



Shadow of a doubt

COURTESY PHOTO

Dean Strang and Jerry Buting, who represented Steven Avery of "Making a Murderer," are on tour to encourage conversations about justice.

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In the O2 Academy, a 2,550-capacity venue in Glasgow, Scotland, that's used to hosting the likes of Kings of Leon or The White Stripes, two middle-aged guys in suits are doing the traditional sound-check call. "One, two," says Wisconsin attorney Dean Strang. "A,B,C ..." recites his colleague Jerry Buting. It's more than a little surreal.

Later this evening, Strang and Buting will pack the venue to the rafters for their "long-form conversation" about the issues raised in the Netflix hit documentary "Making a Murderer." The 10-part series – focusing on Manitowoc County, Wis., man Steven Avery's wrongful conviction for the sexual assault and attempted murder of Penny Beerntsen and his subsequent arrest and conviction for the murder of Teresa Halbach – is a damning reflection on the flaws of the U.S. justice system and a powerful indictment of the role of class, power, poverty and educational opportunity on legal outcomes.

In an otherwise bleak tale, Strang and Buting, Avery's defense attorneys in the series, are the sole rays of light. When Strang breaks down partway through the series, saying he almost wishes that Avery were guilty because otherwise the injustice he has faced is too unbearable, it is the most inspiring a lawyer has been since Atticus Finch's closing speech in "To Kill a Mockingbird." Both men's passion for justice ignited a vast following of fans – enough to fill venues like this across the U.S. and U.K. – and turned both into unlikely stars. In the immediate aftermath of the show's release, Buting said, his teenage daughter swore off social media because "everyone keeps talking about how

Dean Strang and Jerry Buting were the defense attorneys in the documentary series "Making a Murderer." Now, they are promoting conversations worldwide about justice.

hot Jerry Buting is." Strang doesn't do social media, but "Sexy Dean Strang" has thousands of followers on Twitter.

Though perplexed at this "crazily improbable" turn of events, both are determined to use the publicity to open up a frank debate on the reality of human attempts to provide justice – in the U.S. and further afield.

Recognizing the particular problems that street paper vendors and others experiencing housing insecurity face with the law, they were particularly keen to talk about these issues with the International Network of Street Papers.

"I didn't realize there was an international network before," Strang said about INSP, a network of more than 100 street papers worldwide, including Street Roots. "That's amazing."

Speaking to our global readers is a good start. After all, they pointed out, criminal justice starts with social justice.

INSP: *Why have you decided to take time away from your day job to go on tour?*

Jerry Buting: After the documentary came out, there were so many issues it raised: unanswered questions not just about the case, but issues of justice. One of the things we saw pretty quickly was that even though the media would interview us and ask questions about some of those issues,

the reports that would end up on TV and in print would be fluff. They didn't even scratch the surface. We talked it over and we thought it would be great if we could have a forum where we could bring in the public and have them ask us questions and have us talk about justice.

Dean Strang: A long-form conversation.

J.B.: Yes, a long-form conversation. And we did that – 90 minutes in Milwaukee. All of a sudden, all of these other cities said, hey, we'd like to do that too. It just sort of grew on its own, organically. Then some tour promoters came up with the idea of doing a longer-term thing in America. And now we've been going foreign as well.

: Do you feel like your discussions will have an impact, once people leave the theater?

D.S.: I hope so, over the long term. I really do hope so. That's the point – to foster dialogue about problems in the administration of justice that transcend one county or one time in the United States and, to a very large extent, transcend all national borders. Because no matter where on this Earth we are trying to administer justice, it's human beings who are the entire composition of every institution of justice that any country has ever devised. So many of the weaknesses or frailties of any system of justice are universal. Ultimately these

things don't change unless the public understands what the professionals on the inside are doing and what the risks for uncertainty or unreliability really are. Again, those risks tend to transcend national boundaries. They often concern class. Class gets linked to race and ethnicity. Poverty is linked to race and ethnicity. Or you're a recent arrival as an immigrant. And certain mistakes police officers make or their own cognitive biases that affect how they look at the world are not so different no matter where you are.

We're hoping that members of the public who found themselves engaged by "Serial" the podcast or by "Making a Murderer" or by "The Jinx" or by "Paradise Lost," or whatever these interesting and well-done true crime entrants to that genre are, we're hoping that they'll take that interest and challenge themselves to look beyond one case that happened at a distant time and place and to look at their own locale and to look to the future. We hope they'll look at what they can do to get involved in advancing not just criminal justice but social justice.

INSP: *When you agreed to be filmed for "Making a Murderer," you couldn't have known how big the series would be. Would you have thought any differently about agreeing to be filmed if you'd realized how much of an impact it would have on your lives?*

D.S.: I wonder if it would have scared me off, at the time, had there been any way at all to anticipate this. I hope not, because – though unexpected and widely improbable – it's been a great gift to be able to participate as a voice in this discussion.

J.S.: It's a good question. And it's a new question, actually. I don't know. If I'd have known that this impact would be there, I