

[Transcript] True Sunlight / TSP #6 - Could the Jeroid Price Case Get Worse? More Bad Behavior Outed By Women Attorneys

I don't know what it will take to change the way we elect and police our judges in South Carolina.

But until that changes, we will continue to expose horrific stories involving judges that should deeply concern anyone who wants to fix the system.

Like the Kenny Gleaton case we will talk about today.

My name is Mandy Matney.

This is True Sunlight, a podcast exposing crime and corruption previously known as the Murdoch Murders podcast.

True Sunlight is written with journalist Liz Farrell and produced by David Moses.

As y'all know, I'm an open book when it comes to mental health.

Sometimes too open and a few of y'all email me about how you want to hear more murder in less Mandy.

I'll spare you the details, but I've been struggling recently.

I'm burnt out.

I have a lot of personal issues going on and the universe just hasn't been tilting in my direction.

But that's okay.

I think it's honestly whispering that it is time for a vacation.

The universe seems to be telling me to go somewhere far away from internet trolls and the little fires burning everywhere in the South Carolina justice system.

It is time to reset.

And a reminder, it is always okay to take a vacation.

This thing we are doing here, it's a marathon and not a sprint.

Rest and resets are important for the fight.

They are essential.

That said, we will be taking off next week.

That means no cup of justice and no true sunlight episodes for the week of July 4th.

We will do our best to have special true sunlight premium member events next week that we will announce in the next few days.

And speaking of premium, Luna shark premium is going to be lit starting July 1st in the words of one of my favorite Twitter followers.

Through Luna shark media.com, premium members will get access to searchable case files, written articles with documents, case photos, episode videos and exclusive live experiences with our hosts and guests all in one place.

I am so excited about this and very thankful to the members who support us and are helping us rekindle a love of journalism for so many.

The work you are supporting is important and meaningful, so thank you.

But again, there will be no cup of justice or true sunlight episode next week.

And speaking of cup of justice, I hope you all caught this week's episode of cup of justice because we covered a lot of ground, including a problematic TikTok in the Steven Smith case and we briefly introduced you to the Grant Solomon case.

I want to be clear about that TikTok.

We have checked with multiple sources since we recorded that episode Monday and it appears

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that the rumor being spread on that TikTok about an arrest warrant being issued in the Steven Smith case was false.

We know that a grand jury has been impaneled in the Steven Smith case and we are hoping, wishing and praying that Sandy gets answers soon.

If you know anything about the Steven Smith investigation, please please email tips at se.sled.gov.

Keith sharing justice for Steven on social media.

July 8th will mark eight years since Steven was killed.

Also, on cup of justice this week, we talked about a new case that we will be diving into soon, the Grant Solomon case in Tennessee.

I'm excited to tell you all more about that after we get back from vacation.

And finally, while we're on this little break, we really need our pesky army to turn up the heat on the Bow and Turner case, specifically to remind Solicitor Bill Weeks that it isn't too late to do something.

Please email him at solicitor at achingcountyse.gov.

Every tweet, email and phone call to the elected officials involved in this case matters, not only to the system but to the Stoller family.

Peskiness is powerful, remember that.

So a quick update about the criminal libel slander case we told you about involving Low Country Montessori School, which is connected to two people closely associated with Alec Murdoch,

his admitted co-conspirator Corey Fleming, and Yemisee police chief Greg Alexander.

First, we want to correct an error, Amy Horn, who is the director of Low Country Montessori, who is not previously the director of E.C. Montessori, a private school that closed around the same time this public charter school opened.

She was the lead teacher of the lower elementary school there.

Okay.

So prior to the episode airing, we had foyered for the police report, but it wasn't ready for us until later in the week.

We want to tell you about that report.

Have you ever watched the show Riverdale?

Because it's a little like that.

A few things to note here.

One is that the fake Instagram account was live for only about eight hours total.

It was made in a former teacher's name using real photos and videos of the teacher that had been pulled from real social media accounts, including a video showing him kissing his former boyfriend.

The report was first made by a former student counselor at Low Country Montessori.

Now both the former teacher and former counselor left Low Country Montessori at the end of the 2022 school year and went on to work at a local private school.

It looks like the teacher stayed at that last school for just a semester before leaving the state in late December 2022, about one month before this incident occurred.

The report was also made by the director of the school.

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Neither the counselor nor the director reported the issue directly to the sheriff's office by calling the non-emergency line, but instead had texted the investigator personally. So the report is redacted, meaning we literally had to read between the lines. But here's the backstory.

Apparently there was an issue involving some tomfoolery at a theater in Bluffden. It also involved kids getting, quote, trashed and bashed by this particular teacher throughout the last school year, and kids not being allowed to go to their proms ostensibly because of this teacher and whatever had happened at this theater.

The kids were all home from college during winter break and thought they'd have some fun I guess.

The content of the fake posts and DMs wasn't always clearer because much of it is blacked out in this report, but this is the thing we wanted to share.

Before this incident was first reported a few weeks ago, there were no public reports that we could find anyway, making that connection between Alec Murdoch and Low Country Montessori,

Visa V, Corey Fleming, and Greg Alexander.

Behind the scenes, we had been looking into this for a while over a year, but had not gotten very deep on it beyond looking through public documents.

But according to this incident report, direct messages between this fake account and other users discussed accusations involving teachers at the school whom they apparently named.

The students called those teachers, quote, money launderers.

Money launderers.

Think back to your days in school.

Do you remember thinking your teachers were money launderers?

Because we sure don't.

I'm not even sure that I knew what that word meant back then.

But these Low Country Montessori students apparently knew it.

Now what does this mean?

Other than it's merely interesting at this point, and along with everything we reported last week about the school, it's another question that investigators should be asking.

Why would students who started a fake Instagram account two days before Alec Murdoch's trial was set to start be talking about employees at a school he is connected to being money launderers?

We want to note that nothing in the police report, or in our reporting so far, suggests that this accusation is true.

It was simply mentioned among other accusations about teachers, including that they were allegedly having sex on campus and that one was allegedly fired because of a sexual assault.

The teacher whose name this fake account was created in, and who lives several states away now, did not speak to the Beaver County Sheriff's Office until five days after he was made aware of the incident.

According to the report, quote, he expressed his concern of the account's intent to cause harm to him, others, and institutions in the Beaufort area.

Institutions in the Beaufort area makes you wonder what's under those redactions, huh?

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Today, we continue our deep dive into South Carolina circuit court judge Casey Manning, a person who, as we keep finding out, seems to be the Kevin Bacon of everything that is wrong with the state's justice system.

Pretty much everything is six degrees of separation from him.

All this time, he has been looming in the background of so many stories we've told you about over the past two years.

Manning's name first came to our attention back in the fall of 2021 when, reportedly, he told Eric Bland to back down, as Eric was voicing his concerns about Judge Mullen's involvement in the Satterfield case.

As time passed, and we found more and more concerning information about Judge Carmen Mullen, specifically that one audio recording where she appears to attempt to get a man arrested for a crime he did not commit, aka entrapment, well, we got increasingly curious about who was protecting Mullen and why could they be involved in something bigger.

Then, things got weirder in April when we got one of those episode-changing phone calls alerting us of the drawn price case.

You know, price.

That convicted killer who was mysteriously let out of prison 15 years early due to an order signed by Judge Casey Manning.

Price, the one who the FBI and several other South Carolina law enforcement agencies have been searching for for several months and is still on the run.

Well, after the drawn price case became public and prompted the South Carolina Supreme Court to step in and reverse Manning's decision, Governor Henry McMaster ordered an accounting of how many similar sentence reductions had occurred in the past few years.

In that report, compiled by the South Carolina Department of Corrections at Governor Henry McMaster's request.

It shows that Judge Manning signed eight of the 27 orders in the 16-month that McMaster's office requested about.

Seven of the 27 orders, a whole quarter of them, were signed by Manning the month before he retired.

And Manning, by the way, is one of 49 circuit court judges in South Carolina, but more odd and concerning could be the potential clog in this whole accountability part of this.

This all came out months after Governor Henry McMaster awarded Judge Casey Manning the order of the Palmetto, the state's highest honor, which he also awarded to Ellic Murdoch's father Randolph in 2018.

So just a few weeks after Manning got this award, which, by the way, is turning into the state's bestest good ol' boy award in the eyes of the public, Manning signed this secret deal to release convicted killer, Drawed Price.

So essentially, right now, as we look deeper into Casey Manning's past, we are wondering what exactly is going on here when it comes to accountability.

Is it possible that McMaster, or someone else, is covering for Casey Manning because they don't want to eat their own words?

And like everything else in a corrupt system, nothing is simple.

Everything is complex and nuanced, meaning Judge Manning is neither all good or all

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bad.

It is turning out to be a great example of where broken parts of this system are.

The thing we always have to be careful about when we talk about the Murdoch story and in telling the story about how the world that created and nurtured Ellic Murdoch and others like him is not to allow one person to stand for all the evil when we know that it takes a village, a big village of people who look the other way.

We were worried about this with Judge Carmen Mullen in the early days as we were learning just how entrenched she seems to be in the Satterfield case, especially when we took into consideration other questionable things that she has done from the bench and from her chambers.

I remember this one day clearly when Liz and I were watching the Chad Westendorf deposition and we were both like, she's going to be their sacrificial lamb, isn't she?

She's going to be the one that gets held up as an example of the Supreme Court actually doing its job and holding judges to account.

But so far, we've been wrong about that because as you know, she is still plugging along on the bench as if nothing were wrong about that.

But still, we are so aware that those at the top of a corrupt system seem to love nothing more than to throw the other under the bus first, to assign the blame mostly or entirely to a person who has less power, whether it be a white man who is lower on the totem pole or a woman or a person of color.

People with more power in the equation also tend to use those with less power to distract the public from their own wrongdoings or their roles in corruption by holding the person with less power to even more account than they would have otherwise.

I've seen this so many times in investigations into law enforcement officers.

We haven't done a full study on this, but anecdotally, it seems like the moment somebody who isn't part of the Good Old Boys Club gets caught up into something bad, the Good Old Boys in charge pounce on the opportunity to discipline them.

And not just discipline them, but in a way that they can later hold up to say see.

We don't protect our own.

Look at this officer here, who is facing criminal charges.

Look, we do our job, so there's nothing to worry about.

Just go back to what you were doing.

It doesn't mean that Judge Mullen's actions do not merit scrutiny and accountability.

Because I cannot say this loudly enough.

They do.

They really do.

It's just that we're ultra-tuned in to that move.

It also doesn't change our decision about whether to report something or how to report something.

It just means we are looking behind people like Carmen Mullen or Casey Manning to see who all is hiding behind their robes.

Who are the people ducking behind them to escape scrutiny or worse, the law?

So keep that in mind as we continue to discuss the story of Casey Manning.

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Like I said, it is complicated.

And he and Judge Mullen are not the only problematic ones.

We'll be right back.

So let's back up a little and talk about some of these six degrees of Casey Manning.

To start with, Judge Manning was not only the first black basketball player allowed to play on the University of South Carolina's team.

He was the school's first black athlete allowed on any team, and this was in 1969.

We can't even imagine what that must have been like for him.

His entire life has been spent operating within a system that was originally designed to keep him and people with his skin color out of the room.

A look through South Carolina's laws and the reasons for them existing will show you just how much race has factored into the way the state has been governed since the Civil War.

Now, Judge Manning's stint on the USC basketball team continues to be relevant because he's considered a trailblazer.

It's mentioned all the time whenever anyone is speaking about him or writing about him.

Last week we pointed out how dumb it is that whenever anyone was writing about the Bennett Galloway case, they made sure to include his status as star high school football player as if that should matter in the grand scheme of the accusations that were made against him.

This is much different from that.

A Judge Manning's retirement ceremony on December 8th, 2022, about a dozen people spoke according to the state newspaper.

One of them was former South Carolina Supreme Court Chief Justice Costa Placonas.

Senator John Monk wrote, quote, just as Jackie Robinson, the first black baseball player to desegregate Major League Baseball in 1947, was picked not only for his great athletic skills, but also because of his character, intellect, and basic human decency, Placonas said.

Manning was carefully selected by leaders to be the first black athlete to play collegiate sports for the University of South Carolina.

Carefully selected.

I know that was meant to be a compliment, but it's a gross reminder of a gross past.

It means that the standards were likely set higher for Judge Manning than for any other member on his team.

And it's not hard to imagine how this might have continued throughout his career in various ways.

Judge Manning's contemporaries had let him into their club, and then he became a big part of that world.

At the ceremony, Judge Manning received the key to the City of Columbia and was presented with a proclamation from the South Carolina House of Representatives.

You know the same governing body that includes Representative Todd Rutherford and Representative

Seth Rose, two of Judge Manning's personal friends, who are both attorneys, whose clients received strange and highly problematic sentence reductions from Judge Manning in his final

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year on the bench.

Also, let's not forget how much power legislators hold over the judges they elect and reelect. Just four days after this retirement party, where Judge Manning was given the state's highest honor of the Order of the Palmetto, Judge Manning sentenced a man named Justin Jones, represented by Todd Rutherford, to 16 years for attempted murder and burglary. Almost three weeks after his retirement party, Judge Manning reversed course without explanation and without the necessary hearing, reduced Jones' sentence, the one he had just given him, to six years.

Earlier in the year, he had done the same thing for Representative Seth Rose, allowing LeBorn Hallaw, a man Rose represented, to have his attempted murder sentence reduced from life to 30 years.

Oh, and look who presented Judge Manning with this legislative resolution.

Seth Rose.

In its story on Judge Manning's retirement, by the way, the state newspaper made sure to note that Representative Rose is, quote, a lawyer and a former University of South Carolina, all-American tennis player.

So, forgive us for forgetting to mention Representative Seth Rose's tennis player status in episode three of True Sunlight, when we first told you about the LeBorn Hallaw case. Now that you know this information, we urge you to go back and re-listen right now so you can properly judge this man's actions against the thing he was good at in college.

I mean, honestly.

Oh, and don't let us forget this.

Seth Rose is also the legislator who, a month or so after this party, introduced a bill on the House floor calling for a bridge to be named after Judge Manning.

Here's David with that resolution.

To request the Department of Transportation, name the bridge crossing, the CSX and Norfolk Southern Railroad tracks along Blossom Street in the city of Columbia, in Richland County, quote, the Honorable L. Casey Manning Bridge, respected judge and trailblazing Gamecock, and erect appropriate markers or signs at this bridge containing these words.

Erect, indeed.

We've said this over and over on this podcast, but good old boys love to give each other trophies.

And this is a great example.

It reminds me of Carl Bowers, butch Bowers' father, who went to prison for tax evasion and was awarded both the Order of the Palmetto and got a bridge named after him.

So every day, thousands of people in Hildenhead drive over a bridge that is named after an ex-con, which is a great way to inspire the children of South Carolina.

Anyways, the bridge resolution included a rundown of Judge Manning's accomplishments over the years, including his stint as a named partner at what became the Walker Morgan Law Firm when he took the bench in 1994.

We're probably going to talk more about the Walker Morgan Law Firm in a future episode, but you might remember us mentioning them as a part of the Hakeem Pinkney story.

In episode 55 of the Murdoch Murders podcast, Eric Bland told us about how his client,

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Melvrick Edwards, who was Hakeem's father and the lawyer who represented his interest in Hakeem's estate.

Here is a clip from that episode.

It seems pretty clear that Eric at least knew that he crossed a line here because almost three years later, he had to figure out a quick solution for cutting Melvrick Edwards out of millions of dollars.

And Alex brings this lawsuit against the nursing home and there's a recovery.

Again, he's died in test date, it's got to go through the probate court, AM is the PR, and money's recovered.

Well, all of a sudden, people start to realize, hey, Melvrick is out there.

And Melvrick, the father, is entitled to 50% of the in-test date estate of Hakeem.

And they start to realize, well, you know, if they challenge this annuity, Melvrick is going to be entitled to 50% of those annuity funds, if it turns out that Russ was not authorized to purchase it post death, post death of Hakeem.

And so I don't know the circumstances of how Melvrick got to his lawyers, Kirk Morgan and Will Walker.

I know that Tyrone's brother was involved.

I know that there was a fee agreement that was strangely signed with Tyrone being the client, even though under no circumstances could he ever be the client.

I know that if you look at the court record, they were moving to have Tyrone be appointed as a conservator for Melvrick and that failed, and then he got a power of attorney.

But at the end of the day, Melvrick Edwards, I always use this expression, you know, he traded his birthright for a bull torch, he in return for settling for \$340,000.

As they were settling the case in April 2014, though, and this looks really, really bad, Melvrick's attorney sent an email to Ellick telling him this, I should mention the time is of the essence on this Melvrick's brother Tyrone Edwards has the power of attorney to make financial decisions on behalf of Melvrick at this time.

However, Melvrick will be released from the mental health facility in the very near future, which may complicate this settlement considerably if Melvrick decides to revoke the power of attorney upon his release.

While he noted that Melvrick was fine with the terms of the settlement, it also seemed super suspicious for his lawyer to say this.

His lawyer's job was to represent him.

But honestly, it's not clear who's interest Melvrick's attorney was serving in this.

We do know this attorney and his law firm work closely with Ellick PMPED and Moss Coon and Fleming over the years.

I'll say that again.

The law firm worked closely with PMPED and Moss Coon and Fleming over the years.

Quick reminder, Moss Coon and Fleming was the law firm where Ellick Murdoch started his career in private practice.

Moss did his best friend Corey Fleming who, as you know, later became a partner before getting fired in 2021 for helping Ellick steal money in the Satterfield caper.

Judge Manning was leaving Walker Morgan and Manning right around the same time that Ellick

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and Corey were being handed the torch at PMPED and Moss Coon.

Okay, one more thing before we get into our main story.

We've said this many times, but it's worth bringing up again.

When Judge Mullin's role in the Satterfield case became clear, the bland Richter law firm sought to depose her and spoke out publicly about the many red flags that she should have seen in that settlement.

It was Judge Manning who apparently put down the hammer and protected her.

Now that's because Judge Mullin was a law clerk for Judge Manning back in the day.

He was her mentor and many people have told us that she considered him to be a father figure.

Keep that law clerk thing in mind because did we mention who was in attendance at Judge Manning's retirement ceremony last December?

There was Carbon Mullin because duh, there was also Fifth Circuit solicitor Byron Gibson who told a reporter, show me where it says I can't do it when he was asked about helping get LeBorn a law out of life sentence for murder.

And we should mention that Byron also was a law clerk for Judge Manning.

Then there was representative Dionne Tedder who was another of Judge Manning's former law clerks.

There was also Daniel McLeod Cobble, the 30-something year old man elected by the state legislature

to take Judge Manning's place.

For our South Carolinian listeners, Cobble's father was the long time but former Columbia mayor Bob Cobble and his grandfather was state attorney general Daniel McLeod.

Oh, and there was another attorney whose name you might recognize at that party.

Jim Griffin, Alec Murdoch's ride or die dream guy.

Also notable was that in addition to former Chief Justice Costa Blaconis, Judge Manning's ceremony was also attended by former Chief Justice Jean Toll who told reporter John Monk dis about Judge Manning, quote, he is a wonderful bridge to the new face of South Carolina.

That room was filled to the brim with people from every walk of life and background.

It was a gathering that could not have been had when he first came to USC as a student.

So one thing we've learned about Judge Manning over these past few years is that in addition to being seen as a judge who had a superior knowledge of the law, he was known for a few other things.

One was his casual benchside manner.

He would crack jokes at lawyer's expenses.

He would suddenly stop proceedings just to loudly greet a friend in the courtroom and he would lose his temper.

Lawyers we've spoken to over the past two years about the problems they might have experienced or seen with Judge Manning almost always seem to include the phrase, but I respected him.

And he did the right thing in other cases I had.

The state newspaper story about Judge Manning's retirement ceremony included a quote from Representative

Dionne Tedder who called Judge Manning, the only person I know who can shout at you while telling you to calm down.

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That quote really stood out to us because of a case we have been researching, the Kenneth Gleaton case.

And it stood out to us because of what happened to three women who were Gleaton's public defenders during that trial.

The short version of this story is that Judge Manning allegedly reported all three women to the Office of Disciplinary Counsel in a preemptive strike after he apparently acted like an unbridled maniac during Gleaton's murder trial in Richland County.

Now let's talk about this a little before we get into this case because it's important you understand a few things about where we are coming from.

One, this was a horrific case and solely based on news coverage of it, we do not think it was an injustice that Gleaton was found guilty.

However, we question whether he got a fair trial.

Two, despite what certain gyms and dicks say about us, we absolutely believe that everyone is entitled to a defense.

We just don't like funny business from show voting attorneys who don't stick to the facts or the law.

Three, unless the system works for everyone, it will work for no one in our opinion.

Four, as a result of our state's utter failure to hold judges accountable for their terrible behavior in and out of the courtroom, Judge Manning appears to have acted in such a way that could very well result in the appellate court overturning a murder conviction and all of it was preventable.

Seriously, what is with this guy and helping murderers get off?

Okay, so the defendant in this case is named Kenneth Ray Gleaton.

In November 2019, he was found guilty of beating, strangling and shooting his 39-year-old girlfriend, Amanda Peel, in 2017.

Amanda, by the way, was a mother of five.

When he was done, he burned her body.

Like we said, it's horrific.

Now, not that it changes how we feel about his guilt, but it is worth mentioning.

Kenneth had what sounds like a very difficult upbringing in Barnwell County, which is right outside the 14th Circuit.

His biological mother was the victim of incest, and from the age of eight was being sexually assaulted by her brother.

At age 13, she became pregnant with her brother's child, meaning Kenneth.

Kenneth was raised by his grandmother, whom he believed to be his mother.

He was raised in the same abusive and violent household as his biological mother, who later attempted suicide in his presence.

The cycle of abuse went even deeper.

His grandmother, the woman who raised him, was 13 years old when she married his grandfather, who was a 33-year-old man at the time.

Those are facts that the public defenders had hoped to present during the sentencing phase of the trial, when both Kenneth's mother and grandmother would have spoken.

But Manning wouldn't allow them to speak, nor would he allow Kenneth to speak, nor

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the prosecutor's office, and, worst of all, not even the victim's family.

Instead, he hastily sentenced Kenneth to life without parole, and called it a day, late on a Friday evening, within minutes of the jury returning its verdict.

And that was just part of the problem with this case.

On May 9th of this year, Assistant Appellate Defender with the South Carolina Office of Appellate Defense in Columbia, Catherine Haggard Hudgens, argued the merits of Kenneth Gleaton's appeal.

About seven minutes in, Appellate Judge Stephanie P. McDonald asked Hudgens about Judge Manning's behavior.

I will tell you, and Ms. Batfield, I'm sure, will address this when she speaks as well, One of the things that greatly concerned me here, it kind of permeates everything, but also I think goes to the cumulative error argument, is the judge's temperament here. I know you didn't make that a separate ground for appeal, I understand that, and I respect that.

But the defense counsel, the public defenders, I thought, made proper objections to the photos, and then there were others, and the judge seemed to just be irate that these proper objections were being made.

At what time, at what point does that become a procedural due process problem?

And I struggled with that when I was preparing this case for appeal, and I can tell you that the public defender's office really, really wanted me to pursue that as a separate issue.

I'm not sure that we had enough for that to stand alone, and that's simply why I tried to intertwine that into my cumulative argument at the very end, because not only do we have these seven issues that stand on their own, and I'm asking this court to reverse on them alone, but you combine those seven trial errors and put that in the atmosphere of this judge not only being testy with the defense counsel, he's being testy with the defense counsel's witnesses.

In front of the jury.

In front of the jury.

That does become a problem, and his whole demeanor feeds into, and I know I'm going to be running

short of time, but his whole demeanor even runs into the issues six and seven, I believe, on the brief where there was no meaningful sentencing hearing.

This jury came back at 845, I believe, and the judge didn't hear from the state or the defense.

I've never seen a sentencing like that where the, well, first of all, the victims in the family or in the defendant's family or even to the point of the state presenting the prior record.

I mean, I know his prior record is bad, and it was already in the, I think, in the motion to bifurcate.

So, I mean, they had that, but I don't, I guess my confusion or concern is, it's fine to keep on working if the jury wants to say, I have no problem with that.

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I would have asked the jury, do y'all want to stay or do you want to come back and kept going?

But then if you make that choice to keep going at 830 on a Friday night, you have to at least still conduct the meaningful review.

I guess my issue is, in light of the brutality of this crime and the prior record, how would remanding for a meaningful sentencing review help hear your client?

I just don't know that that would accomplish anything.

And I understand that question, and, you know, it was a brutal crime.

This was a terrible set of circumstances and a terrible set of facts.

But still, talking about due process, the appellant Mr. Gleaton deserved and was entitled to a meaningful sentencing hearing.

And who knows?

They may have been able to present something that the affidavits didn't show.

I know they submitted affidavits in their motion for new trial, but in person, that's different.

And that might have been something that could have changed this from life to something less.

I see my time is out.

I'm asking this court to reverse on numerous grounds.

Interesting, right?

The same judge who signed eight sentence reduction orders in his final year on the bench, some of which were done without a proper hearing or without the victims being notified.

And at least half of which were for clients of his lawyer-legislator friends, including a murderer who got released and is literally still on the run right now.

That judge couldn't be bothered to hear why he might be due submersive.

But like we said, Kenneth Gleaton didn't have a lawyer-legislator defending him.

He had three public defenders, all of whom were women, from the Richland County Public Defender's Office.

Now think about the situation that Catherine Haggard Hudgens was in, having to publicly talk about the thing the good ol' boys bend over backward to keep hidden from the public.

And that is a judge's misconduct.

And think about Judge McDonald having to publicly address that concern.

Think about those three public defenders, three people who became lawyers, and chose to defend those who could not afford an attorney.

Having to put their concerns about Judge Manning's behavior in writing for all the judges in the state to see, for the Supreme Court to see, for their colleagues in the bar to see.

Think of the people who have kept silent in the face of bad judicial behavior.

Now think of the sheer guts that it took those three attorneys to call Manning out like this.

Here's what happened during the trial, according to a motion for a new trial and sentencing hearing filed by Gleaton's attorneys days after the five-day trial ended.

The motion starts by saying, quote, the actions of Judge Manning prevented Mr. Gleaton from having the fair and impartial trial he is entitled to under the United States Constitution and the South Carolina Constitution.

Abusive and hostile treatment of defense counsel deprived Mr. Gleaton of having a fair trial,

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both by impugning the credibility of defense counsel in the eyes of the jury and by chilling defense counsel's ability to effectively advocate.

During those five days, defense counsel was berated, verbally abused, not allowed to make a record, and at one point threatened for making a hearsay objection.

Judge Manning spoke loudly to his law clerk with mocking body language throughout defense counsel's presentation and frequently rolled his eyes when displeased with defense counsel.

These actions left the jury with the impression that the defense was doing something wrong.

OK, so remember Ellick Murdoch's murder trial and how Judge Clifton Newman reminded the jury that when he overruled objections, it was not something that they should weigh against the defendant.

And remember how he was careful to send the jury back when there was a procedural matter to discuss.

One thing to note here is that defense attorneys aren't just defending their clients in the current moment.

They are preparing for what happens after the trial, should their client be found guilty.

And to do that, they must enter objections for the record.

They must put those markers in the transcript to show that they attempted to argue a point but were blocked by the judge.

Just know this, because again, remember how Judge Clifton Newman would allow Dick and Jim to make their arguments solely so it could be heard for the record in the future.

That is not what Judge Manning did during this trial.

All three public defenders included sworn affidavits about Judge Manning's behavior, something we have never seen before, and attached them to their motion.

Again, think about how much courage that took to do this in South Carolina in 2019.

Their entire careers were put on the line.

And we'll be right back.

Here is an excerpt from Sarah Christine Jurick, who was an assistant public defender on the case.

Judge Manning gave the impression from his body language and demeanor that he did not want to be there.

He made a lot of exasperated noises, talked about how tired he was every morning, appeared as though he was sleeping, and asked counsel to repeat things often as though he was not listening.

When my colleagues objected with confidence in trial, they were yelled at and told to sit down.

I am ashamed to say this affected the number of objections I made and the manner in which I made them.

My objections were meeker and more timid than usual.

Sometimes I did not object at all.

Aside from not wanting to be yelled at for personal reasons, I was concerned about how our being yelled at was interpreted by the jury.

Okay, here is Maisie Austin, who was an assistant public defender on the case.

During the trial, Judge Manning appeared constantly displeased with defense counsel.

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This was evidenced by Judge Manning relentlessly yelling at us as we tried to present arguments, his response to our objections, and his incessant interrupting when we were trying to make the record or present arguments to the court.

Austin also included an example.

When a witness began to talk about information she had received from the victim, Amanda Peel, Austin objected to the testimony, as he or she said.

Judge Manning incorrectly repeated back what he thought the witness had said and overruled Austin's objection.

Quote, as Judge Manning was inaccurate with his recounting of the witness statement, I tried to offer the court more information about what the witness said.

He got very mad and roared at me to sit down, which I immediately did.

I was afraid to upset him further and to have him admonish me in front of the jury so I did not object.

Once the direct examination of the witness was concluded, he asked the jury to leave.

As soon as the door closed, he turned to me and said something to the effect of, Miss Austin, if you have another outburst like that, you will regret it.

It was clear that what I considered advocacy was upsetting him.

His reaction forced me into a constant calculation.

During my objection, I did not raise my voice beyond what would be a clear speaking voice.

I did not lose control of my language and I certainly was not trying to disrespect Judge Manning.

Austin ended her affidavit with a statement about Judge Manning's decision to cut short the sentencing hearing and prevent Kenneth, his family, the attorneys, and the victim's family from speaking.

It was, Austin said, one of the most dehumanizing, unjust moments I have experienced in a courtroom

to date.

Finally, here is an excerpt from Laura Young, the third woman on the case who was the deputy public defender at the Richland County Public Defender's Office.

She said, Judge Manning's actions directly contradicted his words.

He would frequently speak over defense counsel during her efforts to preserve issues for the record.

He would repeatedly tell us to calm down despite the fact that we never raised our voices or lost our tempers.

At times, it seemed as though Judge Manning was not listening or paying attention during the trial.

He would close his eyes and place his head in his hands.

Judge Manning seemed frustrated and irritable and expressed as much through his body language and behavior, he visibly rolled his eyes during objections, stood up and leaned over his chair during defense counsel's cross examinations, crossed his arms, and angrily stared at the defense table.

He moaned and sighed audibly during defense counsel's objections.

He lacked patience and spoke loudly and negatively about defense counsel to his law clerk.

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While the jury was present in the courtroom and witnesses were testifying, several times witnesses paused during their testimony and turned to the judge because it was so distracting. And then Laura Young said, quote, I have never moved for a mistrial based on a judge's demeaning treatment of defense counsel.

I was compelled to do so following a threat to my co-counsel after she made a valid hearsay objection.

I believe that I definitely made poor choices regarding potential objections or arguments due to the ongoing calculation of acting in my client's best interests while also trying not to anger the judge in front of the jury.

The women also noted Judge Manning's seemingly chummy relationship with the jury and that the defendant had heard the judge screaming in his office as well as noted a comment Judge Manning allegedly made about wanting to have his attorneys arrested and thrown in jail. Their client questioned whether he was getting punished because the judge seemed to dislike his attorneys.

All three women said in their affidavits that they have never in their entire careers filed affidavits about how they were treated by a judge.

On top of all of this, and on top of Judge Manning reporting all three women to the ODC, he would not give the women an audio recording of the trial.

Now, in South Carolina, the court reporters are the custodians of the transcript and the audio from court proceedings.

When you file a FOIA for them, you do so through the court reporter, but, and this is a big but, the court reporter needs permission from the judge before releasing them.

Remember, courtrooms are public, but here we are.

In the Gleam case, the public defenders tried to get the audio so they could include it with their motion for a new trial to audibly demonstrate the judge's tone and accurately portray his words, but they weren't getting anywhere.

According to emails attached to a subsequent motion to preserve the recording, Judge Manning was maintaining that he had already ruled on this matter.

It was really frustrating to read these emails, especially after reading about Judge Manning's gaslighting in the courtroom.

In the emails, the attorneys were like, um, yeah, so you keep saying he already rolled on this, but we didn't make the argument before now.

So in his clerk, Shelby Herb Kurzman, whose father, by the way, is a legislator, was like, yeah, he already rolled.

But she never said how he rolled, and the attorneys never asked how he rolled.

Not that it would have mattered because the attorneys had to have the ruling and writing for the appeal anyway.

But that is the dance that attorneys have had to deal with judges whose egos take over the case, and judges whose egregious behavior has gone unchecked for years.

Remember that quote earlier in the episode from Representative Teter, who called Judge Manning quote, the only person I know who can shout at you while telling you to calm down?

It was something that was presented like it was a quaint little tidbit about a harmless

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grump.

It's a tolerated misbehavior.

Oh yeah, sure, let's laugh at the bad moods and the lashing out and the unpredictability.

That's just Judge Manning, and by laughing it off and staying silent and tolerating it, we get to remain members of his club, and that's the most important thing.

In the case of Sarah, Maisie, and Laura, though, what became of them?

Being a grievance filed against you by a South Carolina judge of all people is no small matter.

It could affect an attorney's job opportunities moving forward.

It could cause problems for their colleagues at their practice, or in this case, the public defender's office.

It could affect the outcome of their cases in front of other unscrupulous judges.

It could make them pariahs in our state.

It could affect their abilities to earn money and provide for themselves and their families, all because they were doing their jobs.

In the meantime, you've got men of power, the legislator attorneys, for instance, or members of certain powerful law firms, who have some judges' ears on speed dial, who can get some judges to do things quietly and in their favor without being hassled.

That is not the system we want, and it is not the system that is good for anyone.

Like we said, this case is currently being appealed.

It is hard to know what the outcome will be, but it hangs in the balance, right?

Would Kenneth Gleaton's verdict be overturned because of how judge Manning conducted himself in the courtroom?

It is absolutely possible.

I mean, look at the chaos that is created when the Supreme Court and the Commission on Judicial Conduct fail to hold judges accountable and fail to foster a system in which lawyers can do right by their clients without having the walls come down around them.

The Gleaton case is just one of many, I'm sure.

Cases in which a judge's gaslighting and temper tantrums and unprofessional behavior took over the courtroom and everyone just had to sit and take it.

We applaud the three women who spoke up.

It is bravery, like theirs, that we all need to see more of in this world.

So, the Supreme Court has not filed its order rescinding judge Manning sentencing order in the drawn price case.

It has been two months and it still hasn't given the public any reason to trust that something will come of this.

Where is Supreme Court Chief Justice Donald Beatty?

Where is Attorney General Allen Wilson?

And where is Governor McMaster?

Well, we see the same kind of bravery from them when it comes to finally taking on one of South Carolina's biggest shames, our secretive system of not policing our judges and attorneys. We hope that those in the power seats decide to hold judge Manning accountable despite his retired status.

Remember, retired judges collect lofty pensions from taxpayer dollars.

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At the very least, again, we need to know that they are investigating his past like we are.

And speaking of investigating his past, before publishing this episode, our awesome Pesky reporter Beth Brayden received a 500 page FOIA from SEDC regarding Jarrod Price's release. So remember how Price's attorney lawyer lawmaker Todd Rotherford held a press conference saying that his client has done nothing but help the citizens of South Carolina.

He claimed that he saved the lives of correctional officers.

Remember that?

Remember how the whole reason Price was allegedly let out was because of this so-called life-saving behavior by him?

Well, Beth asked for the reports related to Price's prison record, including the specific incident reports where Price allegedly helped save correctional officers.

And y'all, we got 500 pages back, including a whole lot of pages about the correctional officers involved.

Beth, Liz, and I spent the afternoon reading through these documents to the best of our ability.

And guess what?

In all of those 500 pages, we have not seen any evidence of Price helping a single person during his stint behind bars.

But also, it shows that Price himself had his fair share of altercations with prison guards.

In the years leading up to a secret release by Manning, Rutherford, and Gibson, Jarrod Price was decidedly not on his best behavior.

Some of the incidents in this file include exposing himself to a prison guard repeatedly getting caught using blood code language and notes to other prisoners, hiding cell phones in his room, having, for some reason, a six-pound can of collared grains in a cell, getting caught with a shiv-like weapon made of paper and a sharp object, writing letters to his sister and asking her to smuggle in photos of women for him, hidden in fake legal paperwork, getting caught with notes that had financial numbers on them and account numbers and social security numbers, getting caught with alcohol, being drunk, having condoms, refusing to go to work, hitting a prison captain and a sergeant when they caught him flushing a cell phone down his toilet, booing and cursing guards, trying to snatch a prisoner transport belt out of a sergeant's hands after a verbal altercation and then charging another sergeant while yelling I'm the real deal, mother effer, and threatening to kill a guard for not offering him extra trays of food.

That last incident happened just two years before Judge Manning signed off on his early release.

There is a lot going on in these prison records and we're going to do something new with premium members.

We will be sending the 500 page report to premium members today and next week we will host a live chat so we all can share our findings and unpack every bit of this thing.

We will be posting announcements soon at lunashark.supercast.com.

So stay tuned, stay pesky, and stay in the sunlight.

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True Sunlight is created by me, Mandy Matney, co-hosted by journalist Liz Farrell and produced by my husband, David Moses.

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