk about this more in a minute.

[00:23:43] **Rep. Joe White:** When you go campaigning, you wanna know what everybody complains about? They complain about the roads. Some of them complain about education. Very few of them complain about the judicial system because until your daughter is raped and ends up committing suicide, until your son is murdered, until — a lady out here, your brother is murdered and the murderer is put out on bond for \$250,000 — until that happens, you don't care. It's time that we started caring about these victims and we put people in — first of all, elect some people that will stand up to this JMSC mess. Secondly, stop the mess of the JMSC. We got the governor saying he wants to change it. We got the attorney general saying he wants to change it. My bill H4183 isn't a complete answer, but it says that lawyer-legislators cannot serve on the JMSC anymore. And it says the governor would have the right to appoint some people, not just the head of the Senate and not just the head of the House. So I ask you to look at H4183. I've got 34 sponsors. It's never coming out of committee until we the people say it's gotta come out of committee. So I thank you, I apologize to all the victims this morning for the





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fact that our judicial system has failed you, and I just want all of us to pray together and work together to change this injustice system. Thank you.

[00:25:08] **Mandy Matney:** We'll be right back.

[00:25:12] **Liz Farrell:** It's worth noting that Rep. White is not a lawyer, and he is not from South Carolina. According to his official bio, he is a retired CEO of a medical equipment company. He was born in Tennessee and graduated from the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. In other words, he hasn't been baked inside that kiln that is the University of South Carolina School of Law, and he hasn't been glazed over by the years of benefiting from a broken system.

[00:25:41] So a few things here. First, we applaud Rep. White for speaking out about judicial reform. His point about victims is 100% correct. Victims will never be treated fairly by any bill in South Carolina until judges are selected properly. This bill needs to pass. We especially like the part where no legislator-attorney can serve on the selection committee. But how about this? How about no attorney whatsoever? How about no one who stands to benefit personally from the outcome? The problem as it stands is threefold. One, lawyers should not be in a position where judges feel beholden to them politically. Two, every judge put on the bench should be there because they are qualified and because they would make a good judge for the people and not just for Lawyer McLawyerface from Lawyerville and his lawyer friends. And three, there needs to be a robust system of accountability that is transparent. End of story.

[00:26:39] At any rate, if this bill passes, and we hope it does, the future process will still be corrupted by politics. It is inevitable. Judges are in the most consequential role in our legal system, which means that that dynamic will always be corruptible to a certain degree. There's just too much at stake for the players involved. Also, malleable and controllable judges are a critical part to whatever greasy revenue stream lawyers like Alex Murdaugh have depended on for generations. But a good first step would be eliminating that humiliating and degrading process; that annual beg fest that happens on the steps of the statehouse wherein wannabe judges essentially put on their best pearl necklaces and rush the legislature like it's the Zeta House at University of Alabama.



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[00:27:30] Oh, and Rep. White's point about the media is also 100% correct. Nothing will change if the media is a complicit partner in this corruption. One or two investigative pieces a year that shed light on various problems within the system is just not enough. It's also not enough to write a few editorials a year calling out the behavior of judges. How do we know this isn't enough? Because this state's media views itself as avid watchdogs of public corruption, and to a degree, they are. But look at where we're at. We are here in this place still. The problem is this: after the media calls out the egregious behavior of judges or legislators, after the reports that expose the corruption and editorials that condemn the behavior, reporters seem to reset the clock on them. The next time they cover that judge or that legislator or whoever, they don't always include the context from earlier incidents. They don't always point out that, hey, this person was caught lying before, or you should also know that this judge was involved in X, Y, Z. Like we say over and over, context is critical. Like Rep. White said on Tuesday, for change to happen, the public needs to make some noise. They need to make noise. But for the public to make that noise, they need to understand what's happening first; to see things for what they are. And those in media need to help connect the dots in an honest but unforgiving way. Instead, we have a system where judges get away with bad behavior because they simply wait the media out. Because that's the name of the game in South Carolina. Wait until the bad press passes, and then one day you too will have a bridge or a road named after you, no matter what you were accused of doing during your career. We get so much flak for calling out the media. People see it as sour grapes or unprofessional, and we've seen so many lies told about us online when it comes to the "why" of us calling out our colleagues sometimes. But it's simple. The system is broken in part because of people looking the other way when it comes to the people they personally like. The state's judicial system is so corrupt that it has good people defending it for that reason alone sometimes. In fact, it's how Alex became Alex, and we can't keep doing that if we want things to change.

[00:29:53] This weekend, you might have seen a profile piece that *The New York Times* ran about Elizabeth Holmes, the convicted federal felon who is heading to prison for defrauding investors out of millions of dollars in her scheme. *The Times* has been correctly called out for giving Holmes the space to downplay and normalize her crimes. That is the kind of thing that needs to



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be called out. White-collar criminals should not be normalized. Their crimes should not be explained away simply because the people involved don't look like they could have done anything wrong.

[00:30:22] And I have to mention *Washington Post* columnist Kathleen Parker again. Kathleen, or Mrs. Parker, wrote a column this week about Alex Murdaugh's latest nonsense in which he confessed that dogs didn't trip Gloria Satterfield at Moselle. In her column, Mrs. Parker wrote one of the funniest criticisms I have ever read about us, quote, without the funds, Dick and Jim, as they're derisively referred to by Bland's colleagues on their podcast "Cup of Justice," say Murdaugh will be forced to get a public defender. Forced to get a public defender? I mean, honestly. Also, Bland's colleagues? Our names are Liz and Mandy, Mrs. Parker. It's okay to say our names. That's a normal thing to do. But you see what we mean, right? Dick and Jim are so precious to some members of the media that our use of their first names is seen as some sort of insult to them when really it's all the stuff that can be said in conjunction with their first names that ought to be seen as the problem there. Also, the name Richard has at least a thousand nickname variations. Dick picked the one that best fits him. How is that our fault?

[00:31:33] Anyway, we also need to call out the pseudomedia, the trade publications that want to act like they care but actually are just another agent of trying to normalize that which should not be normalized, such as the South Carolina Bar's bimonthly publication *SC Lawyer Magazine*. You might remember the occasions when the South Carolina Bar has attempted to retie their shoelaces, so to speak, after the Alex Murdaugh situation and how they act like nothing bad had happened there. You might remember how we've repeatedly called them out for that. Here's a clip from episode 45, which aired in May of last year.

[00:32:13] **Mandy Matney:** On Friday, May 13th, the *Charleston Post and Courier* published an opinion piece by the current and past presidents of the South Carolina Bar Association on behalf of the state's 13,000 actively practicing lawyers. The piece said that recent news stories and commentaries have presented an inaccurate picture of our attorneys, judges, and lawyer-legislators. So the South Carolina bar has been noticeably quiet since the details of Murdaugh's alleged legal malpractice started to emerge back in



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September. While we're happy that they've officially acknowledged that this case is in fact happening, we were left shaking our heads at the overall message on their opinion piece, which is basically, oh pish posh goose feathers hogwash. Y'all need to move on. The piece is utterly dismissive, putting the blame on media because they think the issue is that we're not understanding the Murdaugh or Bowen Turner cases and how the system is supposed to work in each. They mention neither of these cases by name, by the way. They offer no specific examples of misrepresentations they say are occurring with the Murdaugh and Turner cases. Instead, they want us to simply trust them and trust the system — trust that the system takes care of the not-perfect attorneys, which this might be the most appalling part, quote, attorneys and judges, like all human beings, aren't perfect. They say this as though we've been criticizing them for typos and not meeting deadlines and not life-or-death issues. They say this as if we're not showing them that this is a broken system, as if we're not telling them we're not okay with how this is working, as if we're not explicitly saying Alex Murdaugh and Bowen Turner would not have gotten where they were if the system worked the way that it's supposed to. And nowhere in this piece do these lawyers talk about solutions to the problems.

[00:34:33] **Liz Farrell:** Not much has changed since then. Like we've told you before, right after Alex Murdaugh was found guilty, State Sen. Dick Harpootlian took to the Senate floor to talk about the Murdaugh loss as some great example of how legislator-lawyers don't get any favorable treatment from the judges they elect. They try to paint that like it's a myth. Literally right out of the gate, the broken system was looking for ways to convince the public that it is not broken.

[00:34:57] Then, in the Supreme Court hearing two weeks ago to address convicted murderer Jeroid Price's early release, one of the justices, Justice George C. James, made it a point to do the very same thing by putting the State Attorney General Alan Wilson on the spot by asking him for the record whether he thought the Fifth Circuit Solicitor, whose actions led to Price's release, had been unduly pressured by Price's attorney, longtime State Rep. Todd Rutherford. The answer of course was "no" because in what world is Alan Wilson saying yes to that? Alan Wilson has shown some courage over the last year in his willingness to prosecute Murdaugh and Murdaugh's alleged



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co-conspirators. But he is one of the many lumps of clay who was taken off the pottery wheel baked in that University of South Carolina School of Law kiln I was referring to earlier then glazed and baked again. In other words, he too is a product of the system whether or not he wants to be.

[00:35:54] By the way, have you ever seen those videos on Insta Reels or TikTok when a TV reporter does a live interview outside of a McDonald's where the employees got caught dealing drugs by, I don't know, slipping them in with the quarter pounders with cheese, and the reporter interviews a bystander in the parking lot who, in their best attempt at a casual, there's-nothing-to-see-here voice, is like, "Drugs? In the quarter pounders? At a McDonald's? No, no. Never heard of anything like that." That's how Alan Wilson sounded to us in that hearing when Justice James asked him about undue influence. A legislator-lawyer using his positional power to pressure a solicitor into doing something shady for his client that ultimately hurts victims? What? At a McDonald's? No, no. Never heard of anything like that.

[00:36:45] Back to the South Carolina Bar Association, guess who their May 2023 cover girl was? The 54 lawyer-legislators standing on the statehouse steps with the headline, "Thank you to South Carolina's lawyer-legislators" with an exclamation point. Here's David with their cover story.

[00:37:05] **David Moses:** Lawyers bring a number of innate strengths to the law making process, including training in substantive law, constitutional issues, and expertise in the rule of law. Further, their legal education and instruction in oral advocacy are well suited to the task of crafting laws that benefit our state and its citizens. Lawyers created the very freedoms that citizens across the United States strive to uphold. Despite this, of the 46 members of the Senate, only 12 are lawyers. And of the 124 members of the House of Representatives, only 34 are lawyers.

[00:37:51] **Liz Farrell:** Only. You guys. 54 lawyer-legislators is almost a third of our entire legislature, and they say "only." Let me do some math here. The South Carolina Bar Association says it represents about 17,000 lawyers. According to an American Bar Association survey from 2021 though, South Carolina apparently has more like 11,000 attorneys. We're not sure how to account for that difference. That said, and I'm about to shock you given what



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these past two years have been like here, South Carolina ranks the lowest in the country for the number of attorneys we have per capita. Meaning, of all the states in this country, South Carolina actually has fewer lawyers per 1,000 residents than even North and South Dakotas do. And yet look at the power there. Look at how much power this small demographic holds in this one state. Lawyers make up two-tenths of a percent of our state's population, and yet one-third of our legislature is made up of attorneys. For comparison, 51.5% of South Carolina's population is made up of women, but there are only five women in the state senate. Five. They make up less than 11% of our most powerful lawmakers in this state. And the South Carolina Bar Association has the audacity to say "only" about the representation of attorney-lawmakers. This would be really funny if it weren't yet another attempt by this tiny group of professionals to trick our state into believing this is the way it should be. Here is David again with the state Bar's cover story.

[00:39:32] **David Moses:** The Bar's Lawyer Legislator Committee works tirelessly to strengthen ties with the General Assembly and advocate for more important legislation for the betterment of all South Carolinians. We recognize that it is not without sacrifice that our lawyer-legislators serve in the General Assembly. Their service requires a substantial amount of time away from their law practice and their families. The Bar extends its support and heartfelt thanks to these public servants for their unwavering commitment to the citizens of our state.

[00:40:14] **Liz Farrell:** We'll be right back.

[00:40:23] **Mandy Matney:** The Bar wants us to only see the good side of having lawyers as lawmakers, and there is a good side. People trained in the law in its use are perhaps ideally suited to writing laws. But are legislators actually writing the laws or is it done by lobbyists and other special interest groups? Hm. Ponder that one. The Bar is conflating the issue and once again ignoring the problem. They are making it seem like the criticism is related to lawyers in the legislature — full stop — as opposed to lawyers in the legislature who use that position to their apparently financial advantage. They want us to believe that these lawyers are breaking their backs for the public because these lawyers love public service. They want us to focus on the sacrifice that they're making. By the way, y'all remember a little thing called



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legislative immunity, right? The thing that allows legislator-lawyers to put off their court appearances during the legislative session. The little trick they all get to use when it suits them. But sure. Sacrifice.

[00:41:37] Let's talk about the culture here. Publicly, we're told that there's no problem whatsoever with legislator-attorneys; that they do not misuse their positions of power for personal gain in their cases; they do not misuse their role as electors of the judges; that everything is great. And yet we see things like what happened in the Jeroid Price case, where \$30,000 of the public's money is now being used as reward money to clean up a mess made by a lawyer-legislator. And we see things like what happened in the Bowen Turner case when Judge Markley Dennis, who is apparently known as a defendant-friendly judge, who according to the archives hadn't presided over criminal court in Orangeburg County for almost ten years, was suddenly there in the courtroom able to sign off on a dangerously weak plea deal basically behind closed doors for the client of State Sen. Brad Hutto. There are legislator-lawyers. But there are also liberator-lawyers in South Carolina, or at least that's what we're going to call them. Good attorneys who want the current system to be philosophically burned to the ground and get rebuilt for the benefit of everyone instead of the few. These liberator-lawyers have repeatedly told us about how, in this state, it is unfortunately an important strategy to associate their cases with legislator-lawyers. Why? Because legislator-lawyers are fun at parties? No. Because they use their positional power to influence the outcome of their cases — the very thing that they all deny doing but we know many of them do. And to us, and to most people it would seem, that is a monumental conflict of interest.

[00:43:30] So yes, we want a bill that kicks legislator-lawyers off the selection committee. That's great. But if that's the sum total of change, then all that they're doing is placating us and the people of South Carolina, hoping for this to die down and go away. But we are not going away, and the victims are not going away. In fact, their voices are going to get stronger and louder. Here's what change we want to see: change that will radicalize the legislature and root out corruption at all levels in the judicial system. Legislator-lawyers should be barred from representing any clients who are suing state agencies, and they should be barred from representing any clients who are being prosecuted by the state.



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[00:44:24] Yup, we said what we said. If lawyers want to be legislators because they want to help and serve the public as they say that they do, if that's the reason they're doing this for \$10,000 annually and 58 cents a mile and \$140 per diem during the legislative session, then that is cool. They just need to remove all conflicts of interest first. And representing clients who are suing the state is a conflict of interest, as is representing people who are being prosecuted by the state. It seems pretty simple to us. I'm sure there are lawyer-lawmakers who aren't happy to hear us say this. Like Justin Bamberg is a good person and a good lawmaker. But unfortunately for him, other lawyer-lawmakers have done too much damage to erode public trust. They lost that privilege because of cases like Jeroid Price and Bowen Turner. The public deserves better, and victims deserve better. This shouldn't be hard to understand because as it stands, this judicial system, this legal system in South Carolina, is shameful. And no matter how many, quote, good, aspects of the system to which the Bar and other self-interested people can point out, it will never make up for the stone-cold fact that the system is built to benefit two-tenths of a percent of the state's population over the rest of us.

[00:46:10] **Liz Farrell:** Okay, now let's quickly talk about the latest with the Nautilus case, the federal case in which Alex Murdaugh has decided to confess to more lies, another case in which the victims are treated as pawns and not as human beings who have been through enough. On Monday, Eric Bland and Ronnie Richter of Bland Richter, who represent the Satterfield family, held a press conference to address Alex's latest nonsense. During it, they reiterated what we've been saying ever since Alex confessed to lying about the dogs tripping Gloria. Ever since Alex, the guy being sued by Nautilus for insurance fraud, suggested that Nautilus get money from the Satterfields instead — the Satterfields, who didn't receive a dime from Nautilus because Alex stole their settlement and frankly was only able to do so because the insurance company lawyers allowed him to do things secretly and outside the normal process. Over the past week, we've been looking at our notes from the beginning of our Nautilus coverage, and we were reminded of the company's legal trajectory when they entered the arena. We touched on this last week and in Cup of Justice, but it's important to say it again. It's well established that the legal circles in South Carolina are tiny, right, and now we know just how tiny. The attorneys who help broker the insurance settlements in the state are often in those circles. It's hard to believe





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that no one knew there was something strange going on with the Satterfield settlement before the murders when we did. We knew it was weird. As we've since learned, attorneys close to Alex knew it was weird. People in the community knew it was weird. But somehow Nautilus, the company that doled out millions of dollars to him, was shocked.

[00:47:47] This case, in our opinion, has always been about Nautilus saving face because they couldn't just stand there, right? And here's the thing. What are they actually trying to accomplish? Alex lied to you. Well, get in line, Nautilus. We see them as no different from Randy Murdaugh and Johnny Parker filing complaints against Alex to get their money back before the victims can. Before all of this, Alex literally tried to steal \$250,000 from PMPED, \$125,000 of which was from Randy, his brother. And yet both Randy and Johnny continued to trust Alex enough to loan him ungodly amounts of money. That feels like betting, and they lost. But whose fault is that? Nautilus took the deal with Alex because it was a good deal for them. They didn't want to risk going to trial and owing even more money. No matter that Alex was threatening them, they still chose to bet on Alex. And whose fault is that? I know whose fault it isn't, and that's the Satterfield family's.

[00:48:47] By the way, Judge Richard Gergel issued an order in this case this week, disallowing the coreceivership to represent Alex's interest in the Nautilus case. The coreceivers were attempting to enter the case on Alex's behalf since they're in charge of his assets. It was an attempt to protect the money that has been earmarked for Alex's creditors, most of whom are his victims. But the judge denied this, saying that the coreceivers have no standing in this case, so that was a bummer. But also, Alex's admission that he had lied made it all but impossible for the coreceivership to have had any effect on protecting those assets to begin with. It's almost like Alex and Dick and Jim and Nautilus and Randy Murdaugh and Johnny Parker would rather see anyone but the actual victims in these cases get any money. It becomes that perverse and that mean-spirited. It goes back to that insular Murdaugh economy we always talk about; about all the attempts that have been made to keep the money circulating among the family and their friends. They say they want to make victims whole, but their actions speak louder than those words.



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[00:49:54] And that brings us back to the core issue: how this system is built to relentlessly protect the powerful at all costs. Whether it's finding ways to keep money intended for victims for themselves or helping friends at the expense of public safety or letting criminal cases linger in the system because dropping the charges when no one is looking helps pad prosecution numbers, the victims are always an afterthought in South Carolina. More needs to be said about that. More people need to do the important work. We need more people like Sarah A. Ford, who gives us hope.

[00:50:32] **Sarah A. Ford:** We cannot change what we don't understand or acknowledge. I challenge us. I see that there is hope today for victims in South Carolina. We will accept nothing less. While power and privilege seem to reign supreme in South Carolina, to those of us who stand beside victims in a courtroom or those lobbying for change here at the statehouse, we know that eventually that power will cease to exert that same influence because the people will not allow it. We will not stand for it. The people will choose to protect and advocate for victims and survivors. That's why we're here. As a victim of sexual assault myself, that's why I'm here. I hope that hearing from all of these incredible speakers today will push us all, particularly those here in the statehouse, to acknowledge the inequities that victims face, demand accountability, and commit to changing and making South Carolina a better place for all victims. Those in power have taken notice of this movement. This is a movement, and the only movement we can make is forward for Dallas, for Stephen, for Damion, for Gavin, for all victims. We will not back down.

[00:51:58] **Mandy Matney:** And I hope that all of you will join in that very important movement, which is why we rearranged plans for today's episode to focus on these issues with victims at the center because, like I said, this is at the very core of what we do and why we are doing it. Change like this can be overwhelming and all-consuming. Hearing heartbreaking stories about not only what happened to Dallas and Damion and Stephen, but what the system did to their families after the tragedy; how the system made it so much worse. It is gut-wrenching, but it is important. We have come a long way in the last two years, but the mission is far from over. Like Sarah said, we need to demand accountability now or nothing will change.



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[00:52:53] Think about it. Not a single public official has been held accountable for what happened in the Bowen Turner case nor the Jeroid Price case nor the Stephen Smith case. Solicitor Duffie Stone has faced no consequences for his involvement in the Murdaugh murders investigation. He is still the solicitor where I live. Alex Murdaugh's alleged tombstone buddy, Greg Alexander, is still the police chief in Yemassee, South Carolina. And Judge Carmen Mullen is still ruling from the bench. Like we've said before, South Carolina is the land of no consequences when it comes to public officials. And the truth is we will be seeing more Bowen Turner and Jeroid Price cases over and over again until accountability happens and public officials learn that they cannot be recklessly endangering the public for their own benefit without facing real consequences beyond scrutiny.

[00:53:54] That said, things will be changing here at Luna Shark for the better, too. Today was supposed to be the last episode of MMP, but we switched things around. So next week, given nothing extremely chaotic or life-changing happens — knock on wood — we will have a special ode to MMP episode as our last episode of the Murdaugh Murders Podcast. Then, the following week, we will change the name of the show and we will continue to expose the truth, give a voice to the voiceless, and get the story straight on a number of cases, including the ongoing cases that we have already covered. You will meet new journalists who have been hired thanks to MMP Premium members, and we will be covering more cases outside of South Carolina where crime meets corruption. MMP Premium members, look for some exciting announcements and big changes in the next few weeks. And thank you for helping us get here. Stay tuned, stay pesky, and stay in the sunlight.

[00:55:18] **Outro:** The Murdaugh Murders Podcast is created and hosted by me, Mandy Matney, produced by my husband, David Moses. And Liz Farrell is our executive editor. From Luna Shark Productions.