



EPISODE 83: Filmmaker Erin Lee Carr on Michelle Carter, Gypsy Rose and Mica Miller Cases

Mandy Matney 00:00

Hey y'all, I am so excited about today's episode. Erin Lee Carr is an absolute queen. She is one of the most brilliant people I've ever met. I've been a fan of Erin long before our worlds collided on the Murdaugh story in 2021 and you may have heard of a certain deadline story about a project we are working on. Erin has been a bright light in a dark world for me, an example of someone who can do good in the true crime space and succeed while sticking to their own ethics and values. Like Liz and me, Erin gravitates toward complicated true crime stories and she tells them in a way that is truthful, victim focused and thought provoking. In fact Erin Created and directed two of my favorite documentaries of all time, which we will be talking about today, Mommy Dead and Dearest and I Love You Now Die. Both stories were complex and the documentaries taught me to approach storytelling differently. In today's episode, Erin and I chat about the Michelle Carter case as it relates to the latest case that we've been working on at True Sunlight, Mica Miller's. We talk about how complicated the case against Michelle Carter was considering the fact she was charged with manslaughter in the Conrad Roy suicide when she wasn't anywhere near the scene. Erin is also an author of a fabulous book and a life changing memoir for me personally, as someone who is still learning how to process enormous grief. Her book is called All That You Leave Behind, a Memoir. Check the link in the description. Also, we talk a lot about the Gypsy Rose case, and how to approach stories involving abuse victims. And reserved just for Luna Shark Premium Members. We talk about the different types of professionals that ELC likes to work with, and what we would both do for a living if we weren't so entrenched in our current fields. All right, so let's get into it. I am joined today by one of my personal heroes and just favorite people ever. Erin

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Lee Carr. Cups up, Erin. I can't believe we haven't done this, I thought that you were a guest for some reason, but you weren't. And David actually looked back and you were on MMP two years ago. So we've known each other for like two and a half years now. Which is just crazy. Time flies. And you've done a ton of every time I turn around, you're doing a new documentary or project, you are probably the most productive person I've ever met. And we should probably do like a side note of how Erin is so productive, because I'm just blown away at all your projects. But today, I would like to talk to you about a couple cases that you drew me into when I was in just my true crime binging documentary phase, not creating any true crime content, but just obsessed with it and very interested in it. And one of those cases was the Michelle Carter case. And you actually went to the you went to that trial, correct? And you did the documentary I Love You Now Die, which pretty much introduced the world to this very complicated true crime case. And the reason why we're talking about it is I have been working on the Mica Miller case. And the big question in that case is when someone commits suicide, and can other people be held responsible, and can people who led them to suicide be charged with manslaughter. And in that case, it's especially known as the texting to death case. There was just...it was so unique because there was actually so much evidence leading up to Conrad Roy's death of his interaction with Michelle Carter. And the entire case is extremely fascinating. But what drew you into the case to begin with, and what year did you get involved? Tell me about all that.

Erin Lee Carr 04:33

So for the Michelle Carter case, it was at the time a sort of local Boston story that had gone somewhat more sort of mainstream with the



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Washington Post publishing an article that said like, is this woman responsible? And when you look at her face, and you looked at how young she was, for me, there was just an incredible amount of questions like who is that person behind that facade? Odd, in the things that had been out in the public about her texting, like get back in the fucking car, or just do it or different things, it seems so out of the realm of possibility for that girl to be doing that. And so something that I've studied, for the majority of my life is who we are behind computer screens? Is that who we are, or is that sort of our ID or alter ego. So I don't think you could have gotten a more intense case that I really wanted to do. And so, and I didn't have access, one of the craziest parts about that documentary is I did not get access to obviously the deceased, Conrad who I have an enormous amount of respect for and then Michelle Carter, who was, you know, in, in a trial that time and I got access to lawyers and to Conrad's family, and all that kind of stuff. But essentially, I created this, a little bit of this genre shift of the first side was the prosecution, that first episode, in the second was the defense. And I don't tell you, where I end up as a documentarian, what I believed, and I think a lot of people, you know, sort of understood where I was. I'm somebody that cares a lot about mental health and the amount of mental health issues that we're at, you know, inside that case, was substantial. So, yeah, I mean, that is, is an was such an important case to me. And I think, unfortunately, yeah, there are ways to really harm people, as they tend towards having those really dark feelings of suicide, and you can be a force for good or you can be somebody that is potentially harming them in continual fashion.



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Mandy Matney 06:41

Yeah, with Mica Miller's case, in the abuse that we've uncovered. And it's similar in the fact that it's modern day. So everybody, everything is in text messages. There's so much evidence now to document abuse via text message. And I think that the Michelle Carter case really opened that door to just approach things differently in that way, versus I think, before police were just like, well, there's no evidence of anything. So what are you going to do, but I think what's so fascinating with the Michelle Carter case, is that the police and prosecution kind of found a way into it, versus a lot of police and prosecution that I encounter. They want a debt to be suicide, because it's its author list. It's one less murder that's open. And it's one less thing for them to have to deal with. Do you know, was there one person within the prosecution or one detective that really got the ball going in that case and how that process worked?

Erin Lee Carr 07:43

Oh, that's such an interesting question. Nobody's ever asked me that. And I did the rounds when it came to the Michelle Carter case. So I think that it was really the prosecution. The two female prosecutors that got the cook, like got the complaint and saw what the text messages were saying. And it galvanized them into this intense way of this kid was murdered by this other kid. And they also, I mean, we're trying to figure out legally assisted suicide, what's going on in Massachusetts, they were trying to set a precedent that you can't do certain things like this. So I think the prosecutors really wanted to intensely spell out like this is wrong. I do think that one of the craziest things about it was that their sort of motive that they put on Michelle was that she was somebody that wanted attention. She was a lonely girl, no one wanted to hang out with her. So you see inside the documentary, there are these girls that



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are coming up that were friends with her and I'm using air quotes for those who are listening that said, you know, I didn't want to hang out with her, like, you know, she always was asking you to come by. But then she went, she would reach out about something dramatic, of course, we would respond. And so when her then sort of boyfriend at the time, literally committed suicide, everybody flocked to her. And that's what the prosecution said was the motive. But like, what was the real thing, and I feel comfortable years later saying this. This was an emotionally tortured young woman. She had an eating disorder. She was hospitalized, impatient. She had so many dark thoughts herself, she was questioning, you know who she was and her sexuality. And so to me, it was such a, you know, they wanted to see her like a villain which she was she was found guilty of aiding and abetting his suicide, but it was just for anybody who's been bullied throughout their life and I was rhythmically bullied. As I was growing up in school. I was a very odd duck I didn't know how to fit in. And so to be at trial and see these young women doing that like it just hit me. It just felt so icky. And so that was something that there was just this sort of Mean Girls suffocation of pointing out that Michelle did that for their attention, which, you know, ultimately is very unusual.

Mandy Matney 10:22

Yeah, in the documentary, I'll never forget that part of trial were several girls that were for her friend, I remember watching that, and several of her there were mean high school Mean Girls, and then reading text messages of like they, she was trying to go to the mall with them, or whatever, and they would ignore her. And it was just really, really heartbreaking. And I think what you did with that documentary, and one of the main things that made me want to work with you was you



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showed it as a complicated store. It's just not black and white. You know, it's not that this girl is evil. And she's just, she was just born evil, and she just wanted evil attention. And it makes you not necessarily feel you do feel bad for her. You do. Absolutely. And also, it's a kid that we're talking about here. And I think that she was so young, when all this was happening. And that's just another layer to this, that it's just so much easier to have sympathy for someone who's so young kids just don't know what they're doing. And they don't know the consequences of their actions. And they, their brains just are literally not complete in those terms. Like her being so young. And I saw a quote in some paper that you were interviewed in, your saying, like you remember being at the trial, and just everybody just it was kind of like a witch hunt. Everybody just wanted to take this girl down, and you were just kind of like it's a little bit more complicated.

Erin Lee Carr 11:58

Well, what are the things and I'll also say, because I always like to do a little bit of a seesaw, like, I also definitely saw her as a human. I see all humans as humans, but like, for example, one of the things that Michelle Carter did that was just so bizarre was Michelle organized a softball game called Homers for Conrad, which was going to be an event for everybody that knew Conrad to to come together and to play for him. He was a huge baseball fan. And she was at the time texting with his then best friend. And you know, Michelle was from this town called Plainville, which is middle class to upper middle class. And Conrad was, you know, from this sort of more working town, and Tom was like, you know, it would be good to be here, because that's where, you know, Conrad's family and friends live. And Michelle was just like, I don't know, anybody there. I can't be held there. And the intimation was



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that, you know, it was for her, it was for her and all her friends to sort of see. And there are these photos that are very disturbing of her like smiling and grinning. And it was like, you know, she was queen for a day, right? And so all of these factors, when you think about you think about a very troubled kid, a young kid. But let's think back to us as teenagers, you Mandy knew right from wrong. And I think that, you know, you are somebody that gets incredibly bullied online. And so you know, this from a perspective of you, I'm sure it's like, yeah, like, some of these people are responsible for some of the feelings I have, because it's said to me over and over and over and over again, but then I'll complicate it further by saying for a long time, Michelle Carter was really, you know, obviously, like, you can't commit suicide, I need you like, for a very long period of time, she was doing the socially acceptable way of communicating when somebody was talking about suicide. And at a certain point, she just flipped, right? Could have been the medication, which he wasn't on a ton of medication. I obviously talked to that doctor, that sort of more famous interview now, it just like, you know, with all these things, it was like, and I had all these boards, and it was like, Well, this is who she is, but this is what happened. And so exactly, as you said, but I think that we are not the people who are behind closed doors on the computer screen, we would text and do things we would never do, I believe to this person's face. Like I would I would be shocked if the people that said stuff about you. I mean, I want to be sensitive about your brother and things like that. If they would have the audacity to say that to you, in person, right? Like they have to see what you react like right? We still live in a society where it's completely antisocial. Odd to ever do anything like that. And a lot of humans are not capable of it. But there are these sort of complex issues



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about computers and identity and, you know, all these sort of like, why do we feel like we're hidden when we're online, right?

Mandy Matney 15:14

And there's no consequence. They don't feel like there's a consequence. When it's digital communication versus communication in person. I think people don't do those things in person, because it's not necessarily a legal consequence. But like you said, other people will start yelling at that, like there will be, there will be some sort of consequence, there will be a reaction to it. And it's just getting so complicated now. And I all my wheels are spinning thinking about this, because where do we go in a world where words are just as consequential and effective when they are delivered online versus as in person, and I believe, like, they still hurt. And in this case of the Mica Miller case that I keep going back to and I keep thinking about it's, you know, how it is with cases, you're in a case and you just everything relates back to it. And you think, Mica of what you see, you see that girl's face everywhere. You think you relate everything to her, and you're just in it, and that's that's where I am right now. And with the Miller case, and the text messages that her husband sent her.

Erin Lee Carr 16:21

And what did they say? What were they like? Because I think the power comes from hearing what the Michelle Carter thing was like when you hear it, and like this is I've been out of context, but like that's where some of the power is, in my opinion.



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Mandy Matney 16:35

I have been talking to her friend Charlotte. Charlotte has helped me just understand. Charlotte was her best friend. And she has all sorts of text messages documenting this abuse. And I know one incident was in November 2022, there was a big blowup fight between Mica and JP, her husband, and the fight was over nothing. It was basically him asking her over and over again, if you were to kiss a girl, who would it be and she finally said I would kiss Charlotte because she's my best friend and she wouldn't tell anybody and Charlotte who's the person I've been talking to, and he blew up. Freaked out to the point, Mica was scared and she drove all the way to her sister's house in Gaffney, which was like three hours away. And there are just all of these texts, JP texted her friend, Charlotte. So on this night and November 2022. He was telling Mica and her sister, I have a gun and I'm coming to you. And they called the police. They reported this and as they were calling the police, and as they were both freaked out, JP kept texting them. Mica said I don't feel safe. And he said lol and this is a pastor. lol whatever, then stay away forever. That shit. We're going to be up all night. Another text message. There's only one way this will work. You come home now. And then she said I don't feel safe coming home. Mica, that's such a cop out You liar. I'm three hours and seven minutes away. So he's acting like he's, he's getting closer and closer. And you can't come here. And like I said, you can't come to someone's house threatening with a gun. There's kids involved because there was a child sleeping at the house. And he said ha ha ha I don't care. lol I have no gun. Crazy. And then she said you just texted my sister. You're armed. That doesn't mean gun. Everybody is going to be awake all night by can't text and drive. Anyways.



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Erin Lee Carr 18:39

Oh, God. I mean, that's just like, it's chilling. Like, it's just, I mean, it's just that's that's, that is the threat, right? It's the threat. It's in writing. This person doesn't care.

Mandy Matney 18:51

Yeah. And like this went on forever. And another example that just gave me the chills, that she reported to police trying to get a restraining order. She was at dinner with her family. And she had changed her number multiple times. She was trying...this was after they were after she was trying to get a divorce. She was in the separation period. And South Carolina. It's really stupid. You have to be separated for a year before you're officially divorced. They were in that period. She was just trying everything impossible to get away from him and to get her to get her freedom back and to get her life back. And he texted her one night when she was at dinner with her family and they were eating oysters. I hope you enjoy the oysters lol and like that, again, as somebody has been harassed and as somebody who has been very freaked out by stalking and as somebody who has been very paranoid about it's things like that I look at my kid's life and I'm like I don't under I could understand how she could see no possible way out.

Erin Lee Carr 19:56

And I think that if this is a supposition by it, I think one that I can make my opinion on, we look at the different victims, in this case, the victim in the case that the prosecutors chose to go forward to a young man full of promise, right? That was a snatch from his life, we will look at the mica case, this is a wife of somebody, they're having a marital dispute, and that it is something that happens all the time. And so there is this



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case where it's like, this is the sort of the victim that we want to protect, right? And then there's like, who is like, oh, we can't get involved in this, you know, and she made her own choices. She made her own choices. And if that's just not lost on them, yeah, right. The difference of the victims, I think, obviously talks to the difference in the prosecution attempts and things like that. I mean, obviously, different jurisdictions. There's Boston, which is very heavy, free speech. And it was a sort of lightning rod case. But there's this you can I mean, I started looking into the case, it's just you, this person made every single Mica said everything, this person is going to hurt me. I'm so scared of everybody possible. And you know, who should be at fault, or all the people that ignored her? Right? It's not just JP, it's the system that allowed her to be effectively killed.

Mandy Matney 21:20

I know. And I think it's really interesting, like what you said, there's kind of a hierarchy of victims, the prosecutors zero and on and it seems like women in abusive relationships are always at the very bottom. And I've noticed that over and over again. And when I looked at these police reports of mica reporting, harassment, he slashed your tires one time, allegedly, every time she called the police, they said something like, this is the domestic issue. This isn't this, this sounds like a civil issue. And they gave every excuse in the world to not do anything. And there's something really wrong with our system that ignores warning signs like that, and ignores women who are literally begging for help and doing everything that they can. And it makes me really mad because she worked for the church. And so she didn't have any of her own money. She basically followed all of the I call them now Harrison, Butker rules of life, the serve God, serve your husband, and everything will be okay. And



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she did all of those things. And she woke up one day and realized that she was in a horribly abusive relationship, and the way our society works, there's just no options for women like that.

Erin Lee Carr 22:37

Then she had been groomed since she was 15. Right. And so like, you know, I, you know, in the wake of OJ's death, I took a look. And I watched the Tour De Force documentary, OJ Made in America. And something that was so striking to me, after all the work I've done the past 10 years, is that. So we're at trial with OJ and the prosecution, Marcia Clark is setting up all this stuff about the abuse, and all the phone calls, the 911, the photos that have Nicole's bruised face, these things. And so you see all that evidence. And then there's this point in which a juror in sort of present day when the documentary was made, talking about how they felt about Nicole and this, this one woman who I'm not going to name was just like, you know, I don't trust you if you're taking an ass weapon from a man when you don't have to. And so, for mica for Nicole for, you know, all the women that have been in these situations, it comes from this internalized misogyny, of like women have done something that they need to be punished for. This is like biblical things. Right. And, you know, so I think that we still have such a dysfunctional idea about DV and how it starts. And once that happened, and like, right now we're sitting in this thing where P Diddy was shown, there's video evidence of him hurting his then girlfriend, Cassie, right. And it's only through that where it's a video, and it's somebody clearly beating the person and it's unprovoked, right, that we as a society feel strongly at the time. You know, like, it's just so we are in 2024. And, you know, had the victims been flipped. Had Michelle been



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the victim, and Conrad was the perpetrator. Would we have gone to trial? I don't know. I don't know either.

Mandy Matney 24:38

I want to talk more about that. Especially the P Diddy stuff after a quick commercial break. We'll be right back. Oh yeah, that P Diddy video I saw a meme the other day that just struck me to my core that it just simply said, Why does it have to be on video for a woman to be believed? And God, I hate that. And I hate that we are in this society that the rules were set by men. The laws were set by men and the laws were, I think they help abusers more than they help victims in a lot of cases, especially domestic violence. And I get so frustrated. And immediately when I started working on the Mica Miller case, immediately a lot of the reaction on Twitter was why did she stay? And if he was so bad, why, and it's like, the question is, why don't we have a system that would help somebody like that? How could she leave? I don't see a way that she could have, that she had any other option? Those are the questions we need to ask instead of, again, why are we constantly blaming women for these things?

Erin Lee Carr 26:07

And you know that the perpetrators are people too, that potentially have been abused? But what are you and I talking about? Is it a pattern? Is it something that continues into the present day, and also us sort of indicting the system that allows perpetrators to sort of go sort of not face consequences? And it's the same thing, I mean, we could do a whole nother podcast about standing your ground rules, right? If you are a person that's protecting your house against a person of color, guess what's going to happen, you know, you're likely going to win your



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case. And there is this incredible stat, where women who try to use stand your ground defense strategies, when their partner kills them, they basically never win.

Mandy Matney 26:56

There was also another statistic that within domestic violence situations that result in death, and it had the percentage of men who go to prison and their prison length and the percentage of women, I think it was, like 70% of them on did 20 years or something, it was insane. And in that situation, women always lose.

Erin Lee Carr 27:20

Yeah, I mean, you know, I think that I just feel fearful that we are inside a system that doesn't want to change, that doesn't feel like it has to change, that when women protect themselves against the sort of patriarchy or system in their life. They're asking for it. And so it's like all of these factors from my upbringing, and then understanding all this sort of case law and being a part of these cases for 10 years, and knowing what emotional, physical and sexual abuse does to people and does to the families that they try to have after the fact and all of their friends and things like that. I mean, it is incredibly, incredibly disturbing. But there are good prosecutors, there are good defense attorneys, there are these people in the system that are fighting for the rights of victims. And so I think it's about empowering those people to continue and hopefully growing more people like that, that want to change the system.



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Mandy Matney 28:15

Exactly. So, and I don't know if you've ever said this, but how did you feel about Michelle Carter circling back to that, how did you feel about her sentence? Do you think it was appropriate?

Erin Lee Carr 28:26

I was shocked that she was found guilty. There was this really weird thing that happened where in the judge's decision, it wasn't a jury trial, it was literally the judge decided, and there was something that felt inaccurate inside his decision that was about I'd have to look again, but it was I think it was something like, you know, that she had said, get back in the fucking car. And she'd actually texted it and texted it to a friend. And there was something and I was like, Well, I don't there's something about this, that doesn't feel right. And then for her to have that sort of guilty verdict. Yeah, it was shocking. And I think that, you know, she got out and she lives her own sort of really private life, I've, I will forever want to try and meet her to sort of understand her more fully, like my door is completely open. But yeah, I mean, did it potentially deter other people who were thinking about saying certain things when their friends were talking about, you know, mental health risks? I don't know. But yeah, I guess my feelings are just so complicated, right? And we live in a sort of Murdaugh world where you know, we know who did it right are these sorts of absolutes and these moral absolutes and then you know, and then you live in these other and Mica, right? Like this is a moral absolute. This person was tortured to death by the person that you know, she was the babysitter of his four kids. She met him at 15. You can Not get more of a grooming situation than that. But yeah, I just feel so I often take on cases where it's you're very unclear how to feel about it. And then at the end of the documentary, it's about how you, as



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an individual, are making the decision based on all the evidence that I've presented to you about how you feel. And that's how I've gotten people to really engage with my films. So long answer, it's complicated.

Mandy Matney 30:26

Yeah, but I think that that's the good part about your film. It's...they're not just who done it. And let's just hate on this person, it makes you think, like Michelle Carter, you just have to sit and like, you feel sorry for her at times. And then you're like, What are you doing other times? But ultimately, it's just a complicated thing. And I think the good part about that case is that, hopefully, yes, it does. You shouldn't text someone to encourage suicide in any way. And then the Mica Miller case, we also have no evidence of her communication the day that she died right now. So it's really hard to understand what was going on. But for cops to just simply say, it's just a suicide. She did it. And that's that, and it's just really aggravating. But I want to switch to another topic of another extremely complicated case. Gypsy Rose, have you talked about Gypsy in a while?

Erin Lee Carr 31:31

Yeah, I mean, I talk to Gypsy.

Mandy Matney 31:32

You do? Yeah. That's awesome. I've been wanting to ask you about this for a long time. You are the reason why I knew about Gypsy Rose. I was living in Missouri at the time that was going on. And I had no idea that that was going on until I watched your documentary with my roommates. What drew you to that case? And how did you get sucked into that? And how did you decide to make a documentary?



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Erin Lee Carr 31:56

So the way that I then approached and to a certain extent now is I do like, sort of like itty bitty stories that could go big, right? That was not a known case, nobody really knew about it, it was in a thought catalog piece by this woman named Megan, and it just was this kind of like, there's something weird about this young woman who is reported to have to be in a wheelchair, and there was some sort of murder with her mother. And so I, I basically knew nothing about the case, started getting into it. And at the same time, there was this writer, Michelle Dean, who was going to write a piece for BuzzFeed. And we were sort of actively working on it at the same time, and she ended up being interviewed in the documentary, and it just was like, what happened here, and then you would see pictures of Gypsy and Diddy. And it was just like, these pictures said 1000 different things from the way that Gypsy looks to her clothing. How old was she? What was going on? What were her actual illnesses? You know, and so then I ended up getting in touch with Mike Stanfield, Gypsies, then public defender that was open to me, but he was like, don't don't talk to my client, right? Like, we're sort of fighting for my clients' life.. And most people, I think, would say, Okay, we can't get the interview. I gotta move on to a different subject. But then I filmed with the family, they got to know me, it was raw. It was Christie, Mia and Dylan. And I mainly hung out with Christie, who is incredible. We're close friends now. And you know, there was just so much and there was so much in the tangle of the Blanchard's and what was going on. And so I ended up feeling like that documentary could be a big deal. It was my second film. But then it just blew up because like you nobody had ever heard this case before. It became one of the most famous true crime cases that was then made into a television show by Nick and Tosca. And, and then I've gotten to



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know Gypsy and you know, as she's gotten out of prison and talked to her about what that's been like. And last night, I found out she was on an episode of the Kardashians. You know, like, it's just like, what simulated reality? Are we living in this case that I started investigating in 2015? This is where we're at now, but yeah.

Mandy Matney 34:21

Yeah, since she's gotten out of it and she got a prison in December.

Erin Lee Carr 34:26

I believe. I was invited to go and then the day that she got out and I really, really, really regret not going, I had some sort of work thing that was happening but it would have been really significant because they say you are a real part of the reason why, you know, Gypsy is going to be out and I don't that has not lost me. I have a career because of that family. And I will never forget that I will never forget their trust in me. But yeah, she got out and she was with her then husband and like just the social media sort of descended and she's become this like cult personality.

Mandy Matney 35:03

Right? And she's in tabloids, tabloids are following her dating life is so crazy. I've never seen anything like that before. And I think again, she was this very complicated person that I, you could look at click bait headlines and maybe judge her for one thing, but you watch your documentary and you're like, whoa, that was a serious, serious case of long term abuse.



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Erin Lee Carr 35:33

Beyond what we have ever known. I still have the medical records and all the different things that she had to go through. This was like Nuremberg sort of stuff, you know, and it was, you know, what she had to go through medically with her feeding her epilepsy med with, you know, the teeth falling out to stomach problems to eyesight, like, all these things? And, you know, there was a big question at the time. It's like, why did she stay in that abusive relationship? You know, this is a theme of our work today and our work together? And yeah, it's just like, yeah, when you are, you know, and she was violently intimidated by DD. And she said to me, and DD is no longer here. So I could in fact, check this, I need to say that, but like, if you try to leave again, I will break your fingers with a hammer. And, you know, how quickly are you going to try to get away, you know, right. And so she found it was through the internet, she found her way out through the internet, and through dating, and she made a bad choice, a really bad choice. But none of us gets to judge her because we did not go through anything like that. And the court judged her, but I think they the sentence they gave her for what happened was on the lighter side, obviously, because the abuse that she had endured, and like documented abuse.

Mandy Matney 36:57

How many years did she get for her mother's death?

Erin Lee Carr 37:00

It was 10. And so I think she served like, you know, like a large chunk of it, but not the full 10.



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Mandy Matney 37:07

And was she technically charged with murder and convicted of murder, or was it manslaughter? Because her boyfriend did the majority of it, right?

Erin Lee Carr 37:15

I want to be sensitive, but you know, she, yeah, she did hand him the knife. She opened the door. Yeah. This was, yeah, she was a participant in it.

Mandy Matney 37:28

So how much time did you spend with her in the prison? Hours?

Erin Lee Carr 37:32

No, oh, my God, it wasn't hours. Oh, I think they gave me like, maybe 50 minutes or something in total. I'd have to look back. But it's one of these things where I've done a lot of prison interviews. And sometimes you get a lot of time. And then sometimes you get nothing. But you know, we had spent so much time talking in letters, I have these beautiful letters from her. And I spent so much time with her family and like we would talk all throughout the family. So it really felt like we knew each other. And you know, at the time, I remember that she came to the courtroom and the showers had not been working in the jail where she was being housed. And so she liked her hair. She wasn't even able to shower. And so she really wanted to pin it back. And I had a bobby pin. And I said, can I give her the bobby pin and the bailiff was like if you take it back and then to watch you sort of take it back and things like that. But this you know, this was a woman that was so, so mistreated. And you could just see in her interview and I think she finally watched it



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when she got out and we had a conversation about it. Because obviously she was not allowed to watch it in prison. But yeah, it just was so crazy. And she met the two loves of her life because of mommy dead and dearest. She met Ken and then you know her husband, which is unfortunately going through the process of divorcing and yeah, so it's just that moment in time with her in the jail interviewing her was one of the most intense time periods of my entire life like I couldn't believe that it actually happened. And then everything that followed.

Mandy Matney 39:09

The documentary, it looks like you spent like hours and hours and hours in there. So you did not, it was just very quick. You had to do that all one thing. You didn't keep going back to the prison. No, no. I mean, it seemed like you guys knew each other through letters and just talking on the phone.

Erin Lee Carr 39:27

Yeah, through letters, through phone calls, I mean, I think that what am I special skill sets on this earth and I like when people on podcasts talk not negatively, but positively about their skill sets. I see people and I can make people feel seen. And I think we had been talking for such a long period of time. So when people actually sit down for an interview with me, they know me, they know my story. They know what I'm trying to do. And I would say that while there's certain aspects of documentary filmmaking that I'm still learning, like I'm really good at interviewing people and really good at figuring out what is the thing and the secret that unlocks this because I think of it as like a mental chess match. And you're not on opposing sides, which you would think if you're playing chess, but I'm playing against the board against myself like, what



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moves this to this? And like, how do we actually tell something that is going to be about a societal understanding of mental illness? Or of you know what happens in sickness and paranoia and all these different things? But yeah, I was a really young filmmaker when I did that. And I think a lot of people have been really scared out of their mind to sort of do that. But I just, it was so clear to me.

Mandy Matney 40:41

I watched many things that you did throughout, you know, life and didn't realize it was all the same person, these things. And then I met you through your agent Neil, and we'll talk about that in a minute. But I remember watching that and being like, whoa, this girl is really good at interviewing this is, you just got to the heart of it. And also, it's not your work. It's different. I hate true crime. That's like the killer's side of the story where it's like it typically. But there are some cases like Gypsy Rose, where there are big societal issues to discuss when it comes to her. And, again, she's just this big, pop culture figure at this point. And it's just incredibly wild. I want to talk to you about that in a minute. But we're gonna take a short break.

Erin Lee Carr 41:44

Something else I did was download and listen to Terry Gross interviews. Terry Gross is the host of fresh air, and I listened to probably 100 interviews, and I diagrammed okay, like, When does she ask this? How does she ask it? Because these are really, really sensitive questions. And people could do the same with your podcast, right? And so if you are looking to be a documentary filmmaker, to be an investigative reporter, to, to find out how to do these things, there have been these all time greats like, Terry, that if you spend the time trying to figure out exactly



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how these people do this, you can really gamify it, you can really do it. And so I credit Yes, my dad when I listen, do interviews, but I never heard the other side, right? Yes, I had an amazing dad. He wrote this book about addiction, but he became the preeminent journalist. But Terry...and I was ultimately interviewed by Terry, and she said, you need to take a deep breath, we need to start again. You're too nervous, because I was in front of like, you know what people think of my Elvis, you know, like a superhero. Yeah. And so I think that I know, there's so many incredible, justice filled warriors on this podcast. And that's something that you can do to sort of educate yourself on how best to do it. Because I wasn't born doing this. I literally figured out how to do this through this copious amount of research.

Mandy Matney 43:10

Yeah, that's really good to know. The interviews are extremely, I think we connect on I'm, I'm very good at connecting with people, I'm very good at befriending people I'm very, my friends would always say in college that I was the one at we would come home and like I was the one that like, some random person would tell me this crazy story. And I'd be like, This guy was slimy for hours about how his mom was killed or whatever. And people have just opened up to me throughout my life. And I feel like we share in that, but it's different to nail that into an interview. There's the element of getting people to warm up to you and to not be cold with you and to trust you and trust that you're not going to make them look bad, which I'm sure Gypsy was a little nervous about.

Erin Lee Carr 44:00

You also have to ask that really hard question. And, for example, going back to Michelle Carter, I had to ask Conrad Roy's father about the



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physical abuse that had happened inside the home, his son is now dead. And I was sitting there and it was like my skin was crawling, but you have to know this person, have them understand, you know them as a human. But you also have to be ready to ask that very serious question that the audience is going to ask, you know, and I've taught classes on this, and I've done talks, but it's just like, you have to use that trust in order to say that and you're not going to like eff people over in the edit, but you need to at least give them an opportunity to answer the question that a lot of people are asking. And so for Gypsy it was that I couldn't remove the fact that she had been a fairly intense part of how her mother died, and that she was sitting in the bathroom You know, while her mother was being stabbed and listening to it, and then she sort of like had this thing where she had to, like, go on with her life, you know, and like, be with Nick and try to escape and do all these different things. But you know, I think an interview is almost always as good as those big moments where you have to ask that thing, and you have to let them answer and you never interrupt, you just let the silence breeze.

Mandy Matney 45:30

The silence is the hardest thing for me in interviews, because I think as humans, we just get nervous with silence, and you just want to fill the gap. And I do that all the time. And instead, it's like, no, just let it sit. Let them talk, things like that. With Gypsy another thing that I have been very compelled by is she's been bullied horribly on social media ever since she got out. Have you been following some of the things that people have said, I just saw an article, I just Googled her. It's like social media saying that Gypsy Rose never endured any abuse.



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Erin Lee Carr 46:11

I mean, I have all the records to prove that I could not be further from the case. And I think Gypsy has been really bullied about her looks. And so that feels scary to sort of get out of prison. And then you feel like you have to change the way you look. And ultimately, she's very happy with, um, she just had a procedure done for a nose job, that's something she'd probably wanted her whole life. With great power comes great responsibility. We think social media is this thing that you can sort of weaponize to use and to financially advantage your life, but it's really scary. And I think that she deals with so many of the consequences of being additionally a sort of a lightning rod person, but I think she has really handled it with the most Grace imaginable, and also humor. And one of the reasons why she's so big on social media is that, like, she just isn't going to say the can thing, you know, that a lot of people would say, and I mean, she's got a flair of genius. And her you know, like, I don't know, she's just fascinating.

Mandy Matney 47:14

So many different parts. Yeah, she says things that you wouldn't expect her to. And I've been all for it. I've been all for the glow up. I've been all for seeing her kind of treated like a celebrity because she just went through so much. And she overcame so much. And then she kind of is a celebrity, right?

Erin Lee Carr 47:34

Her life was made into an uber successful Hulu show. And she was at prison at the time, just sort of like, how am I a part of this, right? And I want to be thoughtful, like somebody is dead. And we don't want to glorify things like murder. But I think that she is a 21st century celebrity



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in all the ways that this weird world has created those. But I think that she will do great things with that. Right?

Mandy Matney 48:05

And I think that again, because how old is she? She's in her 30's? Oh, 32. So she's a year younger than me. Um, wow. Yeah, I think it'll but I think the other thing I always want to believe is that human beings can change for the better, that there's not one thing that cannot define your entire life. I believe that people should be held accountable, which I believe that she was. And what I saw from her in your documentary was that she understood that what she did was bad. And she understood she was remorseful for it. And she's never going to do anything like that ever again.

Erin Lee Carr 48:46

Which I absolutely believe her on.

Mandy Matney 48:49

And I think what a lot of the work that we do at Luna Shark is, a lot of it is centered on men who are narcissists, and they do not. There's nothing to stop them from doing the bad thing. Everything just keeps encouraging them and they just keep going and the laws aren't going to stop them. They know that they can get out of anything. And that's when people become extremely dangerous. And the justice system should take those things into account versus the justice system should be about are you a danger to society should be the number one thing and it's amazing how that seems to be at the bottom of the priority list. A lot of the times looking at people Gypsy I do believe that she's overcome this incredible. I believe that she is one of the few people on



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this earth who could endure that level of abuse and still be living at all and let alone she's doing really well. And does she have a book coming out?

Erin Lee Carr 49:56

Yeah, that's incredible. Like talking to her. I got to talk to her and Christy the other day. It's just like, you know, she's like a very normal person that's been going through some relationship stuff. But you know, I don't know, like she is just doing great things, as I said, with her in this sort of power position that she's found herself in.

Mandy Matney 50:17

What ethics do you stick to, in the scripted world to stay victim focused to stay according to your ethics and mission?

Erin Lee Carr 50:26

Again, what a great question. You know, I think that it's very much the same as I work in my documentary, everybody is a human, everybody deserves a defense and understanding what are the circumstances that led up to this action? I think that there are so many intent ethics inside the documentary that I've had to live by that have impacted, you know, all the choices I make, and what things and I think scripted is a little easier. You know, because you're making something a bit from fiction, right. And it's either inspired by or based on real events. But I would say that the list of ethics that are needed inside a documentary is vast and intense and a bit variable, because it is journalism, is it entertainment. And I think that that's why I'm also really excited to try my hand, it's scripted. I feel like sometimes when I'm in documentaries, I'm holding



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people like a baby bird, and I want to make sure they're okay, because they've given me this trust.

Mandy Matney 51:33

What do you do, and we've been talking about this for a long time is that both our work just covers a lot of darkness, our work is very dark, there is a lot of sadness. And it's something I'm also noticing the weight we carry with these stories, when people tell us our stories, it's like this giant weight. And sometimes I just feel exhausted by it. And again, it's a baby bird and one like, you feel like you want to protect it and you feel very, you feel like you want to protect it, and but you also you get weighed down by it at times.

Erin Lee Carr 52:17

You're holding somebody else's life at all times.

Mandy Matney 52:21

You're holding somebody else life. And I'll be honest, like, sometimes I just want to get rid of everything, sometimes I just don't want the weight. You know, I just, I look at other cases. And I'm like, do I want to get another baby? Or do I have room in my life for another baby bird?

Erin Lee Carr 52:37

And sometimes you won't, right? Like, and sometimes you won't?

Mandy Matney 52:41

Yeah, how do you balance? And how do you get between the darkness? And how do you step away from work? And how have you been able to



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deal with telling these incredibly deep and dark stories while maintaining your mental health and thriving as you are?

Erin Lee Carr 52:59

Well, I love that question. And I think that it relates to a lot of the listeners that listen to this. So I've been in therapy since I was 18. My first therapist wrote her thesis on me that I got to read in part, I am a part of a recovery group. So anytime I do something I try to look at my actions like the Luna Shark family. I'm a huge proponent of dogs seeing them and looking at them or doing a pup check and just sniffing their little head. I'm in healthy relationships with my family friends and the people that I'm in love with. And my therapist told me that we don't watch true crime at night because I've been doing it for so long. So I have to keep that away from my brain sometimes. And I honestly listen or watch hours of tennis a night which is very strange, but it's something that doesn't have a plot and it's like a metronome. And at the end of the day, it's sort of all given how much information is going into my skull on a daily basis it's like I just can't I can barely read at night honestly like it's very tough I can read a lot during the day but as is a part of our jobs but at the end of the night I'm just like oh god what and I honestly it really it was hurt some of my relationships like I you know a relationship and because the person was like I just can't deal with this. This is you all the time, this is all you talk about etc. Amongst other things that are private obviously, but now it's like maybe I don't like talk about it all night long, but I don't know my partners now are like the sweetest and are huge documentary fans so they allow me.



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Mandy Matney 54:45

Yeah, I have also learned you have to be around people. That's a huge red flag if somebody just doesn't ultimately it's who you are to talk about your work and you're proud of it. So that you should never be a partner should never discourage you. I'm not but everybody needs to get away from this stuff everybody needs to escape. And that's hilarious that you watch tennis. I watched 90 Day Fiance, which is kind of like tennis. It's a back and forth. I don't have to think about anything. And there, none of it relates to my life whatsoever. Or my work. It's just completely different. But one more thing I want to talk to you about before we wrap up. I entered the game, I call it the game. But whatever this is, I entered this crazy world and 2021 and you have been here for a long time. And you've seen it evolve dramatically. I've seen it evolve dramatically as I'm entering. In this new case, the Mica Miller case, I'm noticing how much more a TikTok is playing a role in these true crime cases. The Gabby Petito case was another one where TikTok'ers are getting scoops. So for journalists, everything is just exploding. I have a theory that it increased a lot during the pandemic, do you get that sense? And how true crime evolved during your time of being in this world.

Erin Lee Carr 56:17

Basically, the third wave of true crime happened when HBO did the Jinx, and I believe it came out in 2015. And that's when I came to town I started working on true crime in 2013. So I've been here for 11 years. And there will always be this insatiable appetite for true crime. We're just seeing it vocalized more with sort of, with audiences like TikTok, but you think of Joe Berlin, jurors paradise loss, or Andrew Iraqis capturing the Friedman's or the staircase, it has been a form of entertainment, that is



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and will last the length of time, because it has everything in it, it has the drama, it has the life or death stakes, and it gets our brains actively sort of working. And so I think we need to make smart, true crime. And I think that you have been doing that. And I have been doing that. And I'm really proud of that. And I think that you know, there are a lot of people who are really interested in, you know, what Ted Bundy was thinking when he did all this stuff, and you know, things like that. And we do these, you know, we do those big shows that Joe Berliner actually did, who did paradise loss, but I think there are people that can do that. And then I have my stake in the little corner of the universe where I really focus on female crimes, the intersection of the criminal justice system, but I think that there feels like it's an explosion, but there's always been an explosion. But you are absolutely correct. And that networks are buying more of it, right. And I do believe in your supposition that it got higher inside the pandemic, because we had more time on our hands, and people like to be like to do puzzles. And I think that true crime is ultimately a puzzle for people.

Mandy Matney 58:11

When you look at people that you would want to work with and the true crime space, if you're looking for a podcast, or to base a documentary off of what are your What are your nose? Like? What are your x? What do you not like, creators doing? And are there any?

Erin Lee Carr 58:32

It's really like, you know, we were both wrapped by Neil Cohen and Neil Cohen was like, Mandy is the absolute best. And she broke this case. And so I really like, I tend to lean on people that know the industry quite well, because I get into these keyholes of the subject matter that I'm in.



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And I think that when I start listening to yours, I'll speak sort of positively. It just was so detailed. And there was such a point of view. And it was, I have so much appreciation for a woman who goes after something regardless of you know, it's scary and you had to live through and the people you love had to live through a scary time. And you know, me, I went to prisons, I did all this different stuff that would be concerning, like everyone be like, That lady is crazy. So I guess I like a wild streak, right? I love somebody that is willing to really, you know, spend their life force figuring stuff out for other people. And so I tend to come up with all my ideas typically, like I find stuff and I always work with journalists. I'm like, the most pro journalist documentarian ever, like they're often guiding lights inside the films that I do. But yeah, I think that it has to be a very specific type of podcast, and then the person who's doing the podcast like, can I relate to them? Are they in it for the right reasons? Do they see me as somebody who is like a contributor? Or would they see me as an obstructionist? Right? And I always want to work with people that I choose my partners extremely, extremely carefully. And yeah, like, I tend to just work with the same people because I know and can trust them. But then when there are people that are forces, like you come in to my life through a trusted partner, I'm like, Oh, hell yeah, you know, and then it wasn't about me picking you, it was about you picking me to start our sort of friendship and relationship and thinking about what can be. But yeah, that part was cool, because it kind of felt like we picked each other. And that made me feel really special.

Mandy Matney 1:00:40

Yeah, and I don't know if I've ever told you this, but I was so nervous for that meeting that I remember, you canceled the first meeting that we



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had. And so and I was like, it's fine. That was a long shot. I was happy that we were even on the books to begin with, with Erin Lee Carr. Um, I remember like I was so excited telling Liz, we were like, Oh, my God, this is amazing. And then we rescheduled and I immediately was calm when I started talking to you. It was like, I was so nervous. And I thought that you were going to I was imagining, I don't know, a meaner person. I don't know. Like, what, but you asked me how I was doing, you asked me very personal questions, versus a lot of documentarians were like, How much money do you want? I don't really care. You were like, actually, how are you doing?

Erin Lee Carr 1:01:35

Well, also always, like, I think some people tried to always like, what access can I get out of you. And I like reading your book from cover to cover. And there were people that approached you that just saw you as a money bag, right? And that, to me, felt super disturbing. And so I remember I was also at ease, because I was like, oh, it's somebody that I can relate to that has gone through some of the same stuff as me, but like you literally, this was like this lightning in a bottle that captivated everything. Yeah, it's just I knew that you bear some of the physical consequences of the work that you do. And if there's somebody that can relate to me in my life, and like I've had a lot of health issues, I think because of this, right? The body has a way of communicating when it's under duress, right. And so anytime I can be alongside people there, do what I do for a living and kind of understand it. It's just it makes me feel less alone. Yeah.



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Mandy Matney 1:02:34

And I do the same, I'm more compelled to reach out to people that are going through similar, something similar, and especially with online harassment and things like that. Yeah. Ultimately, the best thing in the world is just to feel less alone and to feel like somebody understands what you're going through and can listen and actually relate on some levels. Because if you feel like you're the only person going through something, you feel like a weirdo. And then you get like, then shit more shame is involved. And then you isolate yourself more. And it's just this horrible cycle versus just relating to somebody and saying, Hey, this is how I'm feeling right now. And it's the biggest relief in the world, when they say, Oh, my gosh, I've felt the same. Don't worry, you're gonna get through this, everything's gonna be fine. Here is what you need to do. Here's what you don't need to do. And yeah, it's just the best.

Erin Lee Carr 1:03:30

I have one question for you. Yeah. What would you be doing with your life? If you were not doing what you do? What would be the other job that you would have?

Mandy Matney 1:03:40

I think actual police work, I think I would be an actual detective. Like, if I was to go back or just start a new career, I was always afraid of what I always thought of, I don't know, like gun chases when I thought of becoming a police officer when I was young, and just things that I didn't want to do. But I think it would be. I think police work would be really rewarding and I did like to just be a part of the system that I talked so much about and to make an impact there. If I wasn't doing this, what would your job be?



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Erin Lee Carr 1:04:14

It's exactly what I asked because I would absolutely be a defense attorney. And you and I are obsessed with the criminal justice system. Because we feel called to these vocations that we ultimately ended up doing this, but like, yeah, we would feel called to be a part of a system that we are sometimes critiquing though and it's like, I often think about, you know, if I at some point, where to go back and go to law school and being a defense attorney is so painful, so difficult. But I think the people that I most respect in this world are like those I've worked with on my cases are defense attorneys, right. And it's a complicated job but yeah, I've always thought about that. And so I think it's really interesting, like, what we do for a living. And it's like this path versus that path. And you know what, what that's like, but life is long. So, yeah.

Mandy Matney 1:05:09

Do you ever wake up some days and think like, what if I was just doing something completely? What if I just do no more justice? No more true crime. Like, I think of being a travel influencer, and I just have this, I start to think about that life and what it would look like. And at that same time, I know that would just be filled with anxiety to because it would be really nice to have a life that's in work that's full of light and easy to talk about with people and easy to say to like a hairdresser, David, and I never know what to say when a another couple asks us like, what do you do?

Erin Lee Carr 1:05:53

But then you say, and people are so obsessed with talking to the hairdresser about what to do? They're like, Alright, let's go into it. Yeah, no, it is the coolest job. I mean, I feel like I am a bit agnostic, but I believe



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I have a calling. This has been my life's calling to do this. And so during these days, I get sad and frustrated and things like that, that I like, I feel like I was put on earth to do what I do. Right. And so I try to not resent it. Because we are so lucky to have that. Because a lot of people don't know what they want to do with their life. And like we get to do this. And so it's just yeah, it has always felt like a calling, right?

Mandy Matney 1:06:35

And a lot of people and what's also tough about our jobs is that a lot of people want it. A lot of people want to live their hobbies are investigating true crime stories, their hobbies are watching documentaries and listening to true crime podcasts and all those things. Yes. And I found that out a lot of my trolls have wanted to be true crime people, YouTubers that tried to have shows and it didn't pan out for them. It is a sought after job. And you take the darkness and all the hard part's but at the end of the day, you have to realize like a lot of people want this and I'm proud to be here and I am thankful to be here. And it is a calling, it is something that you can't really shake. And even if you woke up even if I woke up one day as a travel influencer or whatever, I don't think that I could, I think that these cases would always call me back and you know what I mean? And like, there's always things like the Mica Miller thing. I was feeling very lost. I was feeling like, I don't know what I don't know what I want to do next. And all of these people kept texting me this case, especially close friends of mine and they were like, you have to do this if this story needs my ID and yeah, it just kind of jerked me back. And it's funny how the universe just does that. Sometimes you don't feel completely lost one day and then it's, it's, it's a calling, you know, it's great. And then it's annoying sometimes. And I have to remember that it's important work and a lot of people just



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don't aren't fulfilled with their jobs. You know, like a lot of people it's hard to have a job or not only you can make a good living but you can feel proud at the end of the day and you don't have to feel icky.

Erin Lee Carr 1:08:22

I don't have to bear the enormous consequences that you face like I'm a public figure I'm in my documentaries but just like you said we don't have a super intense awareness about who's behind the camera for things and so people have said like things to me but like not at all the volume in which that you receive and so it's yeah i mean like i think the you wanting to be it you know a travel influencer is also what how we go full circle to this is like maybe you don't want to get attacked online every day, you know? And so it's just like yeah, it's different so yeah, it bears enormous consequences.

Mandy Matney 1:09:00

Yeah, and you just but the other thing with the pipe dream of travel influence that I realized last year is I was following this girl and realize that I just found a random travel influencer. And random travel influencers also go through lots of online hate. And there's one woman who had a very similar thing and entire Reddit group. She was just a travel influencer, there was an entire Reddit group about this woman and people hating her. And it drove her to almost kill herself. And I saw that and was like, oh my goodness, no matter what if you're a woman and successful, that's just a part of it. And so what we have to do is expose that and change it. Yeah, it could go on forever about all of the consequences of fricking online harassment, but I think that the more that women talk about it with each other to like we were talking about earlier, you feel really, really a load and then I felt a whole lot less long



EPISODE 83: Filmmaker Erin Lee Carr on Michelle Carter, Gypsy Rose and Mica Miller Cases

when I saw this girl Briana who was going through something very similar and she had my dream job of being completely away from true crime and she was still going through the same thing so it happens unfortunately all the time and I but the best part of it in the world about our jobs is that like, piece by piece story by story, I think we're changing the world. Hell yeah. And I love that. All right. And with that, cups down. Cup of Justice is a Luna Shark production created by me Mandy Matney and co-hosted by journalists 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