

EPISODE 19

[INTRO]

“And then one day I woke up and I accepted death, man. It was the most amazing, most liberating feeling I’ve ever had in my life. I was no longer afraid. I was no longer afraid. Everything you present to me, once you compare it to death, it doesn’t compare. If I had accepted death, what’s your suspension? What’s your firing? I have accepted you killing me already. So at that point, I was able to go forward and go hard with exposing this misconduct and corruption from the department, because the worst that they could do to me, wasn’t worse than death, and I had already accepted the worst.”

[00:00:47] LW: Hi, friends. Welcome back to At the End of the Tunnel. Today’s conversation is a full circle moment for me. I know I say every week, but this truly, truly is. When I first started thinking about his podcast, and the stories I wanted to share, and the guests I wanted to have on, today’s guest was literally my original inspiration, because when I first heard about what he was doing in the world as a black man, I was incredibly inspired and completely blown away by his bravery.

His name is Edwin Raymond. He’s a police lieutenant with the NYPD. That’s right, the infamous New York Police Department. He’s Haitian American. And after years of being stopped frisked by the NYPD while he was growing up as a teenager in East Flatbush, Brooklyn, Edwin, who was always a very responsible young man, he didn’t understand why he was being targeted so much for just walking around in his neighborhood. And after meeting a friend of his who had joined the police department, Edwin got inspired to become a police officer himself so that he could be the change that he ultimately wanted to see in policing.

But once he got on the force, he discovered something shocking. Police officers were actually being issued monthly quotas for writing tickets and summonses as a part of their job. In other words, instead of just being the keepers of the peace, they were essentially fundraisers for the city and they were being directed by the higher-ups to go and issue tickets to people for minor things like jumping turnstiles, and standing in the middle of the sidewalk, and playing chess on the street. It’s called broken windows policing.

But what made it insidious was that officers like Edwin were encouraged to target individuals in poor neighborhoods, because black and brown people had fewer resources to fight the summonses in court. And if they went unpaid, a summons turned into a warrant for their arrest, and that could lead to them being trapped in the system and a family would be torn apart. And worst case scenario, it could result in one of those police brutality situations that we now see on video and we protest about today.

So none of these sat right with Edwin, and he began disobeying the orders to issue summonses to those people in those communities for petty offenses and potentially ruining some black kid's life in order to fill a quota. Edwin decided to become a whistle blower, and he joined a lawsuit that was filed by 11 other NYPD officers to challenge that quota system, and this put a target on his back. He experienced retaliation from within the department, yet, Edwin still works as a New York City police officer in Brooklyn today even though he is now viewed by his colleagues as a whistle blower.

And most recently, Edwin announced a run for city council in District 40 of Brooklyn. His mission is to end systemic racism and policing and to affect change in the local government. I first found out about Edwin's work from an in-depth New York Times profile that was written about his experiences of becoming a whistle blower. And then I saw him in the Emmy-winning documentary, *Crime and Punishment*, which was also about exposing the quotas in the system and showing how the NYPD targets black and brown communities like the one Edwin grew up in.

I don't say I told you so very often, but with this conversation, I'm going to make an exception. Because for my listeners out there who think that black people have been playing the victim when it comes to police brutality. While it's not as black and white as black and white, I do think this conversation will change the way you think about police brutality and understand what systemic racism actually looks like even with so-called good officers who are caught up in a bad system as reported by an actual police officer currently in the field in one of the most notorious police forces in the country.

By the way, this conversation happened with Raymond sitting in his car after his shift. So you may hear some of the sounds of New York in the background, but I think it adds a little bit of gritty texture to an even grittier story. So without further ado, I introduce you to officer Raymond of the NYPD, and hopefully the next city councilman of District 40 in Brooklyn.

[INTERVIEW]

[00:05:13] LW: Thank you for joining this podcast, Edwin. I am really excited to hear your story. But before we get into what's happening now, I'd like to start this conversation by talking about your childhood. And I know you're a Haitian immigrant, but you're born in Brooklyn. Can you remember, Edwin, what your favorite toy or activity was as a child?

[00:05:37] RE: Yeah. First and foremost, thanks for having me. I really appreciate this opportunity to share my journey and share my life. I used to like drawing a lot, man. That was my thing. Yeah, I used to love to draw. Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles was my favorite to draw.

[00:05:51] LW: Do you have skills?

[00:05:53] RE: Yeah. I mean, artist to this day, from drawing Michelangelo back in 1990, 1989, whatever.

[00:05:58] LW: What was it about the Mutant Ninja Turtles that intrigued you?

[00:06:01] RE: I think just the martial arts. When you think about it, mutant turtles, that are teenagers that eat pizza. It makes no sense, but I loved it as a child. The martial arts was definitely a big part of it. Back in those days, cartoons had a lot of moral lessons attached to them.

[00:06:17] LW: Do you remember any specific moral lessons from the Mutant Ninja Turtles cartoons?

[00:06:21] RE: I mean just doing right. Like Master Splinter was like this monk almost. He was always very righteous in the way he presented himself. And it was my brother, and myself, a

friend, we each picked a different turtle. So I was Michaelangelo. My brother was Raphael, because his name was Ronald, it started with an R. And a male friend named Ashley, he was Leonardo. And we had nobody to be Donatello. So his older brother who was an older teenager, we just made him Donatello. He never played with us, but he was Donatello. It's nice.

[00:06:51] LW: That's awesome. Talk about what it meant to grow up within a stones throw of the Front Page? What is the Front Page and what did that mean for your childhood?

[00:07:03] RE: Yeah, man. So the front page is part of Vanderveer. It's a private housing. They basically took the blueprints from NYCHA, New York City Housing Authority. So the typical projects, as a lot of people refer to, housing authority buildings, is that they took the blueprints from NYCHA and built a project that wasn't technically a project. So it was called Vanderveer. And Front Page was particularly a part of Vanderveer. It was dangerous, man. It was the old New York. Homicides were insane. It was just a part of life that almost 10 people will murdered a day.

[00:07:39] LW: Hence the name the Front Page. A lot of stuff would go down there that would end up on the front page of the paper.

[00:07:46] RE: Exactly. Yeah.

[00:07:47] LW: Did you see a lot of crime personally when you're growing up?

[00:07:51] RE: Unfortunately, I did. From dead bodies, a lot of fights, shootings, stabbings. Yeah, man. Unfortunately, I was exposed to it all. When it's the cards that you're dealt, you don't question it. It's your neutral. It was not until I went to junior high school in another part of Brooklyn, a very white area, suburban part of Brooklyn, that I really start questioning things that were happening in my neighborhood. I went to Marine Park Junior High School, and it was just night and day. I remember hearing gun shots during class in elementary school by Front Page. But now, it was white picket fence, American flags and all these beautiful green grass. It was just a complete different world.

[00:08:34] LW: I saw or read that you and your brother used to go to sleep counting those gun shots in the night.

[00:08:39] RE: We would hear shots. I would look over in him and say 6, he'd say 7. And then would call friends who lived around the block, "Did you hear the shots?" "Yeah." "How many?" "7." "I told you it was 7." It was a normal thing to hear gun shots.

[00:08:52] LW: Your mom died of cancer when you were 3. Your dad fell into what sounds like a deep depression. How did you process that as a kid?

[00:09:03] RE: Well, not having a mom was rough, man. I'm in an environment where everybody has a mom, everybody. You're watching cartoons as a kid and it'd be the cliché situations where an egg gets hatched and the chick sees the first item and says, "Mama." That's how ubiquitous mothers are in society, and yet my brother and I, we didn't have one. So that was rough.

So the mental health issues with my dad, it was undiagnosed. Mental health in the black community is quite taboo. In the extended Caribbean community, it doesn't exist. Mental health, those terms don't even exist in the Caribbean community. It's something that people, the younger generation is now starting to understand better. But unfortunately, the down in the dumps feeling that my dad had, he never got help for it. But it affected him, because it was one of the reasons that he wasn't able to work. From the time – Unfortunately, my dad was employed. And he never worked again.

[00:09:59] LW: Did you think he was crazy? Or what was your internal dialogue seeing that every day? Because I'm assuming that he was probably sad and probably in his room a lot and all of that. How did you feel about that when you were a kid?

[00:10:12] RE: It was sadness. He didn't do anything that I would consider crazy. It was just sadness. After my mother died, three years later, my father sent my brother and I to Florida to live with his brother, my uncle. We were there for two years. So when we came back to Brooklyn, that's the first time I realized my dad – When I went to Florida, my dad was Superman. When I got back, he was no longer Superman. He looked different. He was just, as

they say, a shadow of his former glory. The depression had really, really started to take a toll on him. He was just always sad.

[00:10:43] LW: He tasks you with helping him out understand the news, right? Because he didn't speak English very well.

[00:10:49] RE: Yeah, that's part of the reason why I'm bilingual today. I had to translate the news for him. And whenever I get stuck – From the context of the conversation, he'd realized what I'm trying to say and he would teach me the new word in Creole French, and then eventually it grew my vocabulary. For someone born here, I speak Creole pretty well. But yeah, every night we would watch the news, current events, and it's a habit I started at 8-years-old that I had for years. In more recent times, I don't watch the news regularly. But for years, throughout elementary school, junior high school, my formative years in high school, I always watched news for current events, read newspapers, etc.

[00:11:27] LW: You were probably one of the few kids who actually did not look forward to the weekends when you were young. Why is that?

[00:11:33] RE: My mother wasn't my father's first wife. I have brothers that are 20 years older than me. And with them, their moms were around. So my dad simply provided the money, and everything was taken care of in the home. When my mother passed and my father stopped working, unfortunately there was no food at home. There was no job, and there was no woman to give the money to to take care of groceries and cooking, etc. The vast majority of times that my brother and I ate a decent meal was at school. So once the weekend hit, unfortunately, we starved a lot, man. Almost every weekend, we starved.

[00:12:10] LW: What does starving feel like?

[00:12:12] RE: It's funny, because it's triggering still. Any time I get a little too hungry, I start to get those feelings from my childhood. It's hard to concentrate. You start to get a headache. And then eventually it affects your mood. You start to feel sad. So, to me, it was like a sadness with a headache combined. It was hard to concentrate.

[00:12:30] LW: When you were 11, there's news about another Haitian who had been accosted by the police. You had to describe that to your dad. Can you talk a little bit about that?

[00:12:40] RE: Yeah. That was in Flatbush, Brooklyn, the famous police brutality case of Abner Louima in 1997. He unfortunately was sodomized with, I believe, a broom stick. There was a bar fight that spilled out on to the street. The officer, I believe, got punched in the face. And from the way that it's told in the neighborhood, just grabbed the nearest person, which was Abner at the time, took him into the precinct, beat him, bust out his teeth and then sodomized with him a broomstick, man.

And at 11-years-old, I didn't know things like that were real. I mean, believe it or not, at 11, I think I had seen *Pulp Fiction* and there was a similar scene, but I didn't know those things were real. I couldn't believe it, man. I said, "Wait. What?" I remember trying to process. Why would someone do that to someone? Let alone a police officer.

[00:13:33] LW: Had you had any run-ins with a cop by that time?

[00:13:36] RE: At 11? Nothing serious. There were kids throwing eggs on Halloween, and my brother and I were just walking home and the cops quickly stopped us to check to see if we had eggs, because a lot of kids in the neighborhood were throwing eggs. But nothing serious at that point, not yet.

[00:13:53] LW: So when you were talking about that to your dad, because you had to basically translate it for him, what was his response?

[00:14:01] RE: He was speechless. He couldn't believe it. It hit the entire Haitian community hard. Abner Louima was a Haitian immigrant. So the entire Caribbean community was talking about it – here in Flatbush, where I'm from. But I remember my dad was just speechless. He called his friends. It was on Haitian radio. The Haitian radio my dad listened to was things happening in Haiti, and it was being discussed all over the island, mostly in disbelief that this was something that actually occurred.

[00:14:29] LW: Then you went on to work at a grocery store while your friends were all getting involved in gang activity. How did you avoid that?

[00:14:39] RE: I never thought much about my sense of morality as a child until I was being interviewed for New York Times articles 5 years ago. And the journalist got stuck, because he told me, “What was your moral foundation as a child?” Because as a child, if anything, you’re expected to make mistakes. You’re expected to make certain decisions. And for the most part, you avoided it. Getting a job at 12-years-old definitely helped, definitely, definitely helped. So a lot of times I literally wasn’t even physically present when my friends were making poor decisions. I wasn’t there. I was working. I would literally come home from work just shocked at what they were involved in. Like, “Wait. When did we start doing this?”

One of the goals as a child, at 12, was that to beat Street Fighter, whatever character, to see what the ending is like. None of us could play with the Brazilian one, Blanka? The goal was to try to beat M. Bison with Blanka so we can see what Blanka – like how did we go from that one summer to gun point robberies the next?

[00:15:39] LW: Who was guiding you at that point when your dad was kind of off and depressed? Who was guiding you?

[00:15:46] RE: I had a very, very mature understanding of ethics as a child. My own inner voice for the most part spoke to me. I knew when something was wrong. At a very young age, I knew when something was wrong. I steered away from it as much as possible. It’s something I’m still trying to figure out. Again, it never even stood out to me until the journalist got stuck. And that’s when he decided to interview friends and family members to try to get a better understanding. And from their description of me as a child, they basically said, “You were always very different, Edwin.” So I kind of accept that.

But again, my inner voice kind of let me know when something wouldn’t be right to get involved in. Another thing though I can tell you, I was never cynical or in a state of despair. No matter how grim the situation was, I always knew that as long as I stayed focused and stayed the course, I would be fine. I had a lot of conviction that I was going to be okay, and I had a really early understanding of cause and effect and consequences. So if something didn’t align with

how I saw myself in the future, I didn't get involved with it now. When I think back, it's like most 11-years-olds don't think that way, but that's how I saw things.

[00:17:03] LW: Did you have any sort of religious or spiritual practices back then that helped you kind of tune in to – When people say, “I'm going to meditate on it,” to help you tune in to what you were feeling?

[00:17:13] RE: Most Haitians are Christians. I was raised Christian. So I always pray. Prayer – To this day, prayer is something that I honestly believe helps. It gets your mind in the right frame. So in short, yes, I was raised in a Christian – In Florida, those two years I lived in Florida, we went to church every Sunday. When we got back to Brooklyn, my father didn't – He wasn't too involved in the church. He just read his bible and such at home. He practiced at home. But as a child, some of those morals did come from being raised in the church.

[00:17:47] LW: Okay. So you're working at a grocery store, which kind of make sense seeing as you were starving basically growing up. And it sounds like you're probably doing it a lot out of necessity as well, because you needed the money. Where did you see yourself becoming as you got older?

[00:18:03] RE: Again, from the art skills, I was always a class artist. And around 12-years-old, I started considering a career in art. And 13 is when I decided architecture. Originally, I thought I was – In terms of career, I thought I was going to be an architect. And I actually in Art and Design High School, which is a specialized high school for artists. You have to take an exam and present a portfolio, etc. And I got into Art and Design, but after about mid-junior year, I didn't really care for art anymore. I still do it as a hobby. But I just didn't care for art anymore. But in those earlier years, I saw myself with a career in art.

[00:18:46] LW: And as a teenager, you started getting stopped more by the cops.

[00:18:50] RE: Oh man! Yeah, that made no sense, because to me it was quite obvious who the problems were, and obviously I wasn't one of them. So it didn't make sense to me why the officers kept picking on me. And I remember going to school frustrated one day, and one of my friends from school in Harlem – So I went to school in Manhattan. The schools in Manhattan

had students from all five boroughs. So a friend of mine from Harlem at the lunch table were sharing his own negative experiences with officers. And then somebody else joined. That's when I realized, "Wow! We're all going through this with the cops, man. What's going on?" Not realizing how widespread this thing was yet.

[00:19:30] LW: Were they mostly white cops stopping black kids?

[00:19:33] RE: Yeah, demographically speaking. Department is still majority white. I mean, they'll say it's majority minority here in New York. But you have to put every single minority group together to finally get over that 50%. The largest single group is still white. So when you look back 20 years ago, it was mostly white cops. Sometimes other minority cops, but mostly white cops.

[00:20:09] LW: You saw a friend of yours at a Haitian street fair and that enlightened you to a certain career path?

[00:20:16] RE: Yeah, man. A family friend who is basically family himself today, it was the first time that I saw a cop that I knew. It was a recognizable face. Because cross-racial identification, if you read the studies, is a real thing. Every white cop pretty much looked the same. But this was the black cop. The nuance in his face. And then when I realized he was someone that I knew, I was so proud of him. I remember just being able to get right up on him.

Before that, you don't go up to cops. You don't get near cops. But yeah, it just left a sense of pride. Also, one of the things that said, "You know what? Maybe this is a career that I could look towards." Continuously getting stopped and frisked and just harassed by cops, that was the biggest part of the pie that made me say, "I'm going to go into this direction. I'm going to join the NYPD so I can change this thing." As crazy as that sounded at 18-years-old, after frustration after frustration. And then at 19 I started driving, and I was getting pulled over left and right. At first it was street stops when I was walking, and now it's driving. It was even worse driving. I'm getting stopped left and right. And I remember just saying, "I cannot wait to join this thing, so I can see what's going on so I can try and improve it." Because how was it that I'm getting stopped, and on the adjacent corner or the criminals watching me get searched.

[00:21:42] LW: You and I share the same thing in that we didn't necessarily enjoy reading growing up. But around that age, you became a voracious reader. Talk about some of the books you read and some of the learnings you got from those.

[00:21:54] RE: There was a colleague in my former job. I worked with autistic young adults. It just brought up a question at work about race, about why is it that everywhere you go, black people are at the bottom of society and all these other things? I remember he said, he's like, "I knew I saw something in you." And then he bought a book the next day called the *Destruction of Black Civilization* by Dr. Chancellor Williams. And man, I couldn't put this book down.

Again, I always had a good reading level. I just didn't care for it. And I couldn't read this book fast and I couldn't put it down. And from that book, it was *Autobiography of Malcolm X*, which remains my favorite book, just so many other books about socioeconomics, race, history. I started looking into the work of Tim Wise, who is a great speaker on these issues, and just really understanding race and racism from a different perspective. I became an instant supporter and fan of Tim, and he was actually going to be in New York at a private event. So I wrote him, I think on MySpace, man. This is dating myself.

"Listen, I don't know who runs this page, but I'm a big fan of Tim. Is it okay I attend this event? I called the organizer and he said, "You have to work in schools in order to attend the event." He wrote me back himself and said, "Just say you're one of my guests. Say you're my personal guest." And I was like, "Wow!" So I went, I met him. I already had his book. He autographed it. I bought a new copy. And then we started emailing back and forth. I told him about my plan to join the NYPD, and he thought I was crazy. He said, "Man! That is a serious organization, man." You're going to face a lot of obstacles with your mentality, with your understanding of these things going into an agency like that." And he was right.

[00:23:39] LW: Do you believe in destiny?

[00:23:41] RE: I do, ma. I do, but I don't believe it's all written. I still think there's a level of autonomy that's there. And depending on which decision you make, it pushes you towards a different destiny. I believe there's a sprinkle of autonomy there. But at the same time, when I pay attention to my own journey, these steps had to have been written, man, because everything just

aligned and made sense. Things that I used to question, I won't even question anymore. It's as if I was being fortified the entire time for this fight.

[00:24:10] LW: And your friend who you ran into who's the cop, were you in touch with him? Was he sort of guiding you through the process, like, "Edwin, you got to go and apply here and show up there?"

[00:24:21] RE: Yeah. He gave me a breakdown of what I need to do to get on the job. Yeah.

[00:24:26] LW: Did you mention to him that you're going to get in there and revolutionize the whole police force?

[00:24:31] RE: No. He probably would have tried to talk me out of it, like – It's probably a military with rank structure. And if you like the rank, you're not going to be able to make much of a change at all. It's designed that way. If you're not at the top, you're not supposed to be able to have a voice in terms of how day-to-day operations go.

[00:24:50] LW: Were you in touch with Eric Adams at the time?

[00:24:52] RE: So I met Eric my rookie year. He just became state senator. And I knew his work from translating the news for my dad. I've recognized him immediately, and I was really just like amazed, like, "Wow! That's the guy from the news, Eric Adams, 100 Blacks in Law Enforcement Who Care, one of the founders." And I approached him in uniform. I shook his hand and I said, "I just want to let you know, I know who you are. I'm inspired by you and I appreciate the work that you've done." Every time I saw him, I always made sure I jumped out the crowd to go just walk up to him and shake his hand. So I met him in uniform while at work at Franklin, in Crown Heights.

[00:25:33] LW: What was his exchange with you like? Did you mention to him what your plans were?

[00:25:38] RE: None at the time. I'd say – Because one of the relations that I suffered, it was that they basically sabotaged my promotion to sergeant, and I was speaking to Eric about that,

and he spoke to me about his own obstacles when he became outspoken as a police officer. He still had no idea what I was getting ready to do until the New York Times article came out. He called me immediately and said, "I have to meet him Borough Hall. He had just won the election a few years before and became the Borough President of Brooklyn, a position he still holds." Yeah, that was a very, very special meeting. I think Jim was with me, a very special meeting.

[00:26:14] LW: Just for the people who aren't as familiar with your story, let's fill in the gap there. So you went to the academy. Were you giving the police department the benefit of the doubt that maybe this is going to be a new era of policing and things were going to change organically when you first went in?

[00:26:32] RE: What I believed was if I was able to show them the leadership, that there are better ways to police. Maybe they don't know, because they're white and they're not of the community. All they need is someone who's of the community who's also in blue. I was naïve to think simply because I was also in blue that they'd paid attention to what I have, take it into consideration. And if they agree or if it makes, they'd at least try to implement some of the policy changes that I think are essential.

I was 22-years-old. I was naïve, man. I had no idea to how well-oiled the machine was. So I gave them the benefit of the doubt to improve by taking initiative. I just thought they'd be more receptive to what I had to say.

[00:27:19] LW: What was your first clue that that was not going to happen?

[00:27:23] RE: The numbers game. Immediately after the academy when I went out to actual patrol, me and nearly 1,100 other officers who graduated the academy in December 2008, we were given quotas, quotas for arrest, quotas for summonses tickets, and quotas for the amount of stuff and frisk that we have to perform every month. And I remember just thinking, "What?"

Again, being naïve, rationalizing. I was like, "Okay. You know what? In case we were to organically encounter situations where we have to affect an arrest, or organically encounter a situation where we have to issue a ticket, or organically encounter a situation where we have reasonable suspicion and we might have to perform a stop and frisk." Just trying to get these

things under our belts, because we're in the field training program. This is me just not rubbing my mind around what's really going on, which is this is all it is. This is all they want. They believe that this is productivity and this is how you measure effective policing. You go into the black and brown areas and you lock up as many people as possible.

[00:28:31] LW: At the same time, everything probably have clicked and finally made sense why you were getting harassed and your friends were all getting harassed.

[00:28:38] RE: Yeah. I remember, when I realized how pervasive the numbers game was, I started to playback a lot of the encounters that I had with police when they went to hard for nonsense as I watched my peers do the same, but I knew they weren't necessarily bad people. Because back at the lounge, or after work, we go to the bar, or I got to know them throughout the economy. I knew they weren't bad people, but I watched the way that they policed and patrolled. And I realized that the things that was always in the background was them trying to get their numbers.

I started playing back scenarios when I was stopped by a police and I realized those very same idiosyncrasies and nuances were there, and those officers would just trying to get their numbers also. It was the possible low-hanging fruit that they needed.

[00:29:27] LW: And what's the example of the monthly quota and what are some of the tactics that officers might use that may seem like you're in the wrong place, wrong time, as the victim of being assaulted by a cop?

[00:29:40] RE: I was assigned to the transit bureau. So the NYPD is divided into three bureaus; patrol bureau, housing bureau, and transit. Housing dealt with public housing, the city property, New York City Housing Authority. Anything on New York City Housing Authority goes to the housing police under the NYPD umbrella. Regular precincts was patrol, and anything with the subways was transit. And in transit, we had to bring in four arrests a month, 10 summonses, 10 tickets, and 10 stop and frisk.

When you don't realize what actually happens in policing, there might not sound like much. But organically, that is very difficult to get a monthly basis. So you're forced to –In transit, we had to

hide in these mold and rat-infested rooms that the transit staff use to take their breaks or store their equipment. We hid in these rooms that would have vents in the door. It was a little vent in the vent that allowed you to see outside and monitor the turn styles. And you would just sit there all day waiting for someone to not pay their fare and then you would jump out on them and issue a ticket if you could give a ticket. And if they had a warrant, you would affect an arrest. And we basically, all cops, assigned to transit had to repeat this process until we had four arrests, 10 tickets, and 10 stop and frisk.

[00:31:02] LW: It doesn't mean that for 10 and 10 crimes were necessarily being committed. You had to squint and use whatever judgment you needed to create infractions out of the behaviors you were watching.

[00:31:16] RE: Yeah. Well, in a nutshell, it's called broken windows policing. You use the most innocuous, the silliest things that are technically on the law books to make the stop. And the thinking is you never know who you stop. This had a rationalizing. You never know who you're stopping, that person expat on the floor might be wanted for murder. That person that doubled up through the turnstile with a friend, because they didn't have fare for both of them might be wanted for shooting. And this is how they rationalize this dragnet method of policing, where the entire village was burned down because of a few people who might have done some violent thing.

Yeah, in that sense, no crime was committed, but there was innocuous, overly-technical infractions.

[00:32:03] LW: And were you participating?

[00:32:04] RE: When you're with a supervisor, if you refuse a lawful order, that's insubordination, you're immediately suspended. If you get suspended for insubordination while on probation, you're no probation for two years when you become a police officer. You're going to be fired. That's the end of your career.

In the beginning of my career, if a supervisor was present, and as long as it was a lawful order, I followed the orders. But once I was given autonomy, once I was allowed to patrol with a partner

who's likeminded or by myself, I did solo patrol a lot, I patrolled a more organic, a much better style of policing. Everything that they proclaim is the objective now that was retaliated against for doing 10 years ago, that's the style of policing, a more community-based style of policing.

[00:32:52] LW: But then you got to a point where you weren't meeting your numbers.

[00:32:54] RE: And I never went out to meet the numbers. Sometimes it would happen organically. Other times, it wouldn't. Yeah, that didn't sit well with them, because the way that the metrics are measured to determine effectiveness, everything is done in a 28-day period, every month. So the commander, if you go to first 6 months without arresting and still get 48 arrests at the second half of the year, you're still a problem, because the commander needed those numbers evenly distributed throughout the months, because it's every month you're held accountable for. If you just want to look at raw numbers for the most part, organically, there would be times where I would make an arrest or issue a ticket. If it wasn't happening on a perfect monthly basis, I was red-flagged for that.

[00:33:38] LW: How long did that last before you finally went to that press conference?

[00:33:42] RE: For years, man. Retaliation started in 2010. The first thing I get publicly, I went to President Obama's taskforce on policing in January of 2015. So 5 years, man. 5 years of retaliation before I started doing things publicly. But I still wasn't necessarily a whistle blower yet. It still took about a year for that to happen.

[00:34:04] LW: So that's when you linked-up with Jim, or you had already linked-up with Jim to start PLOT. And we're going to air his episode at some point in the future. But Jim is also a Haitian immigrant. How did you guys connect?

[00:34:16] RE: So that supermarket that I started working at at 12, the rate of attrition was quite high because of the [inaudible 00:34:22]. So what they did make up for that is they would always hire kids in the neighborhood. And you could tell the difference between a kid who needed \$30 to add on to hit the money he was saving to get a pair of Jordan and the kids who needed this to eat. Obviously, I was the latter. And there was another brother named Big Head, Pierre. We called him Big Head. He would often bring kids from Crown Heights. I would bring

kids from Flatbush. And I'll never forget the day that he brought Jim and his brother, fresh off the boat, man.

[00:34:52] LW: Buff and butter.

[00:34:54] RE: Yeah, buffet and butter, man. No English. Man! It was great that I spoke Creole as well as I did, because if it wasn't for that, I wouldn't be able to communicate with them. They spoke no English. Straight from Haiti, I still have the image in my mind. And the following week, they came back. And then the following week, they came back. Right there, I knew they were me. They weren't kids that needed Jordan money. They were kids that needed to eat.

The bond formed there. And not to get too much into Jim's life, but this only lasted for about a year, because he found alternative methods to make money. We'll leave it at that. But the respect was always there. I always considered him a friend. Actually, I heard he got deported. That was the last I heard from Jim maybe 3 years, 4 years after I met him. Because he stopped working at the supermarket after about a year, but he was still around, but I saw as he slowly started to make some decisions and go down a particular path. And then one year I went to on his block, because I had friends there. I was like, "Yeah, where's Buffett?" It was like, "Oh, he got deported." I said, "What? Where's Butter?" "He got deported too." I said, "What?"

[00:36:11] LW: You guys linked-up and started PLOT. So Jim had a whole transformation, which you guys will hear about in another episode. Talk about PLOT.

[00:36:17] RE: PLOT, man. So a little bit more about Jim. There's really no way to talk about PLOT without Jim. So fast-forward eight years later, I'm a rookie cop, Grand Army Plaza Train station. And who enters the train station? It's Buffett. I didn't even know his name was Jim.

[00:36:35] LW: You only knew him with Buffett.

[00:36:37] RE: Buffett, that's it. Actually, I'm four years older than Jim. So the last time I saw him having hit puberty first, I was taller than him. Now he's taller than me, and it shocked me, because he spoke English. Last time I saw him, he couldn't speak English. Not as well as he did that day. Again, I had no idea he went to this transformation. So I immediately asked him to

speaking Creole, because I don't know what he was about to say. But frankly, because he said, "Yo, I respect what you're doing." And I didn't expect that. I kept running into Jim. We exchanged, first, Facebook. And that's when I started kind of scrolling through this Facebook. I was like, "Whoa! What happened to Buffett? What happened to him? He changed his life completely."

And I think I reached out to him. We started talking. His favorite book is *Autobiography of Malcolm X*, which is my favorite. So we definitely connected on that. And one day I just said, "Come over, man." He came over. We both noticed that we go to the gym. So we started working out together at the gym, and that's what allowed us to catch up on eight years. And I learned that he didn't get deported. He went to a group home. He was incarcerated for four years. So now we're going to the gym regularly. He's out of juvie. And the same facility that he was incarcerated in, he now worked in.

And I remember just the frustration of running into these young boys when they had already made bad decisions in the beginning of the process, and he would encounter them after their sentence. I remember one day we were just both frustrated with this and we said, "We need to work on those who had already made poor decisions, but we also need to prevent young folks from making these decisions in the first place." And that's when I was brainstorming and one day I just came up with the name, Preparing Leaders of Tomorrow. That's what we're going to be doing. And he's like, "I like that."

And a lot of people that he would always talk to me about who were his attorneys when he was a knucklehead, he had kept in touch with throughout the years and other people in his life. He called a meeting with them, and I finally met them. Having heard about them for two years, finally met them. Yeah, started the groundwork for what became PLOT. And today PLOT is a mentoring organization for young boys ages 9 to 21. We pair them up with our one-on-one mentors and other activities. Help them find jobs, build resumes, college application. We provide the guidance that a lot of these youngsters need that unfortunately is missing from too many of our communities.

[00:39:07] LW: So when you are invited to the White House, you were going on the invitation of – was it of [inaudible] or was it of the White House?

[00:39:14] RE: That was Obama's taskforce — sanctioned that, whatsoever. Actually, I got in trouble for going, man. Because what it is, is when I got the invite, it was on a Tuesday, and I needed day off. I had Saturdays off at the time. I had Saturday and Sunday off. When I requested leave, it was a Tuesday in the middle of January. Nothing is going on. They should have authorized that leave. They've purposely denied it —

[00:39:42] LW: You hadn't been meeting your quotas. Then they could give you time off.

[00:39:46] RE: Exactly. But at the time, one of the things that was new to officers was a mutual. You can switch your days off with someone. So I found an officer that was off that Tuesday. He definitely traded a Tuesday for Saturday. That was an easy one. And I was able to go, and they didn't like that move. They felt that was a power move. And when I got back — First, that officer was — He faced some retaliation for switching with me. So they are immediately laid the rules, "Don't switch what Raymond, or else you're going to get it." And I was given my first low evaluation. That's when my insomnia kicked in. I suffered from insomnia. I didn't sleep three days after receiving that evaluation.

[00:40:27] LW: 2.5 out of 5?

[00:40:28] RE: Correct.

[00:40:29] LW: Talk to me about your mental state. You're going through this, you said, for years. And you're obviously insubordinate to your superiors. That's got to cause a lot of stress in your mind when you're not working, where you're just at home and just thinking about how am I going to this for the next however many years.

[00:40:49] RE: It's rough, man. What became my fuel and my motivation was with you, man, was my people, the people that are on the receiving ends of this oppressive system. As long as I made them the focus, I was able to push on. But it was rough. It affected my personal life, my dating life, just socialization period. I would be there, but I wouldn't be there. Physically be there, but my mind would be elsewhere because of everything I've had to battle and deal with at work.

[00:41:17] LW: You said a mentor told you about this press conference about the quotas that you did not know about. Who was the mentor who told you about that?

[00:41:23] RE: He was a black captain in the NYPD. Man! He was a gift, because as an executive, usually you're just so focused on playing the numbers game, because after the rank of captain, in order to be promoted, is all discretionary. So there's no more civil service exam that you can take to earn it off of more objectives system of meritocracy. You have to be liked by those who have the power to promote you. But rather than focus on that himself, he doubled down on a more righteous approach. And I needed that, man. That was like a big relief.

And it's funny, because Jim introduced us. Jim was so much work with juvenile justice. That's how Jim met him. And when I would be at the gym with Jim working out stressed-out, he was like, "Man, you got to meet him. You got to meet him." And eventually he set the meeting up and he became a mentor and a big brother to me.

[00:42:20] LW: So you had a reputation within the force as a troublemaker.

[00:42:23] RE: Correct, yeah. It's funny, because supervisors, brand-new sergeants, no matter where you were as a police officer or a detective, when you become a sergeant, you have to go back to patrol. After about six months, if you got the hook up, you can start making some moves. So what had started happening was sergeants that found out that they will be transferred to coveted units, their last day on patrol, they will pull me aside and it was like, "Listen, Ray. I got to talk to you." I was like, "What's going on?" "Listen, when I got here, we had orientation, me and the other new sergeant. But after the orientation, there was a specific orientation about you."

I said, "What?" It was like, "Yeah, man. They warned us about you. They said you're one of the smart ones. You're a boss fighter," police jargon terms. And the sergeants that would come and tell me this would be the ones who, after getting to actually know me, they're like, "Yo, there's nothing wrong with this guy. There's nothing wrong with this guy." That reputation was there. Again, sergeants were already being told how to treat me without ever actually interacting with me first. Yeah, man, I went through a lot, man.

[00:43:33] LW: So after the news conference, you were asked to be the face of this legal case that was happening.

[00:43:42] RE: At the press conference, the attorneys representing at the time five officers who joined forces so that, still, the department, because federally, because of the quotas and the civil rights violations from the department in terms of what they experienced. And I met with the attorneys. I went to their office maybe two days later. And after explaining my situation, they said, "Dozens of offices have reached out since the press conference, but they're being very meticulous in terms of who they add-on to the lawsuits." And they said, "We definitely want to add you, but we have to ask you, can you be the face of this?" I was like, "Wait. I was just trying to provide some ammo here. I didn't think I was going to be the lead plaintiff."

But they explained to me that, I was only one that was due for promotion. And if the department was foolish enough to not promote me, it makes the case that much stronger in terms of how far they are willing to go to keep this system as is. And just how discriminatory the department can be despite a lawsuit, an active lawsuit. I've learning a lot from my attorneys. It's called temporal proximity to the adverse action. Basically, if someone files a grievance, becomes a whistleblower, anything of that sort, and they start getting reprimanded and facing negative experiences at work, it's obviously a retaliation, and it's illegal.

So this helps make the case. So me being on a promotional list and also just other things, me being a very community-oriented person, they asked me to be the face. I spoke to my supporters, my core people, Jim being one of them. And he said, "Well, you were born for this, man. You're asking me these questions." I was like, "You know what? You're right."

[00:45:37] LW: What were you most afraid of at that time before you said yes?

[00:45:40] RE: I just worked so hard to get here, man. The NYPD, especially for minorities, it provides a real springboard, man. My children will never have to know the poverty that I've experienced. The quality of life that you're able to live just as entry-level police officer is pretty decent, man, in terms of medical benefits, salary opportunities for promotion and growth. I worked so hard to get here, to navigate the streets. Say no to selling crack. Say no to picking up guns. Say no to all these negative things that stop breathing down your neck at the age of 11,

12, 13-years-old in these major cities. To be able to say no to all that easy, fast money while I'm starving. To finally make it until career where I'm comfortable, it's not easy to let go. That's not easy to play with, man.

And I would have never understood that if I wasn't on the job. Because as a civilian, it's just easy to say, "What's wrong with these black cops?" It's just so easy. But when you're there and this is your livelihood and this is how your kids eat. Deep inside even though you disagree with what's going on, you try to wiggle and find your ways around engaging in the discriminatory policing. But you're not ready to give up your career that you worked so hard.

I joined the police department 2008. We had an economic crisis at that time, man. People from Wall Street were signing up to be police officers, because even it wasn't as much in terms of salary, there was job security. The last time police officers got laid off was 1978, I believe. '74 to '79, there was an economic crisis in New York, and a lot of city workers had to get laid off, including police officer. So there's a lot of security in that type of job.

[00:47:30] LW: Had you been hearing cautionary tales from some of the other plaintiffs in this suit? Because this is a point of no return. Once you do this, you're exposed. You're out there. Bad things can happen to you.

[00:47:41] RE: Yeah. One of my heroes, Adil Polanco, who in many ways pioneered this. I was so happy to finally meet him at the press conference. I didn't know he was going to be there. Because for years I'd watched – I saw him on TV speaking out against the quotas. Once he laid out what he had gone through, I mentally prepared myself to go through the same. And I also made sure to dot my I's and cross my T's to prevent as much of it as possible. So a lot of what the others who startled a little bit before me went through – I was able to learn from and avoid for the most part.

[00:48:16] LW: I want to share a little anecdote with you. Maybe you knew this. Maybe you didn't. But when the modern civil rights movement was happening back in the 1950s in Montgomery, Alabama and the Montgomery Improvement Association was looking for someone to lead, they nominated Martin Luther King. And he hesitated at first. He wasn't one of the primary organizers. He was the guy that they looked at and they said, "This is a young guy. He

speaks well. He looks good on camera. We want him to be the leader of what we're trying to do." He essentially had to be convinced to step into that role, because he knew that by doing so, he was going to put himself as well as his family in harm's way. And it's a really big choice to make.

But he also said something later near the end of his career. He was assassinated at 39. One of the things he would tell his lieutenants, he says, "Look, if you're going to be truly free, you have to make peace with death. You have to overcome your fear of death. And I'm just curious what your experience was with that as you were stepping out there.

[00:49:32] RE: Yeah, man. I will never forget this day. What was amazing is I didn't go to sleep with it on my mind. I didn't even think about it for maybe a year when a friend asked me, "Are you willing to die for this?" And I said, "Well, why do I have to die? Why would I be willing to die? Obviously, I don't want to die." And then he said, "If you're not willing to die –" Basically, it's very similar to what you said. And I thought it was silly. And one day I woke up and accept death man. It was the most amazing, most liberating feeling I've ever had in my life. Like, "Wow! I was no longer afraid. I was no longer afraid.

Everything you present to me, once you compare it to death, it doesn't compare. If I had accepted death, what's your suspension? What's your firing? I have accepted you killing me already. So at that point, I was able to go forward and go hard with exposing this misconduct and corruption from the department, because the worst that they could do to me wasn't worse than death, and I had already accepted the worst.

[00:50:33] LW: Did you have a dream that night before? Do you remember what sparked that feeling?

[00:50:38] RE: I don't remember what the dream was, but I did wake up. I did wake up from a dream just ready. It's not a suppress memory, because I am getting the feeling now just thinking about it. But I don't recall what I dreamt. But I do remember that amazing feeling of just like a weight had been lifted off of me and I was just ready. I became like a warrior. I was just ready at that time. One of the most freeing, liberating feelings I've ever had in my life, man. And I've realized like, I think very few of us ever go through this. And I started understanding.

Because prior to that, I'm not going to lie, man. As much as I love Malcolm, I felt that he was negligent in not doing more to help prevent what happened to him at the Audubon Ballroom. But I will never question Malcolm again. Because when you read his autobiography, he knew death was coming, and then he continued to fight for us. It bothered me, because I love Malcolm so much. I wish he was here a lot longer with us. But I get it. I will never question him again. I get it.

[00:51:39] LW: And after the press conference, you are officially now seen as a whistleblower in the department. You're still going to work. This is prior to your New York Times articles, which we'll talk about in a second. But what was it just like initially to go back to work after that press conference?

[00:51:56] RE: The press conference in itself, believe it or not. One, I didn't speak. Two, I was in a cut. That wasn't the one did it. It was the article. It was the article.

[00:52:04] LW: Okay. So then talk about the freelance journalist who approached you to write this story on spec.

[00:52:11] RE: So I'll never forget this. He called the attorneys after seeing the press conference and said, "Hey, I want to write a story on these offices." And the attorney was like, "You don't even need to speak to one." The journalist, he told me like – I mean, Saki. Obviously, I could say Saki's name. He's on the article. Once you Google the article, you'll see. He shared this with me. First, I think he emailed me, and eventually we exchanged numbers. And then we met up in Brooklyn. And maybe 10 minutes into me speaking to him, he interrupted me and shared with me that he's doing a group story about the group.

But when the attorneys told him you're going to need to speak one. He didn't understand what they were talking about. He said, "But I think I get it now." He's like, "I'm still going to do the group story, but I think America needs to hear your story separate." I was like, "What? What's he talking about it, man?" I still not really understanding. I was like, "America needs to hear my story? What is this man talking about?" And then we started interviewing probably on weekly basis. We started in May 2015, man. Very deep investigative journalism. He took his time at that story.

And one of the things that I did is to be able to prove what was happening as I recorded supervisors every time he spoke about quotas or retaliating against me. And I would play these recordings to him. But he would always want me to give them to him, but I didn't trust him yet. And I'll never forget, I was assigned September 2015. The lawsuit is then, as of August 31, a revised version with me as the plaintiff goes in. So maybe three weeks after the lawsuit goes in, assigned to the United Nations for the general assembly week where most of the world leaders and representatives meet the United Nations to discuss world issues.

And I get a call from him and he says, "Hey, Edwin, I got good news." I said, "What's was going on?" He said, "The Times want your story." I said, "What? The New York Times?" He's like, "Yeah." He said, "But they don't believe me." I said, "What do you mean?" He's like, "They don't believe that you exist." I said, "What do you mean?" He says, "I need the recordings." And I was so hesitant to give him the – By this time, it was almost as if he was my therapist, man. I'm looking forward to our weekly sessions. It was very helpful to be able to speak to someone who gets it.

My ex-girlfriend at times, she used to get it, but we weren't together anymore. And I was a little embarrassed she was dating someone else. I would call her, and sometimes she'd be with the guy and I was like, "I respect you picking up, but I don't think he appreciates that. I felt like I had no one to talk to about this stuff." So it felt good I could speak to him, and he understood. He took his time to understand the culture of the department and what was going on.

But I immediately called the attorney. I was like, "Hey, I spoke to Saki and he said he wants the recordings." And the attorney said, "Yeah. Yeah. You can give it to him. It's time." I said, "Which ones?" He said, "All of them." I said, "Wow! It is on." He said, "If the story is true, they're going to front page." I thought he was bullshitting me. I'm not going to lie, man. But it was true. A feature cover story on a New York Times Magazine, February 18, 2016, my life changed forever, man.

[00:55:26] LW: How hard was your heart pumping when you first went in and started recording these officials?

[00:55:32] RE: I never enjoyed it. The first recording and the last, it's not something that I have

enjoyed doing. But I realized it was essential. I'd studied the stop and frisk case and I saw how easily these people who lie to their teeth. They had no problem lying. And I'm like, "Do you see this?" If you are unable to prove this empirically, they're just going to lie. They're going to be prepped and they're going to lie. So I was always a little nervous, because it was never something I enjoyed doing. Again, it was essential.

[00:56:04] LW: Had anyone ever done that before, record any of the conversations?

[00:56:08] RE: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Adil Polanco, Adrian Schoolcraft. The thing is that the tapes would leak anonymously. And I realized there was something else that needed to change. This remaining anonymous thing, it's over with. You cannot remain anonymous with these issues. You have to be willing to risk it all and you have to be willing to use your voice and understand the consequences and hopefully that people will support you. That's the problem. Police officers, whistleblowers, we don't get enough support unfortunately. We don't.

[00:56:39] LW: So the article comes out, New York Times. Was it a cover of the magazine?

[00:56:43] RE: Yeah.

[00:56:43] LW: What happens? Your phone blows up? What's that like first day?

[00:56:48] RE: I'll never forget, I had just taken my cousin New Jersey and I didn't want to drive back. I was off the next day. So I woke up. She worked at Macy's in Midtown. So I drove her to work for Macy's, and I was little tired. And as I parked, I got a text message from a friend, a high school friend who said, "Edwin, I'm in tears right now. I'm so proud of you." And I'm like, "What happened?" Because there was no exact release date. And she was like, "I just read the article." And then Jim also sent it to me. So I quickly just parked up next to Macy's and I just started reading and reading this long article, and reading. It took maybe two, three hours. At that time I was off of Facebook, because my attorneys told me to get off for the time being. Because everything is open to discovery.

But I decided to open up my Facebook account again. And I was watching as this article is being shared by peers, supporters, people that have negative things to say about me. People in

general. I was just monitoring the article being shared, and then text messages. What shocked me the most were black executives who said they were proud of me. And I remember thinking – But when I was just subordinated, I was retaliated against for not getting these numbers. You were also one of the executives that pushed for these numbers.

And that's when I realized they also fall in the category of people that are just going along to get along, but they don't necessarily agree. It's not something they necessarily agree with. That shocked me. I didn't expect that. At the same time, I watched as cops called me a rat and a snitch, a zero, an empty suit. I'm just trying to win to get a lottery. I need to go back to Africa. I was reading a lot of the negative comments also.

[00:58:43] LW: So what was working again like when you finally went back to work? Were people crossing the street, other cops not wanting to be your partner, and ostracizing you and that kind of thing?

[00:58:55] RE: So I got to work early. And at first I didn't feel anything. I went into the locker room, and that's when I expected – Because we're all getting changed, talking about the Nicks suck, typical locker room talk. And I'll I will never forget, one of my brothers, Loren. He said his, Brother, black man, I just got to shake your hand." I was like – He's like, "Brother, you don't understand what you've done for us." I was like, "Okay."

And then other people in the locker room started showing love. But then obviously there were those that kept to themselves. And there were those that greeted me, but you could tell it was a plastic smile. You could tell it was in-genuine. And then it was a roll call, and I was given the post that I've never gotten before. Because what happened was, by then, I was skipped over from our promotion. Kicked out of the transit bureau, and was sent to the 77 precinct. I was just getting to know these cops. I'd gotten there the first week of January. I had only known them for about six weeks. But now I got an assignment. There are people in the precinct that were loyal to me that was kind of telling me what was being said. There were supervisors that were upset. Everyone thought I was recording them. The way they made it seem is if I baselessly wandering around recording people, because I had nothing better to do. I didn't realize, specifically, supervises only when speaking about quotas or retaliating against me. But that's the culture. The culture, I'm a rat. For the rest of my life, there are cops that will always only see me as what

they refer to as a rat or a snitch.

[01:00:32] LW: And how did you get involved with crime and punishment documentary?

[01:00:35] RE: One of the things that I did differently from other whistleblowers and studying them and where they had their shortcomings, was I saw that the lack of community support was extremely detrimental. So in that panel, Obama's panel, Carmen Perez of the Justice League was one of the panelists with Jim, and that's when I met her. I followed her on social media. And I started looking at her work, and I was really impressed. And that's when I learned of the Justice League, Tamika Mallory, Mysonne, Angelo Pinto, Linda Sarsour. I remember thinking, "If I can get their support, that would be a game changer." They're usually out here protesting against police misconduct. So standing elbow to elbow with cops would make quite the statement.

So I set up the meeting with Angelo, and I remember I drove to Chinatown. I met him Chinatown, and we sat in my car and just listened like three hours to all the recordings. And he was blown away. He said, "Oh my God! This is all going to be in the article?" I said, "Yeah, man." He said, "Wow!"

So he spoke to the rest of the Justice League. At first, they were a little reluctant. I am still a cop and they don't know what my angle is. But when I met with them, I think they immediately felt the sincerity and decided to try this experiment of supporting whistleblower cops. And I was very appreciative to this day, their family. And immediately after the article – So Sarah Wallace of NBC, she tweets the article and says explosives. So I write her privately and said, "Thank you so much. This hasn't been easy." She's like, "Oh my God! Oh my God! Can you please call me?" She sends me her number. I call her. She says, "Would you be willing to go on TV?" I was like, "Whoa! Man!"

But I realized it is what it is at this point. So I spoke to the attorneys. They said, "Yeah, we can do it." She came over. And that started kind of going a little viral. And at that point, Tamika set up the first press conference following the article. And at the press conference, this Korean guy comes up to me and asked me to wear a microphone and I was like, "Damn! The media is very, very bold." And that's when Adil Polanco was like, "Oh! No. No. No. He's not the media. He's

with us. You can trust him.” And that was when I met Steve Maing. And that’s when I learned that she had already been documenting the others. And now that the article came out, he knew that I joined this fight. And that’s when, basically, he told me any and everything you doing, just let me know. Every meeting with Justice League, anything related to criminal justice reform. And sometimes just me working on the part, going to a juice bar. He captured a lot of footage of me and the others. And then I believe of October 2017, he gave me the good news that we were selected for Sundance. And I knew what that meant, the prestige of the Sundance Film Festival. Everything that wrapped up into *Crime and Punishment*.

Originally, he wasn’t going to wrap it up. He was just capturing, because he knew what was happening was important. He we knew that someone had to capture this, but he made the decision to wrap it up at the end of 2017. And we premiered January 2018 at Sundance. And I think around June, Hulu solidifies the contract and basically gets the rights to the film, and the rest is history. *Crime and Punishment*, Oscar contender. We got shortlisted for the Oscars, nominated and won the Emmy last year.

[01:04:16] LW: And I’ve heard you say that you’ve had something like 2000 police officers reach out to you since that documentary came out.

[01:04:23] RE: Yeah, it’s amazing. I mean, starting with the article. But then when the documentary came out, cops all over the country were watching it and they started reaching out. And that’s when I started learning that like there was this one sister in corrections who – She stood up to some discrimination that was going where she worked. And there was another group of officers in Prince George’s County, who got together and sued 13 of them. They call them the PG-13, and another officer upstate New York. And I remember reading those stories as they happened, and then eventually somebody, they would reach out to me and say, “Man, the reason why did it is because we saw the movie.” And I was like, “Oh man! This is powerful.” So I didn’t realize those articles I was reading about are the officer’s speaking out where they were inspired by what we were doing here in the NYPD 12.

[01:05:16] LW: That’s incredible. So you essentially started traveling around, going to the award ceremonies. You guys won some awards. How is all that you going from the traffic beat in New York City to becoming essentially an international celebrity?

[01:05:34] RE: I mean, it's hard for me to accept that I'm any type of celebrity, man. It's hard for me to accept that, it's something I'm still adjusting to. Every day somebody walks up to me and recognizes me. It's a blessing, but it's still an adjustment. I've been out on dates, and someone will walk up and say, "Yo! You're Edwin Raymond." Or, "Yo! Are you a cop? I think I've seen you." Again, I feel blessed that the people are paying attention and respect the work, especially in this climate.

So, yes. So because of the film festival circuit, I traveled the country in 2018. And then internationally, we took the film to Copenhagen, and London, and it played in France and different film festivals around the world, Shanghai, the Netherlands, etc. It's played in France on TV. I know when it's played in France, because I would get a few French followers. And I'd get to practice my French.

[01:06:40] LW: The department also smartened up, and they finally promoted you. You became sergeant. Now you're lieutenant. Now you don't have any quotas anymore. I guess that was some of the old heads advice for you from the beginning was, "Hey, work your way up through the ranks. Then you can try to change it from the top." And you decided that that was not the direction you wanted to go in.

[01:07:00] RE: That in in itself doesn't work man, because the lack of quotas now is because I'm there everywhere. Everywhere I go, the quotas disappear. But to this day – Well, no. Not since George Floyd, but up until George Floyd, officers have reached out to me that I've never met. In the NYPD, they find ways of reaching me and telling me what's going on where they work. So this numbers game, up until the mass protests around the nation, it was still here, man.

[01:07:26] LW: Was George Floyd the result of a quota situation in your opinion?

[01:07:31] RE: I'm still piecing that one together. No. There were other situations that were attached to broken windows policing and quotas, Sandra Bland is one that I attribute to that, Eric Garner, Philando Castile, but no. You have to remember, one thing that I don't want us to miss is so many – Because most police department have rules in terms of social media posting,

and especially in uniform. And when George Floyd happens, I saw something I never thought I'd see. Because the culture is if there's any wiggle room, you wiggle towards the cop having the advantage. And if it's just absolutely egregious. Shut up. Say nothing. But cops broke that rule, man.

One by one, I'd watch as cops took to social media in uniform, many of them, denouncing what they saw in that video. And I was like, "Wait. What is happening right now?" Because again, the culture is you give the cop the benefit of the doubt. And if you are unable to because it's just that ugly, just don't see anything at all. But cops were speaking out, man. Again, I'd never thought I'd see that. Understanding of culture, I'd never thought I'd see that. And I think we missed that. I think we glanced over how important that was that cops were finally speaking out.

[01:08:40] LW: Two more experiences as a cop I want you to share so people kind of get an idea of what it's like for you to be on the beat and how involved you are with the community. And then I want talk little bit about what you're doing right now. You've told a story that I've heard about a guy who was working construction and he got a summons, and it was potentially going to screw up his whole life. Can you just talk a little bit about that as a case study of how this thing works in a practical situation and how you have helped?

[01:09:10] RE: One of the things that I had often had to do was transport prisoners, and that's usually something that's relegated for rookies. But again, because I was always getting retaliated against, no matter how much my seniority increased, I always had to transport prisoners. I'd take advantage of that to interview prisoners. And I remember it was three prisoners that I have to take down to central booking. And there's one gentleman, you could tell that he was a construction worker. He had plaster all over his boots, etc., and he was crying, like crying. And he just didn't pay his fare.

I said, "Brother, what are you doing, man?" This is a nonsense charge. He'll be all right. He had a Jamaican accent, I remember, and he was just like, "You don't understand. You don't understand. Everything is fine and right. And everything is about to go wrong." I said, "What's going on?" He explained to me that he was in a custody battle for his children. And court happens in the morning. Therefore, every time he had to take off work to go to court to fight for his children, he would get laid off from the construction job, because construction is quite

unforgiving. You're entitled to vacations, but if you take it you come back, and you're laid off. You have to wait till the company gets another contractor or something.

Traditionally, you don't take the vacation. You just cash it in. Very, very unforgiving. I expressed to him, "You're not going to get remanded for this." He's like, "Yeah, but I'm not going to see the judge till the morning. I just got paid today. But if I don't get to work tomorrow morning, I'm going to get laid off." He's like, "You don't understand. Everything just – I just got my apartment. I just got my kids. I just won this custody battle. I just got my kids, and now everything is going to spiral downhill because we don't know when this company gets another contract. I'm not going to be able to –"

And then this was in the fall. So you'd go in into a holiday season. So I said, "Just tell your boss that this is a nonsense charge." He's like, "There's no way they're going to believe it." I said, "All right, man. Give me a number." He gave me his two phone numbers, and I said, "I'm going to call you. If you don't get to see the judge in time to go to work, when is the next day you're going to have to work?" He said, "Monday." I said, "All right. I will meet you at your job on Monday." He said, "You would really do that, officer?" I said, "Brother, just give me your number."

He gives me his phone number. I call him Sunday and he tells me that he saw the judge the evening, Friday evening. So he definitely missed work. So I said, "All right, I'm going to meet you tomorrow." He said, "Officer. Honestly, I've been waiting for this call all weekend. I didn't actually think it would happen." I meet him at his job. I get there a little bit before him. I meet him at his job –

[01:11:35] LW: At what time? That's important.

[01:11:38] RE: Like, five something in the morning, man. I was tired, but I met him at his job. I met the foreman. I presented myself as a police officer and explained to him that this guy was – He was locked up for something foolish, some nonsense, and this is why he was unable to be at work. And he was rehired on the spot, man.

And for weeks, he would call – He would text me. He would text me, "Thank you. Thank you." And as the holidays came, he said, "You're the reason my kids have a Thanksgiving this year.

You're the reason my kids have a Christmas this year," etc. And the officer that locked him up is one of my biggest supporters right now. I spoke to him about that. I said, "Brother, why did you lock him? He's like, "You know how it is, bro. I mean, I needed four for the month. I already cut some people some break. I couldn't afford to give him a break, because I wasn't going to meet my quota for the month." And that's when I was like, "This quota thing needs to go, man. It needs to go."

[01:12:34] LW: By the way, like I said, watch the documentary. You can hear all about that and read the New York Times article and you can hear all the detail about the quota and the quota system and how it's affecting communities, particularly black and brown communities all over the place. You carried children's books around with you now. You're still active officer. You carry children's books. Why do you do that?

[01:12:53] RE: I didn't fall in love with reading till I was about 20-years-old. I want to encourage reading to our youngsters. Also, I want to let them know about their heroes now. A lot of the books that I get are about iconic black figures in the Civil Rights Movement, from Marcus Garvey to Shirley Chisholm, other black inventors. I want them to have the representation that they need now, granted, these are children born under a time where Obama has happened. But it's not enough. I want to be that representative as someone in law enforcement showing them that there are people in law enforcement who genuinely care.

Also, again, I just want to encourage reading in our communities. And I'd tell you, man. Every time I do that, I first respectfully walk up to the parent, "How are you? My name is Lieut. Raymond. I'm a lieutenant right here in Bedford Stuyvesant, and I actually give children books to the kids in the community. Is it okay if I share a book – If I give the book to your child?" There's always that – When I first start talking to them, there's always that weird pause, like people run to move for cars thinking they get the ticket. It's like, "No, man. That's now what I'm here for right now."

With the exception of maybe one time, just one time that I feel like bad energy from the parent even after getting the book. She was like, "What the hell y'all start doing this for?" I was like, "Ugh!" I'd say, "First of all, there's no y'all. This is what I do. And it's because I love my community. I could she didn't really know how to process that. She saw it as a public relations

thing. By the way, this is something I have been doing for years. I just started to document it and share it on social media to encourage others to try to do the same and to show folks that the village is forming, village that our children need is forming.

[01:14:44] LW: Your dad when you were young told you that you could be anything you wanted to be, except president. That was before Barack Obama.

[01:14:51] RE: Yeah, I'll never forget. I remember, I was about 8-years-old when my brother won the election in South Africa. And I was confused, because Africa is where black people are from. He's black. He's the president. What's the big deal? Having no idea that apartheid was a thing. And my father would drop these gems on my brother and I. I remember we would watch images of kids with swollen bellies in Africa, and I remember he would always humble me and say, "Edwin, you know that you, right?" And I'm looking at him like, "What is he talking about?"

He's like, "They don't look like you by coincidence. They look like you because they are you. That's you. You did nothing. You're no better than them. You did nothing to be in a better position than them. All you did is you were born in the United States." He's like, "I did that." He's like, "I'm the reason you're born in the United States. You did not earn your position in this side of the world where there are so many opportunities. So never forget these people. You're not better than anyone."

He taught me these life lessons that you always have to look out for those that are less fortunate. He explained to me simply being blessed enough to be in a position to be able to look out. There's really no saying no, because God puts you in that position just so you can look out. So there's no saying no if you're able to look out. I carried that with me even into going into the police force. If I have this opportunity and this ability to expose this very detrimental and oppressive practice, I got to look out.

[01:16:21] LW: That's you're taking the first step to becoming President Raymond.

[01:16:26] RE: You're crazy, man.

[01:16:28] LW: Stranger things happen. Talk about that. Talk about your choice to run.

[01:16:31] RE: So four years ago when the Times article came out, I constantly got people saying, “You need to run for office, young man.” This is what we need in Washington. This is what we need in City Hall. This is what we need in Albany. This is what we need.” And I would always just laugh it off as a compliment. I accept it as a compliment and kind of laugh it off. And then two years ago, I started going through my own issues with elected officials when I tried to present the issues that I saw on policing from an inside eye. And I realized that they didn't want to touch it.

That's very, very discouraging, because they have the power of the pen. They're legislators. And people, again, you need to run – Now *Crime and Punishment* is out, people are saying, “You need to run for offices. This is the type of representation that we need in City Hall. Imagine what you would be able to do to bring change, and not just in policing, but because of where you stand morally. Imagine what you would do for the people. You truly represent the people when it comes to education and mental health, and homelessness, housing issues.

These are the characteristics that we need in those who are going to represent us in legislature.” So I gave it some hard thought. I made a decision that I'm going to run for city Council right here in the 40th district in Brooklyn. Again, to continue the work that I've have been doing in the police department, to make it better, and bring the same level of integrity to other areas that affect our communities.

[01:17:58] LW: And how can we help you in that endeavor?

[01:18:01] RE: It's a – local race. So anyone you know in Brooklyn, in Flatbush, share with them my story. Let them know that I'm here to do this work. As you know, campaigns require funds to operate. The whole thing operates with donations, campaign donations. Website is edwinraymond.com. You will see a donate button. You can access my website from my Instagram, @e.raymond_ or just type in Edwin Raymond. Yes. So just continue to spread the word about – Let people know how to support me. Donate whatever you can. And I promise, I won't let you down.

Because New York City's election, they're always one year after. The presidential election, so

it's going to be next year. The primaries are going to be June 22nd, 2021. And after I secure the seat for the party, that's when November – I'll be challenged by the opposing party, Republican Party. I just got to win that. Usually in a district that I'm running for, once you secure the Democratic seat, very unlikely for you to lose the general election come November. So, I got to win the election in nine months to keep going with this work.

[01:19:10] LW: Beautiful, man. We've come to the end of the tunnel with your story. There is so much more there. So I really highly recommend everybody going in and, again, doing a deep deeper dive into the article, into the documentary. And you got a ton of interviews, and YouTube videos, and podcasts and everything out there. So there's a lot more to the story. I want to ask you, how are you defining success these days?

[01:19:37] RE: One of the main things, especially after this year's success, man, is optimal health. Health, man. Health is a reflection of success. It was unbelievable back in March and April just watching friend after friend post that they've lost their parents, and they can't even give them a proper going home services, because the funeral homes are closed. Success is just mainly having you help these days, man.

[01:20:02] LW: That was always inspiring to me when I researched some of Eric Adams' experiences when he was diagnosed with type 2 diabetes and he went vegan and he lost 30 pounds. He stopped drinking. He stop eating sugar, and he basically killed himself. Turned his whole situation around. So you're absolutely right. Health is where it's at.

Well, I want to offer a few reflections after hearing your story. I like to tie things back to the very beginning. I still have the image of you drawing Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. And I wasn't a huge fan of Mutant Ninja Turtles, but I do know that they were crime fighters. And I do know that they had these kind of interesting personalities. And it never surprises me in doing these kinds of interviews where I'm hearing people's basically heroes journey that what they were attracted to the most as a child, which in your case was bringing life to these characters who are out there fighting crimes. And this is what you end up doing, is not just fighting crime, but also fighting the injustices within the crime-fighting unit. And I think that's very admirable. And you're an inspiration to a lot of people.

And I have to be honest with the, man. When I started this podcast, you were the person I had in mind in terms of like who would I interview when I tell these stories? I said, "Well, I won't definitely want to interview Edwin." I've always, always – I mean, as soon as I heard about your story, I was one of those people following you and messaging you. So I've been tracking what's been happening since the documentary came going out and going back and reading the article and everything.

So I just want to thank you. If it wasn't for you, we may not be having this conversation. I would not have had a conversation with Ava DuVernay or any of these other influencers and change-makers that I've been able to kind of put their stories out there more and more. I want to thank you for that. I sincerely appreciate the courage that it takes for someone like you to do the things that you're doing, and you're still I in it, and you're still in the fight. And I know you're making a bigger difference that you can probably even fathom at this point in time. So thank you very much for being a part of that and for doing what you do.

[01:22:21] RE: It means a lot to me, brother. I do it for you, I do it for all of us, man.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[01:22:25] LW: Thank you for listening to my interview with New York Police Department whistleblower in city Council candidate, Edwin Raymond. If you live in the New York area, and specifically in District 40, which is the neighborhood of East Flatbush, Flatbush, Kensington, Prospect Park, Lefferts Garden, head on over to edwinraymond.com to find out how you can support his run for New York City Council. If you don't live in New York, guess what, you can still donate to his campaign as long as you are a US citizen and you have a US bank account. So anybody can donate, and campaigns could always use more donations.

By the way, that friend of Edwin said he mentioned in his interview Buffett, well, I've got an episode that features Buffett's incredible story, which is coming out in a couple of weeks. So make sure you're subscribed to the podcast so you don't miss that. I do want to point out though that, really, at any point, Edwin could have thrown in the towel. He could have given up. He could've recognized that this fight was too hard. He's certainly had plenty of very smart and influential people trying to convince him to back off and telling him it wasn't worth it, and that he

should just play the game and try to work his way up to the top and try to change the system from there. But he kept listening to his own still small voice inside. As a result, he's inspired me. Hopefully he's inspired you.

And these are the stories that you're going to hear on this podcast, At the End of the Tunnel. Every guest has shown us how they've used their obstacles to help them succeed in creating their movement, and I really do hope that this serves as inspiration for you to start your movement, or follow your heart, or live your purpose. If you like what you hear. Please rate the podcast. We're still a relatively new podcast. So it helps other listeners discover these inspirational stories.

And as always, you can find everything that Edwin and I discussed in the show notes as well as a transcript of our entire interview on my website, which is lightwatkins.com/tunnel. That's L-I-G-H-Twatkins.com/T-U-N-N-E-L. And while you're there, make sure you sign up for my daily dose of inspiration email, which is a short and sweet daily motivational email just to kind of get you going for the morning. If you have any feedback or suggestions for me, feel free to text it to me. My number is 323-405-9166. I look forward to that.

Thanks again for listening, and I can't wait to see you next week with a next inspiring conversation From the End of the Tunnel.

[END]