



EPISODE 56: 'The Smallest Man in the World' What TikTok Videos and His Parent's Divorce Tell Us About JP Miller - Buster Murdaugh Sues Netflix

Mandy Matney 00:02

I don't know if the FBI investigation into Mica's case will ever amount to charges but the more I hear about the investigation and the questions being asked by the FBI the more hopeful I am that the day of reckoning and accountability will come in this case. My name is Mandy Matney.

This is True Sunlight, a podcast exposing crime and corruption previously known as the Murdaugh Murders podcast. True Sunlight is a Luna Shark production written with journalist Liz Farrell. Well it's been another weird week here at Luna Shark and I want to start on a happy note by saying thank you to a few of our new members, Angela P, Holly B, and Catherine T for recently becoming Luna Shark premium members. Your support means everything to us. Thank you. And for the bookworms out there we have a lot of premium content to go with chapters of my book *Blood on Their Hands*. We're also working on a special book club feature of Luna Shark premium, where members will be able to schedule a virtual meet and greet with yours truly and your book club to discuss *Blood on Their Hands*. To learn more, visit lunasharkmedia.com/membership. Today, we have a lot to get into with the Mica Francis case. But first, let's talk about the latest legal drama in the Murdaugh case because again, it never ends. On Friday, Buster Murdaugh filed a defamation complaint against Netflix and Warner Brothers discovery Inc. Against production companies Blackfin, Campfire Studios and Cinemark. And against newspaper giant dinette, and a Hampton county reporter who works for them, who is now the author of two Murdaugh related books, Michael DeWitt. Buster Murdaugh is accusing them of falsely and yet heavily suggesting that he killed Stephen Smith. We're going to talk about this case in our next Cup of Justice episode because we both have a lot of opinions about it.

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And we know our co-host, Eric Bland does too. Also, there's a lot to discuss with this one, including the viability of this lawsuit and what it could do in terms of helping solve Stephen Smith's case. For those of you who might have watched some of the Murdaugh related documentaries Buster is taking issue with Discovery ID series Murdaugh Murders Deadly Dynasty, which he says aired a 10 minute segment that falsely and subtly accuses him of murdering Stephen Smith. He also is taking issue with HBO's Low Country, the Murdaugh dynasty. Here's David with what the lawsuit says about that one.

David Moses 03:12

That series publishes false statements that suggest the plaintiff, along with others, murdered Stephen Smith by striking him with a baseball bat. A sequence in the show accuses the plaintiff of killing Stephen Smith, because of his sexual identity and further insinuates that the plaintiff killed Stephen Smith in relation to a romantic relationship between plaintiff and Smith. These statements are untrue in their entirety.

Mandy Matney 03:45

Buster also takes issue with Netflix's Murdaugh Murders: A Southern Scandal which according to his lawsuit depicts a young man with red hair carrying a baseball bat.

David Moses 03:56

The plaintiff has red hair, and it is readily ascertainable from the content of the series that the creators were depicting the plaintiff as the murderer of Stephen Smith. This series publishes statements such as, quote, everyone keeps coming up to me and saying it was the



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Murdaugh boys and quote, and, quote, listening to these statements, it's pretty clear Stephens death is intertwined with the Murdaughs and quote, the series falsely contain statements that the plaintiff was engaged in a romantic relationship with Stephen Smith, and that it was plaintiff and maybe two other individuals who killed Stephen Smith.

Mandy Matney 04:44

In the Netflix documentary Hampton county reporter Michael DeWitt talked about what happened in the fall of 2015. After a reporter at the newspaper where Michael was editor published a story about Stephen's unsolved death. We have talked about this worry a lot over the years on the Murdaugh murderers podcast in the show, because it was the first time anyone came close to publicly accusing the Murdaugh's as being connected to Stephen's case. The story referred to the idea that people in town knew who had done this to Stephen but weren't speaking up because it involved a prominent local family. Michael DeWitt is an interesting choice of a defendant because his presence and the roster is the only tie to Hampton County, allowing Buster to file his case with that courthouse, the courthouse that was basically built and run by his forefathers. Buster himself lives in Beaufort County. This is all very interesting because clearly Busters' attorney believes that Hampton County is the best venue for his client. But two years ago, a Beaufort County jury awarded the mayor of Bluffton a public figure \$50 million and a defamation suit that she brought against a very vocal private citizen who accused her of malfeasance. That mayor was represented by Johnny Parker. Yes, the Johnny Parker of PMPED, now known as the Parker Law Group, the guy who gave Alex hundreds of thousands of dollars and alone after the firm suspected him of stealing nearly \$800,000 Johnny Parker, the guy who gave Russell Laffitte a large loan

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to cover the money, Russell had loaned himself from Hannah Plyler's account. Anyway, here is what Michael DeWitt is alleged to have said in the Netflix documentary, his statements were included as bullet points, but we're gonna have David read them all together.

David Moses 06:43

We were hearing all of these rumors about a possible connection. There is some truth to it. We could not put the Murdaugh name in the story unless we wanted to face lawsuits. We said a prominent well known family was rumored to be involved. Everyone knew who we were talking about. We published the story and waited, people would come up to me in the Piggly Wiggly and pat me on the back. We're so thankful you had the courage to run the story. We did everything but put the Murdaugh name in the story. I began to have a bad taste in my mouth, about the members of the Murdaugh family, as many people in the community did.

Liz Farrell 07:27

So yeah, that might be problematic, because in fall 2015, all that was out there were just rumors. It wasn't until the summer of 2021, that highway patrol officially released the case file confirming that the Murdaugh name did in fact appear dozens of times throughout the investigation. Now, I know there are some people out there who think journalists just routinely publish rumors as fact, but we do not. And I'm definitely not saying that. That is what happened here. Obviously, this would be for a judge and or a jury to decide. Again, we're going to talk about all of this on top of justice. But we have seen some questions out there asking why there aren't more names listed as defendants in this case, including our own. So I'm going to go back to what I just said. There's a



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difference between publishing rumors and the truth. The truth is that the Murdaugh name appeared in the case file dozens of times, which is what we've reported time and again, the truth is that investigators were told that Buster had a romantic connection to Stephen. The truth is that highway patrol investigators repeatedly said the case belonged with SLED because it did not appear to be a hit and run. The truth is that Stephen's mother Sandy begged for help from the Governor, the FBI and the AGs office because she felt the case was being mishandled. The truth is that SLED took over Stephen Smith's case in June 2021, because of information purportedly discovered in the course of their investigation into Maggie's and Paul's murders. The truth is that we still don't know what that information is. And the truth is that weeks after Alex was found guilty of Maggie's and Paul's murders, Buster issued a statement denying any connection to the Stephen Smith case, likely in the hopes of being able to move on with his life. And the truth is that all of these documentaries were likely very heavily vetted by lawyers. So this case is going to be a challenge for busters attorney, especially because his own client referred to himself as a national figure in a jailhouse call with his father in the fall of 2021, which some could argue raises the threshold in proving defamation because it means Buster was aware of his status as a possible public figure. And it could mean that he's not only gonna have to prove that these defendants neither republishing a lie, but that they did so with actual malice. Also, for the record Buster points out in his lawsuit that these documentaries failed to mention that investigators were also looking into Patrick Wilson and Sean Connolly. Just a quick reminder, Patrick allegedly confessed to his mother's boyfriend that he and Shawn had hit Stephen with their sideview mirror. That confession came shortly after the story about the frustration surrounding Stephens investigation ran in the fall of 2015.

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And the Hampton Guardian, and that story for the first time included the coroner, putting it on the record that Stephen was likely hit by a side view mirror. Additionally, Foster claims that he was never notified by any law enforcement entities of any allegations against him related to Stephen Smith's death. It might be the case that Buster himself was in contact but in September 2015, during an interview with a friend of busters, highway patrolman Todd Proctor mentioned that he was set to talk to Buster soon and that the Murdaughs were well aware that Buster was on their radar. So I know law enforcement officers are allowed to lie when interviewing people in their investigation. So it doesn't necessarily mean that this was the case, but it is certainly worth US noting. Okay, last thing I want to mention, you might remember Michael David's name as the reporter who was allowed to hold a book signing event in a college and county courtroom courtesy of college and county clerk of court, Becky Hill, you know, just conducting private business for private profit and a taxpayer space. If I sound irritated, I want to say that it's because of the constant abuse Mandy and I had to deal with during the trial and especially during the Becky Hill era, when trolls thought nothing of repeatedly accusing us of having some sort of cozy and conspiratorial and unethical relationship with Becky, the trolls loudly called for Becky's emails and phone logs to be released to show that Mandy and Liz were in on whatever tampering they thought that he had been doing. Since we had no relationship with Becky before, during or even after the trial. Those emails showed nothing for sure but Michael DeWitt's name sure was in them. And Michael Horowitz name sure is part of the ethics investigation into Becky. And here we are again, after years of the same trolls accusing us of defaming Buster in our reporting. Somehow it never registers with these people when they're proven wrong over and over. And I know that I sound petty right

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now. But it is frustrating when you happen to notice that it seems to be much easier and more fun for people to make up lies about women journalists who are just simply doing their jobs than face to truth about a male journalists that they were holding up to be a shining example of Murdaugh related coverage and who they positioned as a victim anytime we spoke out about his previous coverage choices. Anyway, like I said, we're going to talk all about that. It's our greatest hope right now that Buster's lawsuit will result in solving Stephen's case because again, it's undeniable that the Murdaugh name was mentioned dozens of times in the investigation. The defendants in this case are going to want to know why it was mentioned so much that they're going to dig dig and dig and who knows what they'll dredge up in their digging. These are some very big money defendants who can afford the type of unflinching connection free politics free investigation that Stephen's case apparently requires. This lawsuit could be the thing that finally gets Sandy Smith answers about who killed her son. This week. By the way, we'll mark three years since SLED opened its investigation into Stephen's death, after purportedly discovering information during the course of the Murdaugh murders double homicide investigation, and Sandy still has no answers. Who knew that there would ever be a scenario where she might end up having Buster Murdaugh to thank for finally getting answers. Another quick update we have for you is about the Nautilus lawsuit in federal court. Nautilus is one of two insurance agencies that were sued in 2018 over Gloria Satterfield's death at Moselle, Alex and Cory stole the entire \$4.1 million settlement. In that case, Nautilus provided 3.8 million of that and they want their money back so two years ago, they filed a lawsuit against Alex, Cory, Moss and Kuhn which used to be Cory's law firm, and Chad Westendorf, who served as personal representative for the Satterfield at Alex behest. And

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his employer Palmetto State Bank. On Tuesday, Judge Richard Gergel issued a 30 page order outlining his decisions after both Nautilus and all the defendants, except for Alex filed motions asking him for summary judgment. There is a lot covered in that order, essentially Judge Gergel denied Nautilus their motion granted Chad Westendorf and Palmetto State Bank their motions. He also denied most of Corys and moss and coons motions. The bottom line with that is it looks like Chad and the bank are effectively off the hook in this case, but the judge believes that the questions about Cory and Moss and Coons liability are a matter for a jury. Moss & Kuhn tried to get out of the lawsuit, and the judge was like, no Corey worked for you at the time. So this is your problem, too, which makes us ask this question, if mosting Kuhn can be held responsible for Korea's actions here, which we think they should, then why wasn't PMPED included as a defendant in this case, because Alex litigated this case as well. And he did it from the PMPED office using PMPED's resources. How is it that Nautilus argues that Palmetto State bank should be held responsible for Chad's actions? When Cory has already testified that Chad knew nothing about the scheme, but Nautilus didn't include PMPED, whose employee not only knew about the scheme, he pleaded guilty to masterminding it. It is yet another puzzling example of PMPED being allowed to moonwalk their way out of Alex's messes. Judge Gergel by the way, is the same judge who allowed PMPED to be regarded as victims and therefore deserving of millions of dollars in restitution. Anyway, the biggest takeaway in this order is this. Nautilus knew there was something fishy going on. Here's David with what Judge Gergel wrote about that.

David Moses 16:42

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Nautilus opened an investigation into the claim on March 28 2018. Notwithstanding the myriad hesitations voiced within Nautilus over the course of the year long investigation, Nautilus settled the Satterfield estates claim for \$3.8 million dollars following a mediation held on March 22 2019. Nautilus is adjuster writing, quote, The Lloyds addressed her and I believe this claim is very questionable. And quote on APR five 2018. Nautilus his chief claims officer noting quote, there are some questionable things about the claim and quote on May 2, 2018. Nautilus has coverage counsel John Grantland, writing in a February 23 2019 email that he quote, smelled a trap and quote, after Fleming suggested he wanted to take Murdaugh's sworn statement during mediation. Nautilus is insurance counsel complaining of, quote, worst case of insurance fraud and injustice I have ever heard of, and quote, and, quote, extortion, and quote, following March 22, 2019, mediation.

Liz Farrell 18:08

It's stunning, right? This insurance company knew it was being played and still handed over that \$3.8 million dollar check to Cory Fleming because \$3.8 million was a better deal for them than risking the decision of a Hampton county jury. They use the word extortion. Now, that might seem like hyperbole, but what else would you call it when Alex Murdaugh, of Murdaugh notoriety is threatening to admit fault in glorious death to his hometown jury, a jury that for generations has been thought to be run by the Murdaughs and their cohorts? All in an effort to get his own insurance policy? The bigger question is why is this kind of thing ever allowed? Lie hasn't SLED or the AGs office opened an investigation into how Hampton county juries are handled? You want to talk about rumors? There are plenty of those when it comes to what goes down with Hampton County and juries. So where is the outrage?

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Think about it: do the \$3.8 million that Alex and Cory stole get printed, especially for the scheme. Know that money will for all practical purposes be paid back by the rest of Nautilus policyholders when insurance fraud occurs, the rest of us pay for it in higher premiums and in higher rates of coverage denial. So again, Where is the outrage? Where's the outrage from the Bar Association from the Office of disciplinary counsel, the Supreme Court? Why haven't the insurance carriers in South Carolina banded together to say enough is enough? Why is it such an open secret and yet no one wants to deal with it once and for all, Nautilus handed over millions of dollars, because it was a smarter decision to make when they considered what they all knew to be true about the jury there, and they knew better, but then they just went on with their lives and just accepted it as okay. It's not okay. Extortion is a crime. So where are the blue lights? All right. I like had them on his truck because our own prosecutor's office allowed him to. Okay, so that's enough Murdaugh news for today. We have one quick update in the Colucci case. And that's just to say that we've spoken with the South Carolina Attorney General's office and Michael Colucci. His retrial is still not scheduled. There were reports floating out there that the case had been docketed for October, but that's not the case and we do not know where that information came from.

Mandy Matney 20:59

Okay, let's talk about where things are in the Mica Francis case. We have confirmed with multiple sources that the FBI investigation into details surrounding Mica Francis's death is not only ongoing, but it is heating up. We have confirmed with sources that the FBI is asking people close to Mica to sit for multiple interviews, and they are asking questions about JP Miller's relationship with Mica leading up to her death, and



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they are asking for evidence such as text messages to backup claims being made about JP While it appears the FBI is investigating Solid Rock Church and its allegedly questionable finances, for instance, their fundraising and spending related to their missions abroad. It is clear from our sources that the FBI is looking into much more than the potential financial crimes when it comes to JP Miller, which is interesting to us because of how insistent law enforcement sources have been that this FBI investigation is not looking into microstep. Every time a law enforcement agency could say that to us they did, including the FBI more than once. But looking into Michael's death isn't necessarily the same thing as looking into what led to Michael's death. And based on what sources have been telling us about who is being questioned and what they're being asked. It's shorter theme like this is a case of semantics. How Mica died might not necessarily be in question. But why she died definitely seems to be on the FBI's table. Like we talked about with Laura Richards on this week's very important episode of copper justice. Coercive control is not a federal crime and the United States like it is in Canada and the UK. But that doesn't mean that JP immediately escapes all accountability. If investigators find that his behavior did in fact bring Mica to a breaking point before her death on April 27. There is more than one way to peel a potato. As we have discussed many times on this podcast. There is a reason why Alex Murdaugh was charged with dozens of financial crimes before the murders. Police often use low hanging fruit charges like financial crimes that have a clear paper trail to get witnesses and suspects to crack under pressure about the bigger crimes. While we are not accusing JP of any crimes on this podcast, to be clear, we want to reiterate that he has not been charged in Mica's death, nor was he ever charged with abusing her. I think it is worth mentioning that there are laws in place

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that the federal government could use in their investigation laws that according to our own research into the allegations being made against him by Mica's team could apply here. For instance, there's a federal harassment law in the United States. Here is David with that.

David Moses 24:13

18USC2261 A says whoever won travels in interstate or foreign commerce or is present within the jurisdiction of the United States with the intent to kill, injure, harass, intimidate, or place under surveillance or intimidate a another person and in the course of or as a result of such travel or presence engages in conduct that a places that person in reasonable fear of the death of or serious bodily injury to one that person to an immediate family member, three a spouse or intimate partner of that person.

EXPOSING CRIME & CORRUPTION

Mandy Matney 24:57

So for example, It sounds like to us that the FBI finds evidence on a man who used tracking devices on his estranged wife's car to stalk her as she crossed state lines, because she felt so threatened and scared by his pattern of harassing behavior. That may be that man could be charged with stalking by the US Attorney's Office and face up to five years and federal prison, which is something. The other thing is a lot of this depends on the FBI agents, the US Attorney's Office and their willingness to think a little bit outside of the box, when it comes to how these laws might apply. Because again, not all abuse is physical. And unfortunately, legislators have generally done the absolute minimum on that front. Nevermind addressing the idea that mental abuse can be just as if not more damaging, and cover justice 83 with filmmaker Erin Lee Carr, who directed and produced the HBO documentary I Love You



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Now Die about the Michelle Carter case in Massachusetts. We spoke about the case and how it became one of those outside of the box situations for prosecutors. They had no clear state law to follow with her, because they believed it was her influence that ultimately led to her boyfriend, Conrad Roy, taking his own life. And there was no law that directly addressed that circumstance. They ended up charging Carter, who was a teenager at the time with manslaughter, after police found text messages of her encouraging Roy to kill himself up until just moments before his death. The case was unique in the sense that it was the first of its kind, the idea that somebody could be convicted of manslaughter in a death that she did not directly have a handgun, or was nowhere near when it occurred. The court found in that case that Will Carter was not physically present at the scene. Her verbal conduct, quote overcame the victim's willpower to live, and therefore cause the suicide. She was sentenced to 15 months in prison. While the Carter case was much different than this one in the sense that it did not include allegations of abuse and harassment. It was a landmark case that showed our courts can successfully prosecute for people's digital communications, not physical actions when it comes to suicide. And by the way, I'm still not comfortable calling this case a suicide. And I'm not sure when I will reach that point. Everything I have learned about Mica and her life directly conflicts with what please say that she did on April 27, 2024. A few weeks ago, when we were in Myrtle Beach, we retraced Mica steps that day from her apartment to Dick's Pawn Shop to a seemingly random gas station where she got an energy drink and more than half of a tank of gas to Lumber River State Park, where she was found dead in the water. The trip was a chilling experience. And like most of my trips and investigative journalism left me with more questions than answers. But it also left me with a strong feeling and my

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gut thinks something is really wrong here. I don't know why she would have packed a sandwich to go on a trip to end her life. I don't know why she dressed for work that day, only to change your mind at the last minute and go to a pawn shop instead. I don't know how she apparently passed a background check so quickly. From the same store that told us it takes from 15 minutes to several days to clear. And according to the worker, if you were ever involuntarily committed, as her family says that she was, the Feds will deny your application. I also don't know why she chose to go to a gas station completely out of the way of a route. I don't know why she chose this very random State Park in a rough and rural area. I don't know why it took park rangers so long to locate her when the area she was in was not big. Nor was it difficult to get to. I just don't know how this happened. And the more I think about her movements that day, the more I hope that her phone data is somewhere safe and secure and under serious examination. Who was she talking to that day? Did she tell anyone that she was feeling threatened? What really happened to Mica after she left her apartment in her work uniform with her lunch packed? All of it on its own is already hard to reconcile and understand. But on top of that, we have Mica's estranged husband JP Miller making Mica is deaf, a whole lot more complicated.

Liz Farrell 30:05

As we told you all in the last episode JP has been making and sending videos to a content creator on TikTok named True Crime re to give his side of the story. Now normally we hate this kind of true crime content. JP obviously has a right to share his thoughts on things and to defend himself in the public eye. But we don't generally like to allow seeming narcissists to use our platform to spin their narrative when we already



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have enough facts in the case to show that the person telling the quote, other side of the story lacks credibility. But in this case, JP is doing the FBI has worked for them and appears to be in trapping himself and lies with a narrative that doesn't make sense when you compare it to what is already known about the case, while JP promised to deliver 350 Plus pieces of evidence showing the quote real Mica Miller over a week ago, his now five part TikTok series has been a long winded bust. Thus far, it essentially shows him to be a person who accuses other people of perpetrating the same bad behavior that he's literally being accused of in that moment. I don't know if anyone has ever explained to JP what the internet means when they say that they want receipts, but someone needs to tell them that a sleepy five part series of an overconfident, mediocre madman is not it. To this day, JP has been the only person who claims to have knowledge of Mica's diagnoses, and the only person who says he witnessed behavior that would point to what would be serious mental disorders, ones that would have been apparent to those who spent any amount of time with Mica and yet he has provided no receipts there's no prescription records and no doctor's notes. In the meantime, Mica herself through her family attorney and journals is accusing JP of drugging her and trying to gaslight her into believing she was sick. The most telling part of these videos is the big picture that we're seeing of JP as a man who wants to muddy the waters to make it look deep. Remember, JP is a pastor who has been accused of having inappropriate sexual encounters with teenagers drugging Mike on multiple occasions harassing, stalking and mentally abusing my guts. To the point her life ended. Oh, and having multiple affairs. He has been accused of a lot of things but in our opinion, innocent men start by refuting the biggies. Right? JP has been given the TikTok microphone and so far he's just used it to be petty and

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manipulative to float threats out there that appear to be designed to silence people. In these videos, JP isn't even really trying to debunk or disprove anything specifically. Instead, it seems like he's building a false narrative that completely contradicts a slew of police reports and court documents. In the TikTok series, JP is trying to convince the world that he had a loving relationship with Mica and that he never abused her. And that really the only problem in their marriage was her and her mental problems, not his. By the way, this is a man who told his church a few months ago, he was taking 800 milligrams of lithium a day in an attempt to show quote unquote, proof of the so-called loving relationship. For instance, JP spent two videos talking about tattoos that Mica had gotten for him and vice versa. Who wants to tell him that tattoos can't cover up the dysfunction in relationships. He spends another video talking about the amount he paid for like a funeral. You know, because men who paid for their wives funerals, I guess, could not have also heard them. Those two things could not possibly be true at the same time. as disgusting as the videos are to watch. They do provide insight into JP's twisted idea of love and relationships. And more importantly, they are providing documented lies to the FBI. This part we want to play for you because it gives you an idea of this sticky situation.

JP Miller 34:09

She would sometimes forget who I was or forget that I was her husband. She forgot who she was. I don't forget to see where my wife. Sometimes she forgets who her family is. Things like that. And on March 11, I remember that date because you super sleuths out there gonna need to know that date not for the future. But on March 11 something happened that kind of forever changed the course of our lives. And she



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went really deep into the schizophrenia and was delusional and accusing me of certain things slashing tires or sending a naked picture or stalking her or things like that, that I didn't do and and I found the apple air tag in my car in my truck that week and I assumed it was hers because I would keep seeing her pop up where I was at.

Liz Farrell 34:56

March 11th is turning out to be a very important date in this story when you look at the totality of the police reports and court documents filed. That date appears to have been a breaking point for Mica. Around 1:20 that morning, Mica called Orange County police and told them she was at Springmade here in Myrtle Beach and was about to be on her way home when she heard her tire pop and found a razor in it. She told police that this was the second time in a week where this had happened and she believed that it was JP the Orange County police report mentions zero attempts at trying to investigate these claims by the way, but Officer Joseph Barrington decided immediately that, quote, evidence was not sufficient enough to prove that JP had put the wire in the tire. If we lived in a world where women were believed if police were trained to identify coercive control, and if police could have seen what a desperate situation, Mica was in at the time, and at the very least, hear her out, interview JP look for cameras at Spring made peered et cetera, et cetera. We believe Mica would be alive today. Instead, they told her there wasn't anything they could do, which is basically like telling her the system would not be on her side in this fight to win her freedom. So March 11. The day when JP claimed she was quote deep in her schizophrenic episode was also when Mica filed for a restraining order with the Surfside beach magistrate where she signed an affidavit claiming that JP had harassed her three different times in the past two



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weeks on March 3 When he allegedly increasingly texted her while she was eating oysters out wicked tuna with her family and allegedly said enjoy your oysters again on March 4, when JP allegedly put a razor blade in her tire while she was at the County Clerk's Office, and a third time earlier that morning at Spring made Pier. And then again, I want to remind you that the system failed Mica by not granting her that restraining order. The system again told her there's no hope for you here. The system saw the word pastor and let everything else be seen through JP's lens. In the weeks that followed. The harassment from JP appears to have escalated. According to police reports filed by Mica on March 14th and 24th She reported JP to Myrtle Beach PD after trackers were discovered on both her and her roommates cars which she had been using at that time. On April 8, she reported that JP posted a nude photo of her on Facebook. And on April 15, she reported another tracker on her vehicle which she believed to have been put there by JP and that time Myrtle Beach police actually refused to even log it into evidence because they said it sounded like a civil matter. It seems like no law enforcement officer was ever considering the totality of these reports. Instead, it was 1000 paper cuts over and over that April 15 incident apparently was the last straw for Mica and she filed for divorce that day. Two weeks later, she found that the timeline here is very, very important and details are very very important. In the TikTok video made just a few days ago, JP claimed that Mica made all of this up the posting of the photo the slashing of the tires, the tracking devices. The problem is that JP himself has already admitted to all of this in writing. According to News Nation reporter Rich McHugh has an apology email for the naked photo where JP said to Mica quote, it was only up for an hour. Another apology email from JP to Mica saying I'm sorry for damaging your car tires, etc. And finally, a text from JP himself saying I



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put trackers on her car to know she was going to a gun store because she kept trying to get a gun for the past few months. You guys he has already admitted to all of these things that he is now claiming Mica made up during her episodes. This is not a he said she said situation. It's a she said she provided evidence. Police ignored her. He admitted to it. And now that the walls are crumbling around him, he's saying it didn't happen. JP appears to have a lot of evidence stacked against him right now and a lot of people in his life who are actually armed with receipts. At this point the value of his word is going to mean a whole lot in this investigation. These TikTok videos, as stomach churning as they may be, are chipping away at any credibility he had. Remember when we spoke to him like his best friend Charlotte in Episode 51. And she said the day after Mica staff she spoke to JP and he said something to her that he noticed she was on her way to Lumberton the day before. Charlotte said that he spoke to her in a way that indicated to her that he knew Mica went to Dick's Pawn Shop, and in real time knew she was on her way to Lumberton and he was wondering if she was on her way to see Charlotte and Virginia. What if it was true? Backing her that day of her death. We have confirmed that the FBI is looking into that part of the case, by the way. In his TikTok videos JP wants the world to believe that he was doing everything he could to, quote, keep Mica alive in the months leading up to her death. If he really wants to clear his name. Why doesn't he start with the obvious receipts that we want to see? Like Where exactly was he on the day that Mica died? Was he really with another woman? How does he think that can be characterized as trying to help keep my girl alive? We know he was spotted in Charleston earlier that day, and we know that his truck not necessarily him was spotted in Orange County minutes before Mica called 911. But we would like to see more evidence on exactly what he was doing that day. And

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we hope the FBI is also going to question JP's first wife, Allison, who not only has said that Mike reached out to her for advice on how to leave JP and deal with the fallout, making Alison privy to some of what Michael was going through. She's also already put it on the record that JP has a history of mental illness that's only gotten worse. Nowhere in her affidavit did Allison indicate that she believed Mica to be mentally ill herself. It's yet another piece of evidence that jayvees account of Oh Mike has mental issues is only as credible as his TikTok videos.

Mandy Matney 41:39

Over the past few episodes, we have talked about the insight we have been getting from court documents and connection to JP's first divorce, which was filed in the summer of 2015 by his first wife, Allison Williams, after his affair with Mica was discovered. We've also talked about the timeline a Mica's divorce, a Mica filed in October 2023, citing adultery, then consented to dropping the case and February of this year, only to have JP immediately turn around and file his own motion for protection, which was later dropped. That was all before Mica finally filed for a no fault divorce in April, shortly before her death. The timeline helps give context to the other things that were going on and Mica's life at the time in terms of the harassment she was reporting. And in terms of the pressure her friends and family say she was getting from JP and other church members to drop her divorce case. That context is the word adultery appearing in her original filing. In both Alison and Mica's cases, it was clear that JP has reputation at the church and his ability to keep tithers coming through the door was and is of utmost importance to him. And Alison Alison's case, she originally kept JP's affair out of the courtroom, because according to her affidavit, she didn't want his career to be further affected. She didn't want the church to lose any

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more members. It wasn't until JP ignored two court orders and went months without paying her the alimony. She needed to pay her mortgage, that she gave the court the full picture of who JP really was. In Michaels case, she elected to include the adultery. Why was it to hurt JP to embarrass him? Maybe. But there is another potential reason. by citing his adultery. She was speeding up the process in South Carolina, she was essentially asking the court to get her out of this union ASAP. That could be because she didn't want to be connected to JP any longer. Or it could be because she simply could not afford to live apart from him for a full year before being allowed to have him out of her life. And that is the problem with divorce in South Carolina. You have to live apart for a year which is expensive, especially for a woman who made pennies working for her husband at his church when he wasn't firing her and rehiring her on a whim, as Mike as attorney said that he did. So women in abusive situations in their marriages are faced with a very difficult challenge. We could go on for days about this. Divorce is difficult even for couples with amicable splits. Add in a wealth discrepancy, power differential and long term unreported abuse and women in South Carolina are at an extreme disadvantage when trying to leave a partner who does not agree that they should be divorced. That said these women weren't just divorcing JP they were divorce We're seeing his church, which both women have referred to as being synonymous with him. They weren't just divorcing the church in some way. They were using the only shred of power they had in this situation. The good pastors weak spot, his reputation and the church versus what they knew to be intimately true about him as leverage. But like with those videos, JP couldn't help himself either. And both cases resulted in unflattering and concerning details about his life being put on the record, he is not alone. In fact, there is a bit of a pattern here, history

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repeating itself. In addition to getting the divorce files related to JP we also have the divorce filings and JP's mother's divorce from his father, the Reverend Wayne Miller. We have told you a lot about JP's father and his history as a pastor in South Carolina. He was on an upward trajectory in his career as a budding televangelists who was also trying to make a name for himself nationally and internationally, when he was accused of sexual improprieties involving the husbands of Bible college students in the 1980s. Since then, he has pleaded guilty to soliciting sex from an undercover police officer in a Myrtle Beach bathhouse in 2006. And he pleaded guilty to essentially enslaving some of his Bible college students, making them work for little to no money. That was in 2014. Wayne reportedly works with JP at Solid Rock and continues to go on missions with a variety of reported allegations against him. We are working to confirm those before reporting further. So that's Wayne.

Liz Farrell 46:59

Let's talk about what went down in Wayne's incredibly messy divorce from JP's mother Susan, which was granted in 2002. According to court records, JP's Mother Mary JP's father in April 1974. They had three children. JP is the oldest he was born in 1979. He has a brother who was born four years later, and a sister who was born when he was 11. Now the first thing I want to mention about this divorce is the odd trick that seems to have been played. Wayne Miller's birth name is Reginald Wayne Miller, or least that's the name that was used in news reports advertising first church and other publications. And it's the name the federal government used to prosecute him in 2014. That's Reginald with a D ID and and Wayne with a lie after the A. But in this divorce, he is pretty consistently referred to as Reginal. Without the D, and occasionally referred to as Reginal Wayne without the D or the Y. It's

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either a persistent misspelling that they just collectively decided to go with and not fix, or it's a trick we've seen played by the good old boys in the past, where they intentionally misspelled their own names to avoid being found in public searches. For instance, Alex Murdaugh was known to sometimes leave a space between the M and the U and Murdaugh so that his last name appeared to be ER doc. So that's the first thing we want to note about this case, that misspellings like this could prevent the public and the media from finding it. They're not exactly creative, or particularly prohibitive misspellings, though, so it's just worth mentioning when we talked about how important visitation is and was to these men. When Susan filed for divorce. She was around 48 years old and Wayne was around 53. Though the divorce was granted in 2002. The case file includes extensive filings in connection to child support all the way up until 2009. But we're gonna get into that in a future episode. Let's first talk about Susan's claims against Reginald with a D. Though Susan was not seeking a fault divorce and like we said it's a speedier divorce based on claims of adultery, addiction or abuse. Otherwise, the couple has to live apart for a year before getting granted a divorce in South Carolina. She did not hold back in an affidavit she swore in 2001 JPs mother told the court that she met her husband when she was in high school and he was a pastor at a church. Sound familiar? According to the affidavit, Wayne noticed her and asked about her. After Susan graduated from high school she did go on to college, and during her junior year, Wayne asked her to marry him. She said I wanted to finish college but I decided I loved him more. In her affidavit she accuses Wayne of having a temper again, sound familiar? Specifically she says quote, he showed his temper at my parents house pointed his finger in their face and slammed the door so hard. We thought it would break off the hinges. My parents did not want me to

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marry him, but Wayne told me I had to choose between them or him. Again, sound familiar? Not only do we know that Mica's family had problems with her relationship with JP and her subsequent decision to marry him. We've been sharing texts with you, in which JP regarded like us decision to go to her sister's house after their epic fight in November 2022. As Mica choosing her sister over JP, he accused Mica of being a bad wife because of that. And according to sources, this was a theme JP seeing Mica as choosing her family over him. Let's not forget that incredibly weird line in her obituary in which JP noted that Mica was so close to her family with all those emphatic O's. Even someone who knows nothing about this case could have read that and picked up on the vitriol contained in that phrasing they could pick up on like his relationship to her family, being a sore point for whoever wrote that Obed. And all indications are that JP wrote it or had a hand in its writing. Okay, back to Susan and when Susan says she quit school and married Wayne, her parents were so upset, she said that they refuse to attend the ceremony. At the time of her marriage, Susan said she worked as a typist at a factory quote, Wayne would sleep late and would go to his little church, which he started himself with only a small group of people. He was discharged from the United Methodist Church in Evergreen South Carolina. I never knew why they let him go. There were rumors, but I was too much in love ever to believe there was any truth to them. She does not say what those rumors were. But she does say that after six months of having her own income, Wayne told her he wanted her to quit her job, so she could spend more time with him and help him as a pastor's wife in building his ministry, which should sound familiar here is this having separate incomes gives women more power in their relationships. And not just economically. I say this without judgment. By the way, I know plenty of people in safe and fulfilling

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relationships in which one partner is the sole breadwinner for the family. I bring this up just to show the pattern. When a couple decides that one of the two isn't going to work. It can be a team decision, one that's best for their family and their goals. But it can also be a tool to keep the person who isn't working in a place of servitude and a place where they're not able to ask questions or express discontent with poor behavior. In other words, it can be a tool to put a bird in its cage to keep that person from being able to leave the relationship. Allison worked for JP's church for very little money when his affair broke up their marriage. She had nothing. Mica worked for the church for a little money. Again, she had nothing and what she did have JP appears to have taken from her According to police reports and journal entries that were shared by her attorney in Mica's list. Mica's team has accused JP of financial abuse, which includes accusations that he took Mica's name off their bank accounts and then expected her to pay her phone and medical bills. It also includes JP hiring and rehiring Mica at his whim, as perhaps a way to Lord His power over her financially. According to Mica's list. We've also seen text messages that indicate JP might have considered his financial role and their relationship to be one that should come with a certain amount of transactional control over Mica using his position as bill payer, against her when he was in his feelings. We told you about my cousin JP's big fight in November 2022. After JP asked my God, if she had to kiss a woman, who would it be, and then he got angry at her for eventually having an answer, and we told you how she fled to Gaffney to be with her sister and how she said she did not feel safe being at home with him, but he really wanted her to come home. During that night, in addition to threatening to come to Gaffney armed and ready and the police being called JP texted Mica's best friend Charlotte saying, then she leaves while I'm already feeling like the

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smallest man in the world. The only thing I'm good for is to pay her bills. He was angry that Mica would not bend to his will. And that is where his mind went.

Mandy Matney 54:21

Back to Susan and way, Susan testified that from the get go, Wayne had little time for her or their relationship. She also indicated that he didn't seem to care if they were intimate. And when they did spend some time together, it was with one of his friends, either a young Bible college student or a young man. She said quote, Wayne insisted that I ride in the back of the car behind him while he and his friend rode in the front seat. We even started going out at night with his, quote, friend, whoever it was at the time, leaving me alone. I wondered why I quit working just to be his quote, servant. She said that Wayne wanted to be well known as a pastor and a speaker and began traveling. She said that he preferred taking a male friend or a Bible school student with him rather than her. Now, again, I want to note that this is Susan's version of their marriage. We're going to discuss Wayne's version of their marriage in a future episode, as well as issues leading up to an after their divorce. Susan says that she worked hard at being a pastor's wife. Again, there's that phrase, right, good wife. We hear that a lot and JP's case. JP accused Mica of not being a good wife, a godly wife. In their wedding vows, Mica vowed to give 100% of herself to JP and to his endeavors. She was offering all of herself to him. JP's vow was to lead her to Jesus. It was the perfect umbrella vowel for him. Because according to sources, records and Mica's list, it allowed him to weaponize Mica's faith against her so that she would bend his wishes in any given moment. In her affidavit, Susan said that she started taking piano lessons because she thought that it would please Wayne, she



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wanted to become Wayne's image of what a good pastor's wife should be. Susan said Wayne insisted she wear dresses to church, so he bought her pretty clothes. But also, she said he called her too fat and said that she wasn't a turn on. She testified that he would use phrases like, if you were woman enough, then he would want to have sex with her. She said that she was humiliated, and that their sexual problems were always her fault. Again, does that sound familiar? According to Mica, JP told Mica that if she did not engage in his sexual fantasies, that it would be her fault if he sought out sex workers or other partners. In Susan's affidavit, Susan said that Wayne, quote, loved being in the public eye and thrived on people admiring him. And here again, is another thing that JP has in common with his father. If his TikTok videos are of any indication.

Liz Farrell 57:33

Susan's affidavit also gives us insight into what JP's childhood might have been like. According to his mother, his father was not around very much and when he was home, he was too tired or busy. I want to again remind you that this affidavit was used to get custody child support and alimony. Susan likely wanted to demonstrate to the court that she was emotionally abused in our marriage and that her relationship with her kids was stronger than his what we're sharing with you as sworn testimony, but it's one person's perspective. In her affidavit, Susan said that her children became her whole life she saw herself as both their mother and father. When a child awakened during the night Susan said Wayne would make her go into another bedroom to keep from disturbing his sleep. Which reminds me, this is another thing JP and his father have in common. According to sources Mica, she had to walk on eggshells at times because JP is a really late sleeper, and she disturbed



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asleep in any way he would get angry at her. Now, Susan said that she began sleeping separately from Wayne because they weren't having sex anyway, and she grew tired of him putting her down. She also accused Wayne of hitting her once or twice during the arguments, quote, my husband did not need or want me except to wait on Him and be his servant. He would lay on the couch and want me to wait on Him. Susan said that Wayne forbade their children from celebrating Halloween Santa Claus or the Easter Bunny, and that even though she disagreed with us, she went along with it out of fear. He was the head of the household, she said and she was afraid of them. In addition to that, Susan said that quote, a few times, Wayne called me in front of the church people and said embarrassing and humiliating things to me. Since I had not finished college and little work experience. I had no real good job skills. Therefore, I endured Wayne's behavior. So that should sound familiar to you. JP was known to do the same thing to make us first wife, Allison Williams told the court that he even did this with their children as witness. He used his position on the pulpit to embarrass my god and, according to Michael's list to bully her into seeing things his way and their marriage, including sexually in Susan's affidavit, she outlines what could be considered financial abuse in their relationship. She accused Wayne of opening credit cards in her name when he ran out of credit on his own cards, and she accused him of making her sign papers which she only later learned was a second mortgage on their house, but Wayne has always felt he was smarter than I. Once he threatened to take away my car keys if I did not do as he said, yet another similarity. Not only did Mica tell police that JP was keeping her car from her Mica's list included an accusation that JP would hide Mica's purse and keys from her to keep her from leaving the house. Susan's affidavit also includes accusations that Wayne was physically



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abusive with JP beating him so badly one time with a leather belt on a trip to Disney World when he was about five or six years old, that there were bloody stripes covering both of JP's legs. And after another incident that left marks on JP, Susan said her mother told her that if she saw any more remarks on him, any evidence of these beatings again, that she was going to call social services on them. But Susan said the beatings didn't stop. And when JP was a teenager, the police would have to be called to their homes because of the fights Wayne would get into with him. She recounted an incident in which when allegedly choked and slapped and hit JP's younger brother, she said Wayne once allowed a teacher at their academy to put the younger boy beside her desk to face the other children while she ridiculed him and called him slow.

Mandy Matney 1:01:16

These accounts give us more insight into JP's upbringing, and again, Wayne has never been charged with abusing his children. Though he was accused of having a violent temper in his federal indictment in 2014. And JP has not publicly claimed abuse from his father, physical or sexual, at least not in anything that we have seen so far. JP has also referred to his effing dad as a quote unquote homo in text messages, which says a lot about how JP apparently views the gay community. But back to the abuse. If this account is true, it speaks to a potential cycle of abuse, at least maritally There were no accusations of JP physically abusing his own children and Allison Williams filing with the court. She did however, say her children did not want to be forced to be with JP and she included a video in which JP can be seen during a custody transfer, carrying off a very upset child who is screaming, crying and hitting him to be let down. Mica's list accuses JP of getting physical



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with her in ways that would not leave a mark and Alison's affidavit accuses JP of admitting to church elders that he had inappropriate sexual encounters with girls under the age of 16 at his church. Now, in her affidavit, Susan said that her parents bought 90% of her children's clothes because when it came time to buy them, Wayne would say that he didn't have the money. I want to remind you that during this time, Wayne had one of the largest charismatic churches in the state, and a five day a week television show called Good Morning Jesus. Charismatic churches, by the way, are a form of Christianity that believe in speaking in tongues and divine healing. And at that time, Wayne also ran a Bible college. Susan is saying here that they were hurting for money to the detriment of their children. But when it came time for Wayne to take a trip for a speaking engagement, or even a vacation to Bermuda, Wayne always found a way to pay for it, including charging it and fact. She accuses Wayne of telling people that she was responsible for all of the charges, and said that Wayne uses their church credit card for personal items, like trips to Charleston cruises to Bermuda gas dinner with friends and flowers for a yard belonging to one of his male friends employees. Speaking of that, in her testimony, Susan implied heavily that Wayne was having homosexual affairs on her. She recounted a time when she woke up in the middle of the night, it could not find Wayne. The next morning, she learned that Wayne was in one of the bedrooms of her house with a quote, handsome young minister who had attended our Bible College two years earlier. It was shortly after this she said to Bible college students told her that her husband tried to feel their husband's genitals and try to wrestle them or get on top of them when they were on speaking engagements together. Hmm. Susan said in her affidavit, quote, I think I was in total shock. In my world began slowly crumbling. I was devastated and wondered just what kind of

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person had I married a few months after through this in the late 1980s, she kept hearing more rumors, and WPD aired a five part segment about Wayne's alleged sexual advances on men at his church. She said quote, the families in our neighborhood began talking about us. And the things they said embarrass my children so much. My sons lost their friends and became lonely as no mothers would even let their children come to my house again.

Liz Farrell 1:05:32

Eventually, she said they had to move from Florence to Myrtle Beach. She said she considered leaving Wayne at that time, but felt that he needed help, quote, we covered up his mistakes and Florence hoping no one would ever find out. Wayne told me that if I would stay, he would go to counseling. So after that, she said her marriage improved somewhat and then they had their third child. Around that time they were living off the profit made from selling their house in Florence. She said Wayne continued to keep her from working, but that she had begun taking classes at a college until Wayne decided not to pay for them anymore. She said she encouraged Wayne to become a real estate agent at that time, and said that when she expressed a desire to learn a marketable skill, Wayne and his mother suggested that she work at Bojangles. Instead, Wayne started a new Bible College and church, quote, Wayne received an honorary doctorate degree from Indiana Bible University and ever since that time has requested that he be called Dr. Miller. We have a lot more to share about this, but I wanted to leave you with one more piece of insight from Susan's affidavit about Wayne and Susan's marriage. At one point in their relationship, Wayne began to suspect Susan of having an affair which she admits to she said she had a short relationship with a former boyfriend of a friend of hers.

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During that time, she said Wayne had connected a tape recorder to their phone unbeknownst to her and placed the recorder under her bed. All her calls were being recorded. She said until an Ori telephone company worker came to service her phone and found the recorder. Again sound familiar? JP stands accused of keeping tabs on Mica tracking her whereabouts but GPS hacking into her iCloud account, email and social media accounts, as well as taking videos of her in private settings that he then allegedly threatened to use against her.

Mandy Matney 1:07:24

This is all just to show that the horrible behaviors JP has been accused of in his marriage to Mica did not just materialize out of thin air. They appear to have been modeled for him and adapted from the very dysfunctional example of marriage that he had growing up, at least from what we see, according to these court documents. And what we've read in old news reports, the idea of a preacher being one way in front of his congregation and another way at home and in his personal relationships is not a new one. But it is important to call it out. At the heart of the Mica Francis case is power. Mica felt powerless, because in many ways, almost all of them she was even her faith appears to have been used against her making any power that she felt in her relationship with God a tenuous thing. Mica did not just feel powerless. It appears that she was made to feel that any avenue that she had for autonomy, even as a part of a couple, had road bumps and roadblocks put there by her husband, according to sources and documents. As we continue to talk about changing the ways law enforcement responds to domestic abuse, in the ways it gets defined by law, and the ways it gets prosecuted. As we continue to talk about empowering women through calling out the legal and justice systems every time they're filled by

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them. We also need to be talking about the roots of abuse. It is not news that abuse is cyclical that abusers are often victims of abuse themselves. And abusers past is no excuse for the abusers present, obviously, but there is only one way to break the cycle. And that is through accountability. Mica's case continues to be such an important one. Because Mica was and is not alone. But she felt that way. As to many women experiencing the types of abuses associated with coercive control. A lot of that feeling comes with the discovery that the legal injustice systems do not have their backs. The first step to changing that is to call that out every single time. The second step is to not back down. We are encouraged by what we're hearing about the FBI investigation into this case. We hope it is a sign that law enforcement is starting to think outside of the box When it comes to their rigid understanding about what abuse looks like, because until they do, there will be a next time there will be yet another woman dragged down by the system who reaches the point where she feels like she has nowhere to return. Stay tuned, stay pesky and stay in the sunlight. True Sunlight is a Luna Shark production created by me, Mandy Matney and co-hosted by journalist Liz Farrell. Learn more about our mission and membership at lunasharkmedia.com. Interruptions provided by Luna and Joe Pesky.