

Bonus Episode: Message in a Bottle



Season 1 : Bonus: Message in a Bottle - A CALL TO ACTION TO HELP JAMIE SNOW!

July 15, 2020

Speakers: Jamie Snow, Lesley Pires

Episode Description: A message in a bottle was traditionally sent as a distress call by those at sea who found themselves doomed. Jamie has sent his own SOS pleas via message in a bottle a few times...This time, Jamie needs YOUR help. Jamie doesn't want to send one bottle again. He wants to send MANY. From each of YOU. With your own SOS pleas, asking for TV producers to take a closer look into Jamie's case. Join this event to support Jamie Snow and collaborate on his newest media movement.

Jamie Snow: Doing the message in a bottle is the only way that we can separate ourselves and stand out from the crowd.

Lesley Pires: I'm sending you this message on behalf of Jamie Snow. I've come to believe in him and does in a sense, he needs some true and powerful media attention.

Jamie Snow: It's like the modern take on a shipwrecked sailor throwing a message in a bottle and into the sea hoping that somebody will find it rescuing. I have to believe that this is going to get us some traction somewhere with someone.

Music Intro: Injustice Anywhere presents Snow Files: The wrongful conviction of Jamie Snow and how they got away with it.

Lesley Pires: A message in a bottle was traditionally sent as a distress call by those at sea who found themselves doomed. Jamie Snow understands this sentiment all too well. Jamie has sent his own SOS pleas via message in a bottle a few times, most recently to Bob Ruff of the truth and justice podcast. Bob found his message to be endearing, saying it definitely got my attention. So he selected Jamie's case for season seven of his crowdsourced investigation podcast.

(From recording)

Bob Ruff: We get hundreds of requests every month from people asking us to look into potential wrongful conviction cases. Some through our online submission form, some through email, or Facebook messages, and a lot of letters sent directly to our P.O. box from inmates asking for help. It can be overwhelming at times. So many people that genuinely need help and not enough time or resources to help all of them. When I read Jamie's Message in a Bottle, his name immediately sounded familiar to me. A quick look through my files revealed several other letters that he had written to me. At some point, Jamie had figured out that if he wanted our help, he needed to get my attention - and it worked. This is what he wrote to me with his message in a bottle:

Dear Mr. Ruff,

I wish I knew the perfect way to begin a letter like this. Believe it or not, I probably written a few thousand of these letters, each a little different in one way or another, but all with the same goal - a plea for help. Life saving help is what I truly seek. I haven't been completely unlucky in this endeavor to find help. Tara Thompson and John Loevy from the Exoneration Project in Chicago, as well as John Hanlon from the Illinois Innocence Project in Springfield have taken my case up in the courts. I'd welcome you to look them up and see who they really are. They're probably three of the best wrongful conviction attorneys in the entire state, and they believe in me.

My name is Jamie Snow. And I'm almost 20 years into a life sentence for a crime I didn't commit. I've found out over the years that that statement alone isn't in itself enough to grab someone's attention. And it's definitely not enough to motivate

someone to get involved and help. I urge you with every beat of my heart in every ounce of my soul to take the time to really learn about my case. Don't just take my word for it. Do as my lawyers did and review the evidence, and then decide if you're willing to get involved and help us. As great and dedicated as my attorneys are, there's only so much that they can do. Their's is an audience of judges and prosecutors who represent a system that hates to admit when they have made a mistake. I believe yours is an audience of people who truly are seeking the truth. We need to shed as much light on this case as we can.

In the last 20 years, I've seen over and over cases solved after being profiled on one programmer another. Men and women who would have never won their freedom without that program taking a chance on them. So I guess, Mr. Ruff, that's what I'm asking of you today. Take a chance on me in this case. If in the end, you don't want to do it for me and my family, then do it for the victim in this case, William Little. He was an 18-year-old kid who was murdered for less than \$100. And as long as I sit in this prison cell convicted for his murder, he will never receive the Justice his life deserved.

Mr. Ruff, I could spend 150 pages telling you about my case, and even then I feel like I've only scratched the surface. It's truly an unbelievable case that even as I write this letter to you is still twisting and turning. So instead of overwhelming you with the case facts today, I beg of you to check out our website freeJamieSnow.com and contact my case coordinator, Tammy Alexander. Or reach out to me my attorneys. In closing, Mr. Ruff, I will tell you that I acknowledge that I understand a program such as yours most likely receives thousands of requests for help. So I'm just one of many in the sea of wrongful convictions. I could never comment on the truthfulness or veracity of someone else's claims or pleas, I can only tell you that at this very moment you hold in your hands a letter from one who is truly innocent. Please take a chance and maybe help to save what life I have left.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jamie Snow.

(End recording)

Lesley Pires: This time, Jamie needs your help. Jamie doesn't want to send one bottle again. He wants to send many from each of you with your own SOS pleas, asking for TV producers to take a closer look in To Jamie's case. We have selected a pair of award winning producers who previously worked on a wrongful conviction episode at *60 Minutes* to receive all of our messages in a bottle at once. We are asking you to join us and send a heartfelt plea, in your own personalized message in a bottle, to James Jacoby at *FRONTLINE* and Michael Karzis at *60 Minutes* during the first week of August. Ideally around the same time, each supporter will send one bottle to each James and Michael so they're all received as one massive surprise.

Please send your bottles during the first week of August but no later than August 10th. Please make your messages heartfelt and personal, and decorate your bottles in any way you feel compelled. The addresses are as follows:

Michael Karzis
60 Minutes - CBS News
524 West 57th Street
New York, NY 10019

James Jacoby
FRONTLINE
1 Guest Street
Boston, MA 02135

James Jacoby and Michael Karzis are the producers of the 2013 *60 Minutes* episode, Arizona's Pioneer Hotel fire re-examined, covering the 1970 wrongful conviction of teenager, Lewis Taylor. Taylor helped evacuate people from the fire but was later accused of arson and convicted of 28 counts of murder. Taylor spent 42 years in prison, but was released in 2013.

The episode investigated how this could happen and expose the faulty fire science and corruption that led to putting an innocent man in prison for a crime that he did not commit. Taylor was set to get a new trial at the time the episode aired. But instead, after 42 years in prison, he took a plea at the age of 58, expressing that he was tired and just wanted to be free. Just this past March, the court denied the right to sue for wrongful conviction damages because of the plea.

James and Michael are experienced award-winning producers with a history of credible journalism, and we need their help. We hope they will receive a plethora of our bottles and be compelled to investigate Jamie's case. James and Michael no longer work at the same network. But we hope they will remember the work they did together, and that at least one of them will hear pleas.

James Jacoby is a producer for *FRONTLINE*, where he's a founding member of the Enterprise Journalism Group. His most recent film for *FRONTLINE* -- Amazon Empire -- a two hour film investigated how Jeff Bezos transformed Amazon from an online bookseller into a business empire that is unprecedented and its size and reach. His previous film, the Facebook Dilemma, was a two hour investigation that traced how the social media giant departed from its idealistic origins to become an international platform for political disinformation and division. Before joining *FRONTLINE*, James worked for *60 Minutes* where he produced an investigative stories with correspondent Steve Croft. His investigations revealed wrongdoing by, among others, major banks, credit reporting agencies, disability lawyers and arson investigators.

In addition to his investigative pieces at *60 Minutes*, James gave viewers a rare look inside Iran as the prospect of a nuclear deal looms on the horizon. Prior to joining *60 Minutes*, James is a producer for CNBC, the Business News Network, where he produced several documentaries including House of Cards, which has been lauded as one of the most comprehensive examinations of the global financial crisis. James has also worked for *Dan Rather Reports*, Current TV and The Nation, reporting on a range of topics from youth politics in Pakistan to the European debt crisis to the rebuilding of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. James has received several honors for his work including to Gerald Globe Awards, the top prize in business reporting. He's a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania and lives in New York City.

Michael Karzis has been a producer at *60 Minutes* for 20 years. He has produced 52 episodes, most recently, the May 31st episode -- Promise of Plasma -- about an effective COVID-19 treatment. Last year, Michael was nominated for an Emmy for Outstanding Investigative Report in a News Magazine, and received nine other Emmy nominations over the years. He won two in 2011 for Outstanding Coverage of a Breaking News Story and Best Report in a News Magazine. In 2008, he won an Emmy for Outstanding Interview, and in 2003 for Outstanding Coverage of a Continuing News Story.

Michael reports that his favorite case to work was in 2000, entitled Remembering an AIDS crisis ignored by officials, where he investigated the forgotten people in Zimbabwe. He describes how the images of grave diggers are seared into his mind, and he speaks compassionately about the individuals he met who are struggling to help themselves with the disease - with little to no help from the government. He speaks enthusiastically about human rights activism and the seriousness Justice these people face. His work showed his interest in exposing systemic failures and supporting activism and outreach programs. Michael currently works in New York City.

We think this dynamic pair of producers got it right when they expose the Pioneer Hotel fire's faulty investigation and prosecutorial misconduct that led to a wrongful conviction. We think they are smart, honest, compassionate people willing to take a stand for what's right. And we think they can successfully lead investigative media coverage focused on Jamie, his family, and his case. Jamie called in while I was making a message in a bottle video tutorial for his website. And he spoke a lot about his hopes and dreams for this project, and how he really needs your help.

Jamie Snow: I think we have to do it in an effort for our case, to separate itself and stand out from other people. There's wrongful convictions all over the country. So we have guys reaching out to different organizations and different people and trying to get the spotlight on their case, sending letters and whatnot. So I feel like doing the message in a bottle is the only way that we can separate ourselves and stand out from the crowd.

I think they should just say, dear whoever you decide to send it to. My name is whatever it is. Tell them something about yourself. Whatever you do, if you're a housewife, if you're a truck driver, if you're a whatever you are, whatever you do, tell them something about yourself. And just tell them how you came to know about my case. And why you believe in me and why you think whoever you write should look into it and put a spotlight on the case. I mean, ultimately, I think that's why we picked these people, right? I mean, they worked on a criminal justice case before where they were raising doubts about somebody's guilt. Right?

Lesley Pires: Yeah, they actually in the episode, I know I sent you the script, you weren't able to watch it. But they confronted the prosecutor, and it was kind of like the same thing that happened in your case where the prosecutor was saying after

42 years, it doesn't matter what happened at trial. It doesn't matter if the science wasn't good. That's all beside the point. Now it's up to the court. And she said it's still a possibility he did it. And you know, they told her well, you don't convict people based off possibility.

Jamie Snow: Where did this prosecutor come from, McLean County? I'm going to send five out myself from right here. I'm going to make my own out of these bottles that we have these one quart bottles, plastic bottles, that one quart apiece, and it's what like soap and bleach and stuff comes in. I'm gonna have this guy in here, that does a lot of painting and stuff, I'm going to have him paint some, some schemes and just some stuff on the side of the bottles, you know. So I'm gonna send five out myself. I'll probably send four out. I'll send two to each one.

I think too, Lesley, that anybody who makes their bottles, like you're making yours, if you make a video of you making your bottles and you send it to us, we'll put it up on the websites everybody can see it. I mean, if we could get 40- If we could get 40 or 50 to go to each person that would be, that would be unbelievable. I think that would be something that would get their attention you know. Because I kind of feel like I could see in my mind a picture of someone that's doing story about the case, you know, with all the bottles on the table in the background. You know, someone's saying an old school take on trying to get the word out about, you know, something message in a bottle or something. It's like the modern take on a ship wrecked say or throwing a message in bottle into the sea hoping that somebody will find it rescue him. And that's, that's what I see I see a table full of bottles in the background and someone saying, you know, here's a here's a modern twist on an old school idea Message in a Bottle, back in 60 seconds.

I just want to say that I really appreciate you doing this, Lesley. And I appreciate everything that you guys do with the podcast. And I really appreciate everyone out there who listens to our podcast, and anybody who joins in with our message in a bottle thing. I just, I just think it'll work. I have to believe that this is going to get us some traction somewhere with someone. So I just want to say thank you to everybody.

Lesley Pires: Basically, we are asking you to find a clear bottle of wine, beer, liquor bottle, even a mason jar, or anything interesting. You can even buy a nice bottle at the dollar store. And we're asking you to decorate the outside with paint, stickers, embellishment, whatever you desire. And then decorate the inside by throwing

confetti, shredded paper tinsel, flower petals, feathers, bead shells and anything you like. Then roll up your heartfelt SOS letter really tight, tie a string or ribbon around it and put it in the bottle with a string tail hanging out. That way the recipient can easily pull out your school of paper. Package it tightly with newspaper or tissue paper in a cardboard box. You can trim a box down to size so it's a very tight and tape it back up and then mail it. We don't recommend decorating outside of the box with free Jamie Snow messages as we want the producers to open them as they come in and not put them aside in a big Jamie Snow pile.

The price to ship one packaged bottle at the post office is \$8.25. If you have a stamps.com account, it's a little cheaper at \$7.64. If you are having trouble paying for the postage, we still want and need you to participate. So please contact us on Facebook, or email me personally at Lesley@freeJamieSnow.com. That's L-E-S-L-E-Y@freeJamiesnow.com, and we will assist you. Jamie is a very adamant about all of his supporters being included. And the stakes are high with this project, we need it to be successful. So please let us know if we can help you to participate.

So again, just to recap, we need you to make two messages in a bottle. Write a personal heartfelt letter. Decorate your bottles and send one to each James Jacoby at *FRONTLINE* and Michael Karzis at *60 Minutes* during the first week of August, but no later than August 10th. All of the information is online at freeJamieSnow.com, with sample letters included. We also have a Facebook event link to this page where you can join in interact and receive reminders. Please share photos or videos of your bottles before you mail them. As we would love to share them on Jamie's website and Facebook. Again, the shipping addresses are:

Michael Karzis
60 Minutes - CBS News
524 West 57th Street
New York, NY 10019

James Jacoby
FRONTLINE
1 Guest Street
Boston, MA 02135

Thank you so much to everyone who has loved and supported Jamie over the years. Due to COVID-19, we cannot visit Jamie and the committee cannot host an annual

Park event. This call to action is a way for us to join forces, advocate for Jamie, and do something tangible to make a difference to help him reach an immediate measurable goal. And we can do it together right now, while social distancing. We can show Jamie how loved he is, even when we can't see him in prison. Stateville is still on lockdown, and Jamie is stuck in his cell. He still fears COVID as it continues to spread through his cell house. There's no time better than now to join his fight. Thank you all so much.

Transcribed by: Pamela Westby

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