

EPISODE 191

“ER: I'd already been secretly recording supervisors who were pressuring me to engage in this unlawful type of policing. I didn't know what I was going to do with the recording style. The plan honestly was to, I was going to, I was going to sue. But I was also going to go to the media and expose everything. I thought they were going to fire me for sure, if not more. That was the plan. I was under the impression that once people knew this information, they would take the right actions given the information. This is inside information I'm confirming. One of the beauties about whistleblowers. We not only confirmed the things that are speculated, we let you know what you never even know to ask for.”

[INTRODUCTION]

[00:00:39] **LW:** Hey friend, welcome back to the Light Watkins Show. I'm Light Watkins and I have conversations with ordinary folks just like you and me who've taken extraordinary leaps of faith in the direction of their path, their purpose, or what they've identified as their mission in life. And in doing so, they've been able to positively impact and inspire the lives of many other people who've either heard about their story or who witnessed them in action or people who've directly benefited from their work.

And my overall goal is to expose you to as many people as possible who found their path and to humanize them. And then hopefully to inspire you to continue moving in the direction of your path and purpose, because what you'll see is that anyone who has done that has had to overcome many of the same obstacles that you might be dealing with now.

And my guest today, Edwin Raymond, is the epitome of someone who has encountered many obstacles in following his path as a whistleblower in the New York City Police Department.

This is Edwin's second time on my show. I originally interviewed him back on episode 19 way, way, way back in the early days of the podcast when it was called At the End of the Tunnel, and I recommend listening to that earlier episode so you can hear the full backstory of how Edwin became a whistleblower and how his story got featured in the award-winning documentary Crime and Punishment.

Edwin is now retired from the NYPD and his book, An Inconvenient Cop details his harrowing journey from being a Haitian immigrant growing up in Brooklyn to having many run ins with the community police as a teenager to joining the police academy himself at 22 years old with an

aspiration to change how policing is police carried out, to understanding why so many kids in his neighborhood were getting stopped and frisked by the police and arrested for trivial reasons.

Turns out Edwin and the other police officers who he graduated police academy with literally on day one, they were assigned monthly quotas. In other words, they were each mandated by the higher ups to make at least four arrests and issue at least 10 summons and perform 10 stop and frisks each month. And it wasn't about keeping New York City safe or anything like that. It was about generating money for the city, except the majority of those arrests and summons and stop and frisks occurred in and around poor neighborhoods, simply because the people in those neighborhoods didn't have the resources to fight those summonses and tickets. And Edwin literally could not sleep at night knowing how it all worked and finally, seeing why black and brown kids were being entered into the criminal justice system at such an early age.

And he was equally surprised at how many other officers would just turn a blind eye to this unfair quota system and just do it because that's the way the system was set up.

And they would tie the quotas to all of the other benefits that police officers would have. For instance, the more arrests you made that month, the more summons you issued, the more likely you were to get any vacation time approved by the higher ups, or you would get the night off to go see your kid play in their basketball game.

So while many officers just complied, Edwin decided that he had to go public with what he knew. And he was inspired by Frank Serpico, who was the poster boy for whistle blowing in the NYPD. And Edwin began secretly recording conversations with his higher ups related to those quotas, and he approached the New York Times, who ended up publishing a front page article about the quotas and profiling Edwin story. It set off an earthquake within his police precinct. And ever since he's become the face of a class action lawsuit brought against the NYPD.

And in this episode, Edwin and I talk about the inner workings of policing and what we as the general public sometimes get wrong about how policing works, such as the way we think of the Miranda Rights and how it's oftentimes backwards and how New York police would target the people that they would arrest and issue summonses to.

We also talked about the original indoctrination of this way of turning a blind eye, which starts really in the Police Academy with the denial of racial profiling and how Edwin navigated the decision to become a whistleblower, where he literally had to get to a point where he was no longer afraid to die because he thought knew that that was a possibility.

He also gives advice to anyone else who may be working in a toxic environment and you may be tempted to become a whistleblower yourself. And we talked about Edwin strategy of releasing his book and how he brought a unique twist to his promotional efforts, which I think would be valuable to anyone who is a creator who is I'm going to be promoting something in the near future.

And all in all, this was an extremely powerful and even an emotional episode at times. I really hope it inspires you to check out Edwin's memoir, *An Inconvenient Cop*, and that it helps to nudge you closer in the direction of your path and your purpose.

So without further ado. Let us get into my conversation with Mr. Edwin Raymond

[Start]

[00:06:30] **LW:** Edwin, welcome back to the podcast, man. We had a previous episode where we went deep into your backstory as deep as I could go as an interviewer, because I didn't have the benefit of being able to read a book about your story, but now you've released a book and *Inconvenient Cop*.

So there's a lot more detail that we can actually explore and as well as the, just the detail of the culture of policing that I wanted to talk about as well. And then your experiences with releasing a book and promoting it, which I think is always useful when you have a 1st time author who's got a very unique story, just sharing some of the practices that you've implemented, what worked, what didn't work and things like that. So I'm really looking forward to this conversation.

[00:07:14] **ER:** Brother, thank you for having me back. The last time we spoke a lot was happening in the world. A lot continues to happen in the world but this isn't a subject that we can shy away from for too long, because as we've seen historically and contemporarily, it's only a matter of time before things align and people are in the streets again because of this topic.

[00:07:33] **LW:** Yeah. So we did do a very deep dive into your backstory, but for people who haven't heard the earlier episode, and I highly recommend that you do that.

Give us a little montage of how you came up in Brooklyn, where you came from your little bit about your heritage and how that sort of played a role. In the path that you ultimately ended up taking as a police officer.

[00:07:58] **ER:** Oh, definitely. I was born in the mid eighties, grew up in the nineties. My parents migrated from Haiti. This was a time where, immigration laws had only been changed to allow that for about 20 years. So it was a growing community. It grown most, immigrant community, mostly Caribbean, American, Caribbean folks. But unfortunately I lost my mother at only three years old and my dad wasn't very educated in terms of formal education.

He didn't speak English well and there was a big mental health. that at the time was just very taboo for black culture. And when you add the layer of Caribbean culture, Caribbean perspectives, it was unfortunately something that went unaddressed for a long time. And that led to a very difficult childhood because my dad stopped working when I was about six.

And it was a lot of poverty, a lot of, unfortunately, a lot of hunger, food insecurities. And this is in the middle of the 90s when it's a very different New York City, a lot more violent, unfortunately, a lot more homicides, a lot more drugs aggressive policing, that seems to be the constant.

But it was a very different New York, very difficult to navigate New York given the hand of cards that was dealt, but I made it happen. You know, I pulled through a lot of prayer, a lot of thinking, a lot of focus, a lot of delayed gratification. The success sequence as it's known now, you know, I kind of understood at a very young age.

If you do certain things right and avoid certain other things, you may not be rich, but you will be okay. You can be okay in the future. And that's essentially how I helped to guide myself.

But then with all of that, it did not prevent the negative encounters with police. Cause at around age 15, the minute I started growing a light mustache, unfortunately, like the cops that ignored me just a year before, now, I was deemed suspicious and, this didn't sit right with me. I knew I knew the neighborhood could have its issues with crime, but I wasn't involved. And the fact that I wasn't involved, despite my reality, I thought, come on, this is not how I should be essentially rewarded for walking a straight path, despite what I'm surrounded by.

And at 18, I make a decision to join the police department, to analyze it from within.

[00:10:12] **LW:** Which your dad had been, I don't know if he was joking, but he'd been telling you to be a police officer when you were a kid.

[00:10:17] **ER:** Yeah yeah. It's just, unfortunately my dad ended up passing a few years after his stroke. He caught a stroke when I was 17. I don't know where that came from. I thought he was crazy at first. What is he, what is this man talking about? Yeah, about five years after he made the recommendation, I was in the police academy.

[00:10:33] **LW:** Let me ask you something. You're known as a quote, whistleblower. Obviously, we're going to get into all of that. When you describe your developmental years the people who know you and people who are around you, what would they have seen that would have foreshadowed where things were going in your life?

Were you the goody two shoes? Were you the one that was always kind of speaking up for others? Would they have seen that in you?

[00:11:00] **ER:** Yeah. So it's, it's crazy because I knew what was right. And as long as that was able to guide me, for some reason, I didn't, I would still put myself in certain environments because I knew no matter what environment I was in, I was going to make what I felt was the right, the moral, the ethical decision. So I was adjacent to everything you can think about in the hood, everything. And there's nothing I wasn't exposed to by the time I was 16 years old, because, again, no matter what environment I was in, I was firm in who I was much more than

the average teenager, I would say. So I knew I was gonna, I had literally be walking with friends and they're like, hold on. And I'm like, what was going on? And they put a ski mask on and robbed someone across the street. Yeah, seriously. You know, Like I'm not robbing anyone but what I didn't understand at 16 is you probably shouldn't be walking with that friend. Because again, because I knew I would always make the right decision, I didn't mind walking with that friend. I didn't mind going to the crack house. You know, when I play it all back, there was a little bit of luck, guardian angel, because just being that adjacent, it can get you in trouble. But again, because I knew I was going to make the right decision, I didn't care what environment I was in. And others, my peers, they recognized that in me. I don't know if they would call it goody two shoes, maybe some, but they definitely recognized that in me, that, for whatever reason, I certain things I just wouldn't do, I'd be around it all, but I just wouldn't engage.

[00:12:21] **LW:** Yeah, you wrote in your book that the gang members in your area, because you grew up in a gang infested area, they'd left you alone. And I'm just curious, how are the street politics? How does that work? Because I think from watching movies and stuff, you get the impression that you don't really have a lot of choices when it comes to that. So what did they see in you? Was it your father that had a strong influence on them leaving you alone or what was that about?

[00:12:46] **ER:** No one's really, we were all kids playing Sonic and Mario together. You understand? When they started going into that direction it's essentially, I was, it was like sanctuaries, like on a four block radius, they knew me we grew up together. We rode bikes together. So as they started going in that direction, they weren't going to come towards me with their new activities. Like my friends, they were doing a lot of robberies, man, like that was the thing, they finally got a gun and just started, they passed the gun around, and they just robbed people every day. But they weren't gonna rob me, they know me, you understand, so that's essentially, that's just immediately in the area that I grew up in, but a six block walk in any other direction, it was game on unfortunately. It's just a reality of some of the inner cities. It's very territorial. Sometimes it's because of just the drug game and territory of who can sell where, et cetera. So it's not to say that, there weren't times where the gang issue didn't affect me. But for the most part in my immediate area, about four or five block radius, I was good.

[00:13:51] **LW:** And, part of the street code and I didn't grow up in the hood. I grew up around black neighborhoods, but there's no immediate contact with gangs but you still understand, you don't fib. You don't snitch. Snitches get stitches and that whole mentality. Was that a part of your ecosystem growing up as well when it came to you being harassed by the cops. They try to get you to snitch on your friends since you were the one that wasn't doing the

[00:14:15] **ER:** dirt?

Snitches get stitches. That's pretty universal. Something that I understood is something that we all get, right. I guess it's the way that, hip hop it's like they romanticize Italian mafia culture, you understand? The movie Scarface is a favorite for many folks, etc. Scarface was Cuban. But the whole mafia culture is something that's romanticized, so snitches get stitches is pretty universal.

Honestly, the answer to that question is no, because the cops couldn't see, and that became part of the reason why I joined. The cops could not see the difference between me and those that were involved. To them, we were all just one and the same. So they wouldn't even see that I was the different one that they could possibly try to get to snitch. They saw me as part of the problem, simply because I lived in that neighborhood and I was a young black kid.

[00:14:58] **LW:** All right, so you decide to become a cop which you went through police academy, what at 21 years old or...

[00:15:04] **ER:** 22 years old.

[00:15:05] **LW:** Talk a little bit about the training that you were exposed to as a young police officer and you go into great detail about this in the book, but you also mentioned that, our idea of what cops are supposed to do mainly comes from television and movies, and there's a lot that we get wrong. So what were some of those misconceptions that you were learning about in Police academy?

[00:15:32] **ER:** Yeah, so one of the first ones I have to start with, and, this one I wrote about is the Miranda rights. We've seen so many different depictions of Miranda warnings being read during the time of the arrest. As the cuffs are being slapped on, you have the right to remain silent. And as the head is being lowered into the car, anything you say can and will be used against you, et cetera. And that starts to etch into our minds that this is this is lawful. This is a necessary thing to do during the arrest stage. And it's just not. And I let folks know in the book is arrest in custody plus interrogation is what leads to Miranda. If you don't have all the pieces there, you don't have to Miranda-rize someone. And I've actually tested folks and asked them, have you ever seen someone arrested? They'd say, yeah.

At first I'd ask them, what are the rules around Miranda? They'll say if a cop doesn't reach you in Miranda, the case gets tossed. Okay, have you ever seen someone arrested? Yeah. Sometimes they've even been arrested themselves. Did the cops read you in Miranda as they were arresting you? Or when you were watching someone being arrested, were they mirandarized? And they'll say, sometimes they'll convince themselves that they saw it, like a Mandela effect. But most of the times they'd realize you know what, I actually never saw it. I said.

So what happened to those cases? Cause they had to have gotten tossed out. And that's when I would educate them and say, they, if they got tossed out, it wasn't because of the lack of Miranda. And I would explain to them what the rules are. And they'd be shocked. I have friends who are actors who have played police, who I've said this to, and they're even shocked. This is how etched this thing is in people's minds because of fictitious depictions of police. And the thing is, there are so many other things about policing, how police operate, what rules are, what's realistic, what isn't. That also gets into people's minds because of a writer's imagination. And that's why I felt it was crucial that I write about that because there are times when it starts out as a writer's imagination, it becomes ubiquitous in people's minds, and then

it somehow starts becoming policy because that's what people are advocating for based on the foundation that, and how they understand policing, but it's not from genuine research of how police departments operate, what police procedures rules, et cetera. If more people actually went through that stuff, they'd see the issues. And obviously, if more people who are analytical join police departments, they'd be able to see the issues and realize that we have to change what we're advocating for if we want the changes that we need.

Yeah. And just for clarification, Miranda Rights is when you, when they say you have the right to remain silent, anything you say or do will be used against you in court, blah, blah, blah. I just know that from television. I've never had that read to me.

Exactly.

[00:18:13] **LW:** But you also learned that police officers are forbidden from accepting free coffee and there's a whole backstory to that that you also learned. So talk a little bit about that in the backstory and Serpico and...

[00:18:27] **ER:** Sure. So it's the it's the Mullen commission in history. Serpico was the Knapp commission that was just blatant. When people think of police corruption, the things that they make movies and TV shows out of that was Serpico. That was bribes and just money hand over fist like just it was old school corruption, what people think of corruption.

Fast forward 15 years later in the 80s with Michael Dowd, there's a documentary called The Seven Five about him. It was an officer who was struggling financially and this is around the time that crack was the thing. And every time he had arrest someone, they would have more money in their pockets than he'd see in months and they were young black teenagers and he realized it was because of the crack. So at first he would affect the arrest, but then he'd see them out in no time. And, one of the things is cafes and places that serve coffee would never charge cops. And one day as he was sipping his free cup of coffee, he realized. Wait, if I can get away with not paying for this, what else can I get away with?

So rather than arresting the folks that had crack, he would just search them and take their crack and sell it to dealers on the other side of town. And slowly, but surely he would get more involved in the drug game. When he was finally on the investigation, basically he had a deal where he had a certain amount of immunity, if he would be honest about what he did.

Once he explained that it started for him, while sipping the free cup of coffee, he thought about what other type of corruption he can get away with. Immediately the rule was, you were not allowed to accept free cups of coffee. And to me, it's if that's what you've got from Michael Dowd, if you think this is about coffee, you're just missing the bigger picture.

But but yeah.

[00:20:16] **LW:** What is it about though? Is it, Is it human nature? Is it the culture? Is it the training? Is it all of the above? From the police academy POV, where would you say it starts the, idea that something like that is even possible?

[00:20:30] **ER:** That's a good question. Um. think there's a lot of things at play. The individual, where their own morals are. Again, the reality of the financial situation that he was in. Many people struggle financially and they wouldn't make a decision like that. So I think it's a number of things.

Again, before Serpico, that was more normal. That wouldn't barely be a story inside of the police department, as long as they keep it from the public. But today, if an officer was found doing that in the NYPD, they would, even officers would be a little shocked because after Serpico measures were taken to minimize and suppress that level of corruption.

So it still happens, but it's nowhere as ubiquitous as it was before. Yeah, I think it's that's a tough question though, because. I think it's a multitude of reasons why people go in that direction. Some people actually join the police department with that in mind. They literally, they've been able to keep their nose clean despite what criminally. They join the police department, the badge comes with some power, they get to legally carry a gun, and they'll go on the robberies, robbing drug dealers, and using their position in law enforcement to further their criminal activities. There's a multitude of reasons why people end up going that deep into corruption but I guess it's case by case.

[00:21:45] **LW:** Yeah, you wrote that uh, it's not a question of bad apples, like people who are bad apples. You said the culture grows bad apples or something to that effect. And I've often wondered, when you read about police corruption, does being in that culture, create the conditions for someone to become corrupted or does the job itself attract people who have a God complex or, who are egomaniacal and things like that. What's your impression?

[00:22:16] **ER:** I don't think. I don't think it's either. Oh, it could be both. But for the most part, what I've, from what I've watched, what I've gathered in 15 years is the job it instills those things in people. It's part of how human beings socialize. We conform to our surroundings and we learn from, because you have to think about it. Most people join the NYPD between the ages of 21 and 28, you're still figuring yourself out. You're still figuring life out. Yeah. You're an adult, but you're a new adult. And now you're in this very important position where you have a lot of power. And you see how things run and I don't think it's even a conscious decision for many people. It's normative social behavior. That's exactly how I write about it in the memoir. People conform to their environment. I mean, you'll always find outliers, but for the most part, people conform to their environment.

And unfortunately they start to embody The good, the bad, the ugly.

[00:23:12] **LW:** You talked about this. It's a question of safety. You became known later on as an officer who was reluctantly use lethal force, particularly in cases where turns out it wasn't

necessary or there was a misunderstanding. And yet some of the other officers were like I can't believe you didn't shoot. You're playing with your life if you don't use that force. And I'm sure a lot of the ways of being that you learn as an officer. It's just to keep yourself safe, keep your fellow officers safe and police

officers are regular people nobody wants to be killed in the line of duty, whether you're a dentist, whether you are working in a toll booth and whether you're a police officer and I don't think people really appreciate all of the precaution that you have to employ to deal with some of those situations that one may get called out for. Can you just speak a little bit about that? What are some of the precautions that officers learn in the police academy that leads to maybe what we would consider to be aggressive behavior or overly controlling. But really, the intention is just to keep you the public safe.

[00:24:22] **ER:** Yeah, that's a good point.

And one of the things is uh, compliance versus noncompliance, we're trained on, we watch videos. Some of these videos will never make it to the Internet because they're gruesome. We watch videos where someone is noncompliant, but there are other cues that show that they're getting ready to do something.

You know, And unfortunately, a lot of these videos, the officer doesn't survive the encounter. When you watch a lot of those videos, you can be a little edgy because when, once someone is not listening to what you're saying in the back of your mind, you're like, Oh no is this going to be one of those situations? I have to get on top of it. So some at that time, the response can be more aggressive than what people think it should be. But many times it's because of those training videos that we watch in the police academy, that's definitely one. Other thing is tactics. We're trained to have the tactical advantage as much as we can, and sometimes the aggression is the only thing that's going to give the tactical advantage given the situation and circumstances. So that's where safety comes into a play where, people outside of policing would not been training would not see videos of when things go terrible, won't understand.

But at the same time I'll add their videos, and this is what I referred to, I didn't write about this but implicit bias works two ways. It can make folks think if you and I are walking down the street, we're more likely to be dangerous and violent and criminals, but it can also make you not alert when it's someone of a different demographic. And we've seen videos where it's the nice white man that happens to be a felon. But he's speaking, he's speaking calmly. And when the officer least suspects it, the revolver comes out and that officer is now in the grave. We've seen those videos also.

Statistically, that's typically how most cops die at the hands of white men nationally speaking. That's something that a lot of people wouldn't think, especially in major cities where policing is more racialized. But yeah, videos and tactics and safety. It definitely can cause an officer to be a lot more aggressive than people think they should be.

And, conversely, there are times where I've seen videos that none of my fellow activists and friends would understand where I'm like, I can, I see the ugliness in the video, but that's just a difficult one. That's not the typical, brutality that we think it is, but I can see why someone can't tell the difference. But then, of course, there are videos where this is just blatantly, just unnecessary brutality also doing too much. This is just wrong.

[00:27:06] **LW:** Yeah, you said there was a wholesale denial of racial profiling, which you brought up in one of your classes and they looked at you like you were talking about aliens or something.

Yeah. Yeah.

Did you have any private conversations with black officers who maybe felt the same way, but they just didn't speak up. Or were you completely the only one who was talking about this openly in the academy?

[00:27:29] **ER:** In the academy, the black cops, they understood. They just thought I was crazy for saying something. But to me it was a learning environment. So I thought this was the perfect space to have these conversations. I didn't realize I was being looked at differently and being labeled. And my instructor was a black woman, so that's probably the reason why it didn't spread as wide as it could have. And she warned me. Prior to graduating the police academy, you have to get evaluated by your instructor. And she literally saved me for last because of the, where the conversation was going. And she said, as a black woman, I get everything that you say, but please don't go to your command to having these conversations because they are not ready to hear it.

And remember, I'm in the academy in 2008. We, this is probably, we have president elect Barack Hussein Obama, like we're getting ready. Something's getting ready to happen. I graduated the academy, I think, December 30th, 2008. So in a few weeks, we're going to get the first black president. A lot's happening in this country. One of the things about being a writer now, that's difficult is some things don't make the final cut.

I actually wrote about the Henry Louis Gates incident where, you know, he just, yeah. And it was crazy because I saw how cops all over, their private cop chat rooms and Facebook group. At the time they would just be on Facebook, not in private rooms, but they're like there are accounts there, there are web websites that you have to submit your ID in order to get entry and like private discussion boards with cops. And they completely ripped the new president. And I didn't understand because it's like disorderly conduct. You have to be in public for disorderly conduct.

Was uh, professor Gates agitated and could he have been loud? Sure, but he's in his home. That can't be disorderly conduct. You, you have to alert the public. You have to like basically upset the peace in order to get disorderly discount as we call it. But that was my first time seeing the politics of policing outside of the academy where simply because the president was

a Democrat, simply because he was more left leaning and obviously definitely because he was a black man, he was automatically, oh, he hates cops and I'm like, wait, so he hates cops because he said it was stupid to arrest someone in their home for disorderly conduct. Like, how do, how does one prove the other?

But then, as we would see, unfortunately, later when we have started having issues with police, things that would go viral, they definitely felt secure and vindicated in accusing him of hating police because he was willing to have the conversation about the fact that law enforcement needs work.

[00:30:11] **LW:** Yeah. And, And, you know, when we see these things come up in the news, I think a lot of people also don't realize that some of the tactics are actually in the training manual. Like I heard, I don't know this for a fact. Maybe you can clear this up. But the thing that the guy kneeling on George Floyd, I heard that was in the training manual for his police department.

[00:30:33] **ER:** There's a recent documentary that explores that. I hadn't had the chance to watch it yet is actually one of the things I'm looking to do with this, some work I'm looking to do in Minneapolis in the coming months. One thing about me, I try to be empirical and no matter what my position is on something, I always want to hear what someone else's position is, especially if it's a counter position. So I plan to look into that myself. I have not done the research. But that'd be very strange if it is.

It's one thing to use to pin someone down, but specifically on someone's neck that I'll be, very shocked to see that very shocked. But if it's in the manual that says something.

[00:31:14] **LW:** All right. So you graduate the police academy, obviously you know, they pump you up and make you feel like you're the savior of the free world and all of this. You've already had a couple of those play the game conversations. What's the reality? Like, when you get into the actual job of it. What do you find? That's shocking to you?

[00:31:33] **ER:** And that was quite an adjustment period because I was still battling with that idea that I'm a police officer now. It was something, it was an identity that I was still trying to accept myself. I remember being my first day on patrol, all of the eyes staring. You know, I've taken the train to New York City since I was 14 years old, 13 years old. And people didn't stare at me like this. So it was just adjusting to that. And authority, I'm 22, 23 years old and I have this authority. I say something, someone has to listen to me. And I remember thinking that's such a great power in the sense of you have to be very responsible with that type of power. That was mentally what I was going through on my first day on patrol.

But simultaneously, we were given quotas, which at first I didn't want to believe was just the way that the department operator thought. Because we were in a rookie training unit, I assume that the quotas was a way to get us the experiences we needed so that once we're out of the rookie unit, we would know what to do when we organically encounter certain things.

But then it was just relentless. It was just numbers, stop and frisk, tickets and arrest.

[00:32:45] **LW:** Yeah, you had four arrests. You were to have 10 summons and you were to do 10 stop and frisks a month. So walk us through like an average day or a couple of days. Like how would that go? Who would be arrested? Why would a summons be handed out? What is a stop and frisk? And how could that be initiated? What's the justification for that?

[00:33:06] **ER:** Yeah, so immediately my training officer was It was a guy who had migrated here from Eastern Europe, who was very callous, very like dispassionate, but callous. And it was just, these are the objectives and this is what we do. It would take a few months before I realized that when he's around different people, he's different because at first he was just like this across the board.

So the first thing we did is we, the low hanging fruit in the subway system, when it comes to fare evasion are teenagers. Up until just a few years ago in New York State, New York City, a 16 year old would be considered an adult, no matter what the infraction was, whether it's a violation of simple violation, misdemeanor, felony. Before we had the laws, the legislation to raise the age, 16 was tried as an adult. So once you were 16, you were getting summonses for jumping the turnstile, not paying the fare and anything else, dropping your MetroCard receipt on the floor, you name it, anything that's in the rule book, in the law books, they would run your name. They will be hoping to get one of the four arrests, but if not definitely one of the 10 summonses. And if not, one of the 10 stop and frisk. So it was just this very aggressive over policing of mostly young folks, but definitely older folks, too, because there'd be times because I had to do a lot of prisoner transports. And there'd be times I'm transporting someone that's like almost 80 years old for urinating, get, had a medical condition. Now, do I want someone urinating in subway? Absolutely not. But this is a situation where we would use discretion and whenever, and that was a black man. He was like 77, 78 years old. Whenever the rare occasion that it was a white person, everyone would stop what they were doing. Everyone would say, who made that collar? All of a sudden there was this concern. There was a human element that was there that was missing oftentimes when it was whenever it was a black person.

I'll give you an example that didn't make the final cut. My lieutenant was a white Italian. It was good to the offices, especially if you were bringing in the numbers, but I noticed one day that they often lock people up for not having I. D. It's not illegal to not have I. D. But if you commit any infraction and you're not able to be identified, you get arrested instead.

And what we would do if we would try to identify the person by other means we would call the home and say, Hey, do you know? Do you know, Light. They say yes. I was like, I need you to give me his last name and his date of birth, and if you can give me that, I have more of a reason to believe that what the person told me is true and I can run their name with that information even though they don't have official ID. These are little things that we did so we don't completely exploit the rule that says we can lock them up when they don't have ID. But when we're not able to do that, to identify them, it's time to get locked up.

I'll never forget when it was a young white man who jumped the turnstile. He didn't have ID. We had just locked up someone for not having ID, right? We did the calls. No one picked up. He went in. Then 45 minutes later, it was a white guy that jumped the turnstile. And we did the same thing. We made the calls. We tried our best. But then the lieutenant called the precinct that he lived in and sent an officer to his house to see for someone to physically knock on the door to see if someone can get I was like, Whoa, this is a little, there's a little much, when it's the black guy will make the call, which I appreciate, but when it's the white guy would do this extra step. So I can tell the lieutenant was in a tough position because we literally just locked the black person up 45 minutes ago for this. So he kind of had to take this dude in.

He takes him in he puts him in for a desk appearance ticket, which means he has a court date later rather than to see the judge right away. And he had to take the Long Island railroad out to Long Island, which I believe the last train was at 8:30 or 9 PM. So in order to make sure he didn't miss the train, the Lieutenant assigned someone to drive him to the train station. So all these extra steps. Honestly, all the lieutenant did was humanize the experience, but the fact that we don't do that to the tens of thousands of blacks and Latinos who are arrested, stop and frisk and summons, it showed you how race played a major part in how enforcement and lack thereof happened.

[00:37:28] **LW:** Yeah, you know, it's such a big cultural thing in America because I've, I've traveled around the world. I'm sure you have as well. And you never see, I should say you rarely see police setting up citizens to be arrested so that they can give you a ticket. You don't see people getting pulled over. People can drive any old kind of crazy way. And, you rarely see traffic stops.

But in America, you often will see a speed trap. You'll see a cop hiding behind a garbage bin, at a place where they know that people would be driving faster than the speed limit. I've personally been stopped several times in my life for, I'll be driving in an unfamiliar area and then I'll change lanes, maybe without signaling or something like that to try to make a light that I didn't realize until the last minute get pulled over. And you could tell this officer is just doing that all day long. And so with these turnstile summons, that you guys are handing out, you guys are hiding. You're hiding in some closet so that they can't see you. What's the justification for that? And can you talk about how that connects to the larger objective of making money because it sounds like it's just a corporation. It's not really about protecting and serving as much as it is about generating revenue.

[00:38:52] **ER:** You know, I'll never forget when the training officer, the Eastern European officer got a key from the booth clerk where people buy their tokens and metro cards. And we're walking to this door. He went to get the key, the booth clerk let him know that officers were already in there. So we walked to the door and as we get closer, the officers opened the door. And it's four officers in there. And I'm just confused. And then when we closed the door, the officers peeking through the vent. And I realized that this is how they essentially watch the turnstiles waiting for someone to beat the fare. And at some point someone did, and all of us ran to the platform, six of us. We all ran to the platform, ran the person's name, they were issued a summons, and after that we all ran back into the room and you repeat the process.

Eventually someone has a warrant or has a reason to be arrested. And this is what officers did all day, hiding in the rooms all day. I was so confused by that.

Overall though it, the justification by the upper echelon is the broken windows theory. The belief that if you over enforce innocuous things, that larger issues, larger crimes would likely not happen or people wanted for larger crimes would be brought into custody because the person smoking a cigarette on the platform if they happen to be wanted or if they have an unlawful firearm, by enforcing the cigarette, it can possibly lead to bigger things. And this belief, more than anything else, is what they use to try to justify over aggressive enforcement of innocuous infractions.

[00:40:36] **LW:** And as a newer cop, are you groomed to spot for like the top 10 most popular infractions because you mentioned like metro cards on the ground. Like, I'm sure you guys get a big manual of all of the different infractions possible in life. But how do you know which ones? Because I oftentimes think, I wonder that too when when a cop pulls you over and maybe somebody is well informed of the law and you wonder, does the cop actually know all of these laws or are they making it up or how do you know?

[00:41:07] **ER:** So there are things that just happen more often than others, right? And yeah, and that's how essentially your training officer shows you because, after fair evasion, the number one thing is, we call it unsafe riding that's literally just walking from one train car to the other using the indoors, right?

[00:41:27] **LW:** That's illegal?

[00:41:28] **ER:** It's illegal. Yeah.

[00:41:30] **LW:** Really? I've done that. I've done that hundreds of times.

[00:41:33] **ER:** Exactly. Yeah, that's illegal. That's the second most common arrest. And the third is outstretched, just taking up two seats.

[00:41:40] **LW:** That's illegal?

[00:41:42] **ER:** That's illegal. If you put your bag next to you...

[00:41:44] **LW:** You can get arrested for that?

[00:41:45] **ER:** People have gotten arrested. When I worked the midnight tour, the midnight shift, that was the bread and butter of midnights. Outstretched arrests were probably 75, percent of the arrests during the midnights because ridership is minimal. You understand? It's not as many people riding.

No one's on the train at midnight.

Exactly. Which is the irony, but because so few people are on the train, in terms of probability, it's less likely you're going to get someone jumping the turnstile because it's just so few people in the system. But the next main infraction that you do see is people taking up two seats.

Sadly, many times there are people that don't have homes. They're homeless. Their bags that are next to them is everything of importance. Their birth certificates, social security cards, their food, their toiletries. And then we lock them up. Homeless people that have their bags next to them. This is what happens when you have to serve the numbers.

And, I would speak to my colleagues privately, like, How do you just do this? And unfortunately, what I learned is people try not to think about what's being asked of them. They just do it because if I don't do it, someone else will. I have this job. I'm lucky enough to have this job that provides resources to myself and my family. And I'm not here trying to change the world, Raymond, I'm just, I just need to pay my bills. That's what people would always go back to.

[00:43:04] **LW:** Yeah, you mentioned a funny, it was actually laughed out loud when you wrote this in the book, you talking to another black cop who had been in Iraq in the war and you were saying, this is crazy. This doesn't make any sense. He goes, look, man, I was in Iraq shooting at Iraqis. I'm a black dude from New York. That doesn't make any sense. You just got to do what you got to do your job.

But also they tied the quotas to vacation time and other benefits that officers would look forward to. So talk a little bit about how the money thing works. Like you get the summons that puts you in good standing so that maybe you get the promotion or you get the vacation. And then where does the money go? Does it go straight to the city or do your higher ups get promoted. Like, how does it all work politically?

[00:43:55] **ER:** Man it's tricky, man. The summons is obviously become dollars, right? Parking summonses in New York City alone make about half a billion dollars a year. It's just parking summonses. Moving violations seatbelts, cell phones, speeding, there's the summons charges, the surcharges. Again, hundreds of millions of dollars from summons enforcement. But aside from that, overtime dollars, right? Officers when you get chosen for overtime, it depends on how your enforcement activity is. When it's time for the sergeant or lieutenant or other supervisor to determine who's going to get the overtime and who's going to be able to make the overtime dollars, it's based on if you're regularly meeting your quota. It's unfortunate, but that's what runs the whole thing. That was the most shocking part of all of it. It runs on autopilot. These officers are not even thinking about what they're doing. They're simply going with what's incentivized.

And I think that's what's been missing from the larger conversation about policing and how we get the detriments out. Which is why so many people are cynical these days. You know, many

people years ago that said reform, today say abolish, you know, and it's because they're like, everything we've thought about, everything we've tried, everything we wanted to do doesn't work. Again, a lot of it is it's misplaced because it's coming from a good place, but it's not what we need, you understand, and this is what I'm hoping people get from the book. I'm hoping it changes the conversation and becomes a real tool. Because yeah, this is such a it's a large issue. It needs a multifaceted approach. It generates revenue and summons is generate revenue, other dollars that are allocated for enforcement generates revenue, both for the officer and for the city.

At the end of the day, as you know, as many people know it, things usually go down to the dollar and this is one of those ways.

[00:45:52] **LW:** Yeah, you use the term hammer, I guess that's police lingo for somebody who goes really hard with all the summonses and things like that. What's the incentive to becoming a hammer?

[00:46:04] **ER:** We're evaluated. It's a five point scale with, with half intervals. And it's rare to get a 5.0 but 4.5, 4.0, once you're getting those ratings, you can now submit for the detective squad and other specialized units, because the reality is, most officers, if not every officer, wants to get off of patrol.

Patrol is the hamster wheel. Patrol, there's a saying in the NYPD, patrol is for the birds. No one wants patrol because it's that's where the numbers game is the hamster wheel of the numbers game. The constant quotas and pressure. So a lot of offices want to escape that by getting to specialized units. And the way that you do that is to get higher valuations. And being a hammer. Listen, there are times when no officer makes mistakes. Loses department property and other things and they're given a slap on the wrist because of their enforcement activity, it continues to benefit of it continues to benefit you over and over again because in the culture of the department when they want to size an officer up, they can run an officer's name and see how many arrests they've had, and that becomes like a way that officers size each other up. When you're a hammer, there's so many ways that incentivizes you to, you know, because it leads to a very lucrative career. But again, that's at the hands of black and brown folks in New York City.

[00:47:23] **LW:** So someone who's a detective or some other higher level position in the NYPD, they've met those quotas, essentially.

[00:47:31] **ER:** Yeah, for the most part. I mean, there, you know, there's nepotism and cronyism. But aside from that, you're not going to get selected for the detective squad if you have not satisfied the numbers game, unless you're a crony or a nepo baby. Aside from that you have to play the game as they say.

[00:47:48] **LW:** And a lot of them privately will just say, look, man, you just keep doing it for another, six months, a year, you'll get out of this, you'll make detective...

[00:47:56] **ER:** And that's how it works. But all the specialized units, you need a commanding officer's recommendation. What makes a commanding officer look good is the arrest summonses and stop and frisk that offices within his or her command has. The first thing the commanding officer is going to do if you submit an application for a recommendation is look at your numbers. You understand? There have been Air Force pilots that can't get into aviation because they didn't meet the numbers. There have been Navy SEALs that can't get into the harbor unit because they haven't met their numbers. There have been people overqualified to specialized units based on talents and training and education that they have prior to being in the police department won't get into those specialized units if they don't first play the numbers game. Very, Very discouraging. You know.

[00:48:45] **LW:** You told a couple stories about your interaction with some of the teenagers. You talked about the West Indian kid who snatching phones on the train and you would refer to them. You talk to them. I want you to give us an example of how to how one of those conversations would go. And I'm just curious if any of that gets documented at all. Like a cop who's establishing positive relations with the community or is it strictly all about. The numbers.

[00:49:14] **ER:** Yeah. So I'll give that exact story, which I write about a young man named Jacob. Because it's not common to have juveniles, anyone under 16 in the cells. We use the juvenile cell area as a lounge, we eat pizza and joke there. And one day I went in there because, I was so accustomed to using it as additional space. One of the officers said, Hey, Ray, you got to check your gun when you're around prisoners. You're not allowed to have your firearm on you. When I asked him why he said there's a prisoner in there. I looked in there. Again, I was in there, I didn't even see the kid because I wasn't expecting to see him. But he was in, he was handcuffed to a bench and I went, I put my firearm away. I quickly read the arrest paperwork and saw that he was arrested for robbery. I started conversation with him. He tells me his name and he was nervous because probably he thought I was there to interrogate him. But I just was trying to see who he was and what was going on. And that's when I learned that his family had migrated from Guyana. And this was actually his fourth arrest for robbery, and I explained to him, we live in a society where just one felony can derail your whole life. You have four felonies at 15 years old, and explaining to him how this is not a game. The decisions you make now can affect the rest of your life. It shouldn't be that way, but this is the reality of the world.

And at that point, an officer interrupts. When he eavesdrops and hears That I'm trying to speak some positive energy into this kid. He interrupts me and says, Ray, we're just waiting for next year. Again, next year he'll be 16. Tried as an adult. You'll go to Rikers Island. No more slap on the wrist. So once the officer walked down the corridor, I said, did you hear that? And he said, yeah. I said, this is what they think of you. But I see my little brother, am I wasting my time? And he said, no, he shook his head. I said, the only thing that determines whether I'm wasting my time is what you do with this conversation. If you continue what you've been doing, I'm wasting my time and that officer's right. If you make the decisions, because don't do it for me. Don't do it for your family. Primarily do it for yourself because you deserve it. You deserve to live a comfortable life. You don't belong. You know, I remember telling him when you ever walk to a store and you see like a dog chained to something because the owner's inside and the

dog's not allowed. I was like, yeah. I said, when I walk in here and I see you chained to this bench, that's what I think about. And as much as I love dogs, you're not a dog. You understand? You're a human being. You don't belong chained to anything. And again, whether or not I'm wasting my time is you determine that based on what you do with this conversation.

And, I'm glad to say years later, I ran into him going to college and I didn't think he remembered me. But when I came up to him, he definitely remembered and I was so, I was like, I needed to see that light because unfortunately to answer the second part of the question, none of that is incentivized.

Today in the world of social media, if there's a way they can catch that, they'll definitely put it out as a PR piece, but nothing about what's incentivized would ever make an officer do what I did that day. It's just not, if it works out and it looks good for the media, they'll put it front and center. This is what makes New York City great, but in reality, that's not what, nothing about what commanding officers are pressured to do and lieutenants, sergeants, officers, detectives, nothing about the everyday pressure would make an officer. That has to be from within. That has to be so ingrained in who the person is that they're willing to...

Because while I was, think about it, while I was there conversing with him, I could have been in a room hiding, getting an arrest. That would have got me much further in my career than dealing with this and speaking positively to this young boy to the point that as he becomes a young adult, he makes the right decisions. And I hope I can run into him. I'm actually trying.

There's other young folks that I speak about those encounters where I humanized the experience, on one named Cash. When I first wrote it, I didn't, I haven't seen him in 10 years. Coincidentally, I let a friend read it who happened to know him and that's how I, I was able to get in contact with him and I asked him if I had permission to use his name in the book. I told him about, I wrote about our encounters.

But yeah, so there's a few young folks I write about, but again, unfortunately nothing about the system incentivizes those types of encounters.

[00:53:33] **LW:** So then you take your oath. But then there's this whole other under culture of what you're actually being hired to do. So you have to, over time, develop your own personal oath. So how would you articulate that personal oath that justifies spending time having those kinds of conversations?

[00:53:53] **ER:** Essentially, as someone that's dedicated to the community, despite the detriments in the system, I will always make the decision that benefits the community even over the policy. Because the policy is unlawful anyway, so that will always be my foundation. The policy is unlawful anyway. So technically I'm loyal to both oaths, because I'm supposed to uphold the constitution of the state of New York and the constitution of the United States and the penal law and all the other rules and regulations in society. And that's exactly what I'm doing when I'm pushing back on policy that ignores the law. You understand? And at the same

time, my personal oath is that I will always be grounded and make the best decision for the community, even at great cost to myself.

[00:54:38] **LW:** And when did you and how did you become clear about that personal oath? Was there a moment that you can recall where you had that realization like, this is what I'm going to do?

[00:54:49] **ER:** Honestly, before I even joined, before I even joined. And that's why no matter how No matter what people thought about cops, even what I thought about my encounter, my negative encounters, that's what allowed me to even join. If I didn't make that clear to myself from jump, I wouldn't have joined. It's being grounded. And, at first I didn't realize it, but the same reason why 12 year old Edwin could be in a crack house and never sell crack, never smoke crack, never rob anyone, even though 12, 15 year old Edwin is walking the streets with friends that doing robberies every day, is the same reason why I could join the police department and not engage in that. If it's not right from a young boy, if I feel it's not right, I'm not going to go along with it.

[00:55:34] **LW:** So obviously you have to have your personal life and you're not always this serious, trying to reform the system, Edwin, what was dating like as a young cop in New York? I mean, because you're kind of like Superman, you're like a superhero as a cop, right to women.

[00:55:51] **ER:** I mean, prior to being a whistleblower or after?

[00:55:55] **LW:** Prior.

[00:55:56] **ER:** So prior, you know, it's one of the biggest challenges. You try to balance personal life and work because work starts to really eat into your life as a police officer. We work irregular hours. We have mandatory overtime. I was speaking to a friend and I forgot overtime is something that could even be optional because there's, if there's a parade happening on Sunday and you got Sunday off, you don't have Sunday off. There's some sort of emergency. You're supposed to go home at 3 PM and think that you have a semblance of a normal life, you're not going home at 3 p. m. You're being held up maybe three hours, six hours, 12 hours. That made it very difficult with dating and other personal, relationships like friends. I started missing birthdays. It became very difficult.

When I was studying for sergeant, I had a girlfriend who everything was great. And then, I had to really focus on my studying actually for Lieutenant. I was Sergeant already. I had to really focus on my studying and it was three months away. We were three months away from the exam. And I said, listen, I just got a schedule change, which actually would have made our schedules more aligned because we made, we found a way to make it work despite having opposite schedules. But I said, I just had a schedule change. But for the next three months, I got to really double down on my studying. She said, no problem. I got you. But then that Friday she made dinner plans and I'm like, wait, no, I'm here, but I'm not here. I got three months. I have to really get this information. And if we get married and get children later, this is a \$25,000

raise. Believe me, you want me to get this promotion because it'll benefit us for the rest of our lives. And unfortunately for a few weeks later, the relationship didn't survive. Literally nine days before the exam we broke up, man unfortunately.

By then I was already a whistleblower though. I've never actually been asked. I never said this, but I never knew activism was so attractive. Let's put it that way. Because that's the other part that yeah, it does bring attention. There are women that I've been interested in dating in the past that once I became the whistleblower and all that, they then showed interest, which was strange to me because it's wait. I'm still the same Edwin, so I personally don't enjoy navigating that because it's like, wait, are you here for me?

You know, what are you here for right now? But overall, just being an activist can be tough on your dating life because especially this type of activism so it's something that I'm still struggling with, unfortunately, but I did, recently retire. There's a lot more time. Part of the problem is balancing a full career and the little bit of time that you have in between working on your activism. And now that, I've, I'm essentially an entrepreneur now. I'm hoping that, that leads to a much more positive dating experience. I would definitely keep you informed. Yeah.

[00:58:50] **LW:** All right. You become an activist police officer, so what was that moment when you recognize that within yourself. Like there's more that's happening here. I have these strong feelings. But I need to do something about it. So talk a little, and we went into detail about this in our last interview. But again, for the benefit of the listener, just take us back to that moment. Take us to the night that you didn't get a lot of sleep where you came to that realization of what the possibilities were in your life. You were okay with that. And then beyond.

[00:59:25] **ER:** So I had been having conversations with my good friend Jim St. Germain, and who's also been on the podcast as well. Yes. Yes. Shout out to Jim.

[00:59:37] **LW:** What did you call him at the time?

[00:59:38] **ER:** Oh, Buffett, Buffett. Buffett.

Yeah. And we had gotten back in touch because last I heard he had gotten deported back to Haiti because you know, he went down a particular path, but was able to change his life and become an example and an inspiration for many folks. But as we would work out together, we spent a lot of time together. We were building a nonprofit together, he said, you know, I don't know how you do it. And, I would always push back because he knows the poverty, he experienced the poverty himself, he knows where I come from, and he sees the contrast in how I'm able to live because of this career, and he said he would have blown, he would have blew it all up the first day. And I was like, you can't do that, because of the risk, etc.

As Jim and I would speak more and more about it and even when we wouldn't speak it would stay in my mind and, there was one particular night where it wasn't even what was on my mind when I went to bed. But I just woke up in the middle of the night with just the most amazing

feeling. It's simultaneously sad, because to have to be in that mental state because of work is, I think is a tragedy.

But I was literally ready to die, man. I accepted death as a possibility. And once I was there, it was liberating. And every type of negative consequence that could come my way for speaking out for doing something about the system once you have accepted death, my brother, what's your suspension? What's your reprimand? What's your write up? What's your, are you going to fire me? I've accepted the ultimate, consequence. I don't want that to be the case, but if it has to be the case, I've accepted that. So bring it, whatever you got coming, there's nothing I'm not ready for. And that's what made me, gave me the courage, there was no more fear.

What was the loose plan when you came

to that moment of realization? Were you already thinking of tape recording somebody or putting something in public, making a press release?

[01:01:39] **LW:** But what was the loose plan at that moment?

[01:01:42] **ER:** I'd already been secretly recording supervisors who were pressuring me to engage in this unlawful type of policing. I didn't know what I was going to do with the recording style. The plan honestly was to, I was going to, I was going to sue. But I was also going to go to the media and expose everything, which I knew would, I thought they were going to fire me for sure, if not more. That was the plan. I was under the impression that once people knew this information, they would take the right actions given the information. This is inside information. I'm confirming. One of the beauties about whistleblowers, we not only confirmed the things that are speculated, we let you know what you never even know to ask for. You understand? We make it clear that, okay, yes, A, B and C are true, but take a look at D.

So I was under the impression that by simply exposing, simply making this information available, that the people would do the rest especially after the activism that I saw after the Eric Garner incident. I was like, these same folks, if only they had the information that I had, you understand, so I was under the impression that just simply putting it out there will get us closer to where we need to be.

[01:02:54] **LW:** Okay, somebody's listening to this right now, maybe they've seen some corruption. Maybe they've been dealing with a similar situation, but in a different field. Is there a playbook for whistleblowing?

What are the steps? How do you know what to do? What not to do? How did you get guidance?

[01:03:11] **ER:** Yeah. So I'll tell you, over 2000 law enforcement officials have reached out since I've been a whistleblower. Some of them have become whistleblowers themselves. Some of them reached out and then became whistleblowers. Some of them became whistleblowers and

then reached out. And what I found in common with all of them is that they all watched the documentary. And when they were watching the documentary, Crime and Punishment, they thought I was crazy. They thought me and the 11 others, the NYPD 12, as they call us, they thought we lost our minds. But what they didn't realize was it planted something in them so that the next time they went to work and they witnessed whatever corruption they saw, they just couldn't shut up about it. That was when I realized, I think I'm in a position to do a lot more, and whenever the officers would reach out for guidance, and this is beyond policing, to answer your question. One thing that I did different from all the other whistleblowers that I studied, Frank Serpico, and, other members of the NYPD 12, Adil Polanco, and, Adrian Schoolcraft, all these whistleblowers that I'd seen, Pedro Serrano. They put the information out there and waited for the community support. Sometimes the community stepped up somewhat. Oftentimes, unfortunately, they didn't.

I went to the community prior to blowing the whistle, right? The activists, Tamika Mallaby, the Justice League, Carmen Perez, rest in peace to Harry Belafonte and the Gathering for Justice. They were very helpful. They would typically be protesting police officers, but they were willing to take the criticism and stand elbow to elbow with police officers that were here to do the right thing.

By going to the community first, you essentially lay out your insulation because you're going to take a fall. There's no way to do this type of work without some sort of consequence and reprimand and retaliation, but you fortify yourself. When the community is already involved. There is no manual. But if there's one thing I could tell anyone that's a whistleblower, I know that gut feeling that makes you say, I don't care about me. I care about exposing this corruption, even over my own livelihood and possibly life. I've been there. It's a thing that it's very difficult to write about because very few people will ever get there. It's a thing that it's very difficult to write about because very few people will ever get there. It's . You have to suppress survival, your own survival to do for others. Very few people will ever get there because it's just not normal.

But anyone that's having, that's currently experiencing that or has experienced that feeling, advice would be reach out to the community, activist groups, you name it, reach out to the community first and then advise a plan and then go forward with what you need to do.

Again, be ready though, because there's no way to do this without some sort of retaliation. I've had to be essentially a counselor, a therapist almost to many other whistleblowers around the nation, because, they go through it. They become ostracized and I know many of them who have gotten fired and that's the hardest. Some of them have young children and they've gotten fired, because of technicalities. Some of them were able to set themselves up with other businesses, et cetera. They find ways. But this is not easy work. It's selfless work. . But it's necessary work.

You guys, with that documentary Crime and Punishment, it's like you captured lightning in a bottle in terms of the timing of it all and the Black Lives Matter thing that came out and so I think that was, that probably helped to protect you a lot more than what would have played out

otherwise. And I'm just curious, like, when you think about that, if that documentary hadn't come out and you were the whistleblower after you guys filed that lawsuit, the NYPD 12, how do you think things would have gone without the help of the documentary popularizing your case and having all those other people reach

out to you? The thing is, prior to the documentary, I've been doing panels and other media. But nothing was as strong as the doc.

[01:07:11] **LW:** Yeah. And you had a big New York times profile as well.

[01:07:14] **ER:** Yeah. That's what started it though. February, 2016 the New York times piece, front cover of New York times magazine. That's one way to, to be a whistleblower, I'm very thankful for that one. Yeah. It caused an earthquake in headquarters. So I'm very thankful for that one. But yeah, the documentary took this thing to another level, especially, we ended up winning an Emmy. We were shortlisted for the Oscars. So automatically people are paying attention and there's nothing in the playbook for the police department to deal with that. I don't know if they're rewriting the plays now. But at that time, just 5, 6 years ago, they didn't know how to deal with that because the level of craziness, the level of self sacrifice that it takes to do that, most people don't operate from.

[01:08:00] **LW:** Also the story of the Frank Serpico's, their lives, the things didn't end well, didn't go well for them.

[01:08:05] **ER:** Yeah, that's a big part of it. Serpico's someone who I call friend, who I speak to from time to time. It's been a while since I've spoken to him. I know his birthday's coming up in April. The anniversary of him being shot in the head is I think February 3rd coming up. Yeah, you're right. He's I believe 87 years old and he'll be 88 this year. The PTSD is still there, and I don't know if it ever goes away. When I speak to him, as much as it's an honor. He's actually very funny. I'm also it also hurts to see how much this thing has affected him because he didn't have to do any of this. He didn't have to blow the whistle on serious corruption and risk his life like that and have his life almost taken from him.

And then, and you know, Dale Polanco, who was a hero, that's the first NYPD whistleblower that I saw when I was a rookie, this thing has affected him mentally greatly also. Even myself, I've, again, I've been different in the sense that I think I've landed on my feet a lot better than the other whistleblowers, but it's not to say that I don't have my battle scars also. This is just, this is taxing work. Right.

I went to MLK event at the Apollo theater, and it was one of the rare times that they spoke about the whole person. The fact that he suffered from depression. You know the fact that. There are very few moments of genuine joy in his life because at a very young age, he decided to take on a journey that ultimately led to his demise at such a young age, violently taken from us. But I appreciated that because I felt seen at that moment. People see me at the Oscars after events and winning an Emmy and, Trevor Noah on your show and they think I'm just like,

living it up, just enjoying this activism. I don't enjoy this. I don't. But I understand that movements need faces. People need guidance. And, I have a very special knowledge and analysis of the New York City Police Department that's needed that several people who have read the book, they said, I didn't think I needed to read this, I was curious, but I didn't think I needed to read this. I've never, this is, this doesn't exist elsewhere. You know, They said, I'm really hoping this catches on because a lot of what you put in this book needs to become the new language to new ask, that we, that the new demands that we make to those that are in a position to change the system.

[01:10:34] **LW:** So you've identified as this whistleblower for years now, and the documentary came out this wonderful memoir has been released, *An Inconvenient Cop*. Is that kind of like closure for you? Do you feel like you've evolved or graduated beyond the primary identity? And you said you retired. So I'm just wondering what's happening now? Where do you moving towards? What are you envisioning as the sort of next phase of your path and your purpose?

[01:11:05] **ER:** Yeah. So one of the things, my good brother, god rest his soul, Michael K. Williams, one of the things he said when he discovered my story and me, we became good friends very quickly is that don't be in the spotlight, but be the spotlight and shine it on others.

And um, yeah, I'm gonna, I'm gonna ride them and I'm going to carry that. The next step for me is to build a foundation to put myself in a position to empower other officers, other justice minded officers because we exist, right? It's not an oxymoron. We exist. We have to create softer landings because if we're waiting for a whole bunch of people to wake up in the middle of the night, accepting that, it's just not going to happen that way. We have to make whistleblowing less risky. We can do that as a society. But at the same time, the people that need to tell their stories, the people that should be in every decision making room in when it comes to law enforcement and other things that have issues in our society, I want to be in a position to empower them to give them a platform. And again, just be that spotlight and shine it on them.

[01:12:19] **LW:** And how can we help you in that mission? If someone listening to this has some resources, what is it that you are bringing together?

[01:12:27] **ER:** Yeah. Just co founded a new nonprofit called JMA, the Justice Minded Alliance. Our objective is to be that spotlight is to be national, doing the work nationally. I've already have a network of whistleblowers and other offices would not whistleblowers, but have reached out because they've been paying attention for the last few years. I want to empower them. So we need to grow this organization. The presentation, the theatrical presentation, because in between each scene, I do I do have dialogue for additional context. We want to spread that. We want a national tour. So we're in the process of looking for sponsors and partners to help spread this message with actors just a different way of delivering this message so we can have the dialogue, grow the organization and start to empower the justice minded.

And I'm telling you, if we can get the right minds in the room, the right people in the decision making positions, we can have a very different system.

[01:13:27] **LW:** Beautiful man. Well, look, when you released your book, when you present a book proposal, the 2nd half of the proposal is how are you going to sell this book? And so you paint the pie in the sky version of, all your marketing. I know all these people. I know, I know Harry Belafonte. I know Barack Obama. I know all these people and you get the impression that they're all going to give you blurbs and they're all going to promote the book on your behalf and et cetera, et cetera. Most of it ends up not panning out that way, but you had a book launch party with 1300 people showing up, which is incredible. And I'm sure your publisher was over the moon with that kind of reception. And you also decided to employ a very interesting, element with the book launch, which was a reenactment of sorts. Can you just talk a little bit about how you came up with that idea? How did you get 1300 people in the room for new authors listening to this? And how it all worked out.

[01:14:27] **ER:** Sure. So, you know, first I want to acknowledge my project manager, her name is Disney Foot. She's a very talented woman. When I was running for office, I was trying to get her onto the campaign. It didn't work out. But thankfully I stayed in touch and we finally started working together on this project. And originally the plan was to have a video editor put together a video that corresponded with the audio. So the four scenes were going to be audio, so there was going to be projection. But then, because we were at the famous King's Theatre, we had confirmed Malik Yoba as the host, and over the years, I've amassed a good support system of different influencers and celebrities, many of them actors and actresses. She said, wait, imagine how cool it would be if we could actually do theater. Because we have all these actors there, we have Malik Yona hosting, we're in a theater. I just thought, because that's actually one of my pastimes. I love Broadway. It's one of the things I enjoy a lot. It's expensive. But actually one of the last things I did before I retired, I found someone that a donor that sponsored 105 people to go see The Lion King on Broadway. That was one of the last things I did before I retired. I'm so happy I did that. Theater is one of, is one of the things that I love, right? So when she said that, it was like a light bulb went off and I said. We're doing it. I don't know how, but we're doing it. And we delivered. And it was such a successful way of delivering pivotal moments throughout the book, we're actually going to add two more scenes because we do have an encore coming, but we're still not at a point where we can do this nationally.

Again, we're looking for partners and sponsors in that regard. But the idea came from, having dinner one night discussing the book launch with my project manager Disney Foot. I'm so thankful for her vision. It was a very difficult thing to execute, but we definitely got it done. And it's how we're going to continue to present this work.

[01:16:33] **LW:** Did the publisher fund that or did you have to come out of your pocket or where'd the money come from?

[01:16:38] **ER:** Probably the most, the riskiest financial decision I've ever made. Let's put it that way. But, you know, I'm someone who takes risk. That was a very different risk though, because I, you know, I walked away from my career. So but I believe it will all work out. The

publisher was happy to show up. But they typically would never fund something. It was crazy to do, you know? We sold tickets. It didn't break even, so yeah, just being transparent, didn't break even. I'm in a hole a bit, but again, you got to take risks, right?

[01:17:11] **LW:** When you say I retired, does that mean you're officially like on some sort of retirement plan with the NYPD or?

[01:17:19] **ER:** Yes. So I like to say these days that I've left that NYPD because people, when they hear retired, they think I'm kicking up my feet in Miami. It's like, no.

[01:17:27] **LW:** Getting a check every month.

[01:17:28] **ER:** Yeah no. Depending on when you join the NYPD, you have to do 20 years or 22 and a half, a. k. a. 25 years. There's an explanation for that, but when I joined the NYPD, you can start receiving your pension after 20 years. I did 15. My pension is severely reduced because of that.

Second, I don't start receiving a pension until what would have been my 20th year. Yeah it's a very risky thing. People were shocked. People were absolutely stunned. One, because personally, this does not benefit me. I think some of them, despite being shocked, they're like, you know what? You've already demonstrated that you're willing to do things that don't personally benefit you. But at the same time, as someone who, I truly hope, and I don't wanna be one of those people who like vicariously lives through their children and tries to recreate you know what they think life should have been to their Children. But I do hope I get to be a father and husband one day. So it's crucial that I set myself up in a way that you know, my children will be okay. So I have to make very smart financial decisions moving forward even before. But things will work out.

[01:18:33] **LW:** Yeah, your mom died when you were three. So you never really got to know her as an adult, but I'm sure you've imagined what she would think about you now that you've, you're older than she was when she passed away. What are some of those reflections?

[01:18:47] **ER:** Man, as I wrote in the book, this is a void that will never be filled, man. I think about my friends who are parents, particularly my friends who are mothers, and it doesn't matter how upside down their personal lives are. When their kids are doing good in school, man, they feel like the most successful person in the world, right? As they should.

For me to reach this level, for me to be able to inspire thousands but never... I will never be able to look into a crowd and see my parents looking back at me. It hurts, man. I thought about that at King's Theatre, and I thought about actually Jesse Williams, that amazing speech he gave at the BET Awards in 2016, I believe. And I just saw that look on his parents face while everyone else stood in shock and amazement, the look on his father's face is, I know my boy. I'm proud of him, but I know my boy. What I would give to be able to see that or my parents face. But at the same time, they will always be here because they're in my book.

[01:19:50] **LW:** Exactly. As you were saying that I was envisioning like my vision for you. And, you know, I've heard a story little bird told me that a certain author had his books optioned by a production company that's owned by a certain president, former president. And I see that for you. I see that for your book. I don't know if that conversation is has happened or is happening, but, this is one of those stories that people just feel inspired to immortalize. And I think your parents and you and, all of the characters are going to be around for a very long time.

[01:20:25] **ER:** You know what, in 2016, when that Times article came out, I won't name the names, but some of Hollywood's biggest names reached out to purchase something that I'd never heard in my life called Life Rites. Immediately I cringed. I was like, you gotta rename that. I don't like the way that sounds. What do you mean by life rites. I declined all of it because, again, I'm ready to die, man. What do you mean? I didn't even think I was going to land on my feet. I didn't even think, I definitely didn't think I was going to get promoted.

But more and more of those conversations would come up. And to be honest, that's what me and Michael K. Williams was, we were working on. The documentary was important, right? And it helped, but I saw what the difference, I saw the difference that dramatization and narratives do, right? I saw the difference in when they see us because, I was too young when the exonerated five were arrested. I was a baby, I was like three years old, right?

So I don't remember that, but I remember their story when they were exonerated, right? I think I was in high school. That was my first time hearing about them. But then I believe in 2012, their documentary came out. I went to see it with my girlfriend at the time. I bought the Blu ray, right? Blu ray, right? Who still buys those? And I watched it so many times with her, with friends. And I was under the impression that the entire world learned their story that day. I was so wrong. It wasn't until when they see us that the world understood and the world was inspired.

Shout out to Yusuf Salam, who just became the new city council member for Harlem, because people knew his story.

Yes, he's an author. Yes, there's a doc, but I truly believe people got the story and what became inspired from when they see us. So at first, it's something that I wasn't thrilled about. I didn't really understand. But when I saw the success of when they see us, that's when I realized, wow, okay. This angle is needed. And that's when, I started working with our late brother, Michael K. Williams, that has been probably the most bitter part about this entire experience. We dreamt, we spoke about King's Theater. We didn't say we were going to do acting, right? We didn't say we were going to bring theater to the book launch, but we discussed the book launch. We discussed, what we were going You know, at first he wanted to do a film, but when he really got into the story and realized Jim and I knew each other, he was like no, we need a series, man. Like the fact that you both are from Brooklyn, similar conditions, Jim migrates, you're born here you become, you're childhood friends. Jim goes down a path of criminality. You stay straight and then go down and become a cop. You guys meet each other. Then combine efforts to mentor young folks, but then push activism. He's a

juvenile justice activist. Like this is stranger than fiction. I was like, wow, I didn't think about it that way. The fact that you two even know each other, this is what you're doing as adults is an amazing story. And I don't think a movie tells it right. So we need something special. And, I looked forward to it, but. I hope that conversation gets revisited with other production companies, et cetera. And thank you for seeing that that it deserves that, that type of uh, you know, amplification, if you will. Let's hope it gets there. I'm definitely looking forward.

[01:23:43] **LW:** Who do you want to play you in the show or movie?

[01:23:45] **ER:** Oh man there's a brother I've been watching. I think he's based in Atlanta. His name is Corey Champagne. The look is there, definitely. I believe his father's Haitian. He doesn't speak the language, though, so that'll be a little tricky. But the language, me speaking Creole, there's only really one scene where it's absolutely necessary as an adult. It's really me as a child. Because my dad didn't speak English, and I want that to be depicted as it was.

When I've thought about, any type of narrative, whoever plays my dad like he Like, I want my dad captured as perfect as possible. So there's very little English, unfortunately. I don't know if it's unfortunate.

[01:24:24] **LW:** But that'll be a different character than if it's the young Edwin.

[01:24:27] **ER:** Yes. Yes.

[01:24:28] **LW:** Find somebody who does speak creole as a child maybe translate the news.

Exactly

[01:24:35] **ER:** in Jeopardy, watching Jeopardy.

Yeah. Yeah. That'll be amazing, man. That'll be amazing. But more importantly, I wanted to inspire. This is not about me. This is not about me, it's not about me. I just need to inspire others.

[01:24:49] **LW:** Well, look, bro, I appreciate you coming back on and sharing so vulnerably, especially at the end there. I'm looking forward to having the audience hear this and go back and listen to episode 19, which is when you came on first. I told you back then you were one of my initial inspirations for starting this podcast about people who have identified their path and taking the leap of faith. And so I've been able to feature many people who have the most incredible stories who have had to have courage in their life and who are walking that uncomfortable path of activism, but it's also deeply fulfilling at the same time.

And so you hadn't done what you did and I hadn't seen Crime and Punishment. And talk to Jim and I started this this nonprofit in LA and New York called The Shine and the whole point

behind it was to shine the light on people like that people who were doing just that they were walking their true path. And that's how I met Jim. Somebody introduced him to me. And he came and gave a talk, so it's just, it's all interconnected and yeah, the ripple effects of any one of us out here, doing our thing, listening to our heart, taking those leaps, being courageous, it's just immeasurable. And just want to thank you for doing all of that in those quiet hours of your own life where it'd be so convenient just to play the game and just to fall in line and thank God whatever ancestral memory or karma you have within you would not allow you to do that. So I'm honored, bro. I'm honored to know you.

[01:26:35] **ER:** Thank you, King. I truly appreciate that. And thank you for shining that light. Also, thank you for understanding that there are stories that need to be told there. People that need to be inspired. I've watched a few of your interviews and I've sent them to Disney, actually, the woman with Disney Foot. I got to say the last name because people think I'm talking about the company. And yeah, it's very inspirational. Please continue to do it. Continue to find the voices that we need to hear, and thank you for choosing my voice as one of them.

[01:27:05] **LW:** Absolutely.

[01:27:06] **ER:** Thank you, King.

[01:27:07] **LW:** Thank you, bro.

[END]

Thank you for tuning into my interview with Edwin Raymond. Again, his new memoir is *An Inconvenient Cop*, and you can follow Edwin on the socials at E dot Raymond underscore. And of course, I'll put links to everything that Edwin and I discussed in the show notes, which you can find at lightwatkins.com/show. I'll also link to *Crime and Punishment*, which is the documentary that he was featured in and the whole case was outlined in.

And if you enjoyed our conversation and you found it inspiring and you're now thinking to yourself, wow, I would love to hear Light in conversation with someone like dot, dot, dot, shoot me an email with your guest recommendation. I'm at light@lightwatkins.com.

In addition to sending me a recommendation, which I greatly appreciate, I do have one tiny ask, which is a very simple way that you can directly help me get that guest on my show. And that is to leave a review. That's one of the reasons why you always hear podcast hosts like me asking listeners to leave ratings and reviews is because that's how guests gauge how big a podcast is and if it would be worth their time. They go to your Apple podcast page and they see how many ratings does this person have? How many reviews do they have? And it only takes 10 seconds and it's free.

So the way you leave a review or rating is you look at your screen on your device. You click on the name of this show, which is *The Light Watkins Show*. You scroll down past those first few

episodes and you'll see a space with five blank stars. And all you're going to do is click the star on the right. And that's how you leave a five star rating. Thank you very much for that. Obviously, if you feel inspired to go the extra mile, write a one line review about what you appreciate that we're doing with this podcast. And that would also go a long way to help me get all of the guests that you suggest onto my show.

Oh, and don't forget. You can also watch these interviews on my YouTube channel. If you ever want to put a face to a story, make sure you subscribe there as well. And if you didn't already know, I also post the raw unedited version of every podcast in my Happiness Insiders online community a day early.

So publicly you have to wait till Wednesday, but if you would like to access these conversations a day early, you can join The Happiness Insiders, and you will also get to hear all of the mistakes and the false starts and the chit chat in the beginning and the end of each episode. You can get all of that at thehappinessinsiders.com.

And you'll also be able to access my meditation challenge, gratitude challenge, walking challenge, resting squat challenge, and a bunch of other challenges and masterclasses for helping you become the best version of you.

And I look forward to hopefully seeing you back here next week with another story about someone just like me, just like you.

Taking that leap of faith in the direction of their purpose. Your purpose is always going to require a leap of faith. So that's why we keep playing these stories over and over and over. And that's why it's important to keep trusting your intuition and keep following your heart and keep believing in yourself because taking a leap of faith is not for the faint at heart.

Alright. Thank you so much. I'll see you back here next week and have a great day.