

The following is a conversation with Ed Calderon, a security specialist who has worked for many years on counter-narcotics and organized crime investigation in the northern border region of Mexico. I highly recommend you follow the writing and courses on his Patreon and website, edsmanifesto.com.

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and it's also clear that I can make progress on solving little puzzles, little puzzles here. Whether it's debugging or building a new thing, all of it just makes me really happy, especially as the project nears completion, whether it's the intermediate stages of its completion or the final thing. Now, particularly oftentimes with that programming is like scripts that automate various aspects of my life and make me more efficient, but it's also larger projects that I do for machine learning and robotics work and beyond. Anyway, during those moments, if I'm feeling really out of it, I will take an alpha brain to give me a boost. You can get a special discount on alpha brain at [lexfriedman.com](http://lexfriedman.com) slash on it. This show is also brought to you by Inside Tracker, a service I use to track biological data. I've been getting softer and fatter over the past few months. And recently, a few days ago, I decided to change that. So I'm on a stricter diet now, on a stricter exercise regime. And it's amazing, sort of the improvement in how I feel about this world, how I feel about just the way I move about the world, the way I think for prolonged periods of time is able to maintain focus. It's a very low carb diet and mostly fast, mostly once a day. I mean, maybe that's for another time to discuss what my preferences are there. Maybe people don't care. Probably they don't care. But my body is definitely operating at a higher level of performance under a strict diet. And it's interesting to measure that through data, to get blood data, to get DNA data, fitness tracker data, and use all that to see if I'm doing better or worse than I was before. And based on that, make recommendations for diet and lifestyle

changes. That's exactly what Inside Tracker does. Get special savings for a limited time when you go to [inside-tracker.com](http://inside-tracker.com) slash Lex. This is the Lex Friedman podcast. To support it, please check out our sponsors in the description. And now, dear friends, here's Ed Calderon. What does your experience in counter narcotics investigating the Mexican drug cartel teach you about human nature? Wow. I mean, first off, anybody can be got. Anybody can be corrupted. You're working that field and you realistically the training we got and profiling and investigation and stuff like that was basically you learn from the older guys there. And some of those guys were already corrupted from the start. So trust no one. I remember seeing that X Files episode where that was stated. You quickly learn that even if you are somebody that to your own mind appears incorruptible, you know, small changes happen around you, wheels get greased, money gets put in front of you and or things get threatened like your life. And sometimes a payment for some of this corruption is just to continue on living. You encounter people that seem incorruptible

that go through FBI background checks that go through all of the security measures that all of us were put through, you know, polygraph test. And then later on, you know, it turns out they were on the take or they became somebody that was corrupted. I think what I found out is that anybody at any level, they could be a very strong, hard to get person right now. But people get corrupted through their families, through need. Mexico is a place where a lot of instability occurs. So financial needs health. So a crack could form through the wall of integrity. And then over time, it seeps in somehow. Mexico has a culture of corruption, like, you know, you have your kid that goes to school at public school and you want him to be in the morning, not in the afternoon school time period. So you go off and grease the wheels with the director of the school, people hearing this in Mexico, nod their heads because this is something that happens from early on. So there's systemic, there's a systemic and cultural thing to it, you know, as far as getting around rules. And this happens because, you know, the people

are in charge in Mexico, the government is, you know, their tandem amount is trust between criminals

and the cartels down there for a lot of the culture. So people don't trust the government and much less criminality. So when you meet a person sticking on human nature, do you think it's possible to figure out if they can be trusted? So you said anyone could be corrupted.

You know, how long would you need to talk to a person? And you're even in your personal, private life, just a friend, or is trust the thing that's never really guaranteed?

I think that trust is never really, really guaranteed. I know a lot of people are going to say that's a sad way and hard way of living your life, but, you know, life experience at my end, you know, people change, you know, the dynamics of a relationship might change.

I look at people's character, specifically their past and past experiences, if I can, somebody that presents himself in front of you as somebody, but you quickly learn that somebody's just a mask or a persona that they kind of created for themselves.

And they might not even be aware of the persona? Like, is there some deep psychological stuff?

Sometimes I've experienced a lot of failure in my life. You can see it in my nose, you know, you can see it in my lack of a digit, you know, the amount of, you know, the amount of failure you can see in somebody and how they wear them sometimes is a pretty telling thing, as far as them being able to be trusted or that you can trust their story or their experience.

And when I say experience, I mean, I've met some criminals, like former criminals, or, you know, some people of that background that I trust with my life, you know, because they're not reformed. But they figured out that that's not a life that could live long enough to kind of continue on. And I've also met people that are in law enforcement that I wouldn't trust with my car keys, you know, because, you know, whatever persona they adopted over the years is a pretty good one, pretty good mask. Sometimes such a good mask, they don't even know they're wearing it. And on top of that, it's not just the psychology, there's also a neurobiology to it.

I've been very fortunate and deliberate to surround myself with good people throughout my life.

But I've recently gotten to sort of observe, not close to me, but nearby somebody that could be classified as a sociopath and a narcissist. Like I don't want to use those psychological terms, but just like, it's like, oh, people, you know, come with different biology too. So it's not just like the trauma you might experience in your early life and all the deep complexity that leads, all the deep complexity that leads to the psychology that you have as an adult.

But it's also the biology come with the nature that you might not just have the machine that can empathize deeply with the experience of others, or maybe a machine that gets off, gets a dopamine rush from the manipulation of other humans or the control of other humans.

Yeah. I mean, put an example of my own background. My mom didn't have a father.

He left really early on in their childhood. You know, my mom raised her two sisters and basically kept a household. She was a great mom. She was a badass. You know, she was very independent. She showed me how to be independent. She showed me how to kind of watch out for others and kind of build me up in that way. And I had a great childhood as far as, you know, as far as her and kind of like how she molded me. Later on, I figured out that when I had my own kid, you know, I figured out that she was basically trying to make me into what she didn't have in a way. And if I can get to see somebody's parents, you know, that's usually a sign of something at least for me as far as figuring out where people are. I think there's something to be said about nature and nurture and how some people come up. Some people are just

born

with that predatory instinct, you know, and you'll never know. I mean, they spend their whole life practicing how to hide it. But if you can figure out somebody's background childhood, where they're from, you can kind of tell something about them. You know, I'm from Tijuana, you know, I'm a survivor. That's my background as far as where I'm from.

Culturally, genetically, psychologically, the full shebang.

Yeah. I guess some people are born with certain predispositions and if they're in the right environment, some of the negative aspects might flourish more than others. You know, for me, I mean, I grew up skateboarding in Tijuana. And I remember breaking into my first backyard pool. It was a house that a cartel guy owned and we used to skate the pool in the back in the back of it. So I learned how to bop open padlocks with a with a small vehicle hydraulic lift.

And I remember doing that. And later on in life, I got to train with people from other parts of Mexico and and work with them. And I remember pulling that trick off. And they were like, looking at me like, where'd you learn that? Like some birdlers at Tijuana, you know, and they're like, wow, that's interesting. Like, are all people from Tijuana like that?

And I said, no, we're not all like that. But I guess in some way we are because, you know, Tijuana produces some produces kids like that, you know, she produces like the environment itself produces produces a pretty specific person, I guess, you know, where our normal is our normal or our baseline normal is way different than most. The trajectories that you can take in life are are defined in a way that aren't available elsewhere in the world. Yeah. And so you develop, I mean, that's part of that psychological part of that is cultural and so on.

Part of that is the cultural trauma. But then also the ethical lines based on the corruption, because I grew up in the Soviet Union, there's the same kind of understanding that there's some gray area of corruption. Yeah, it's always there, like on the outskirts or even in the center, how you can grease things to make things easier, and how it's like a personal thing. I'll just, you know, pay off the Tijuana, we have a Mordida is what we call it, you know, when you pay a cop off. Mordida means a bite. What's the bite aspect?

So you get stopped for a traffic violation of some sort and the cop walks up to you. Obviously, you don't say the word bite, but it's like a slang term for it. And he asks for your paperwork and, you know, and if you get fined or get a ticket, you say, can I pay the ticket here?

Is what they say. And, you know, put your money inside the paperwork and hand it over to the cop, Mordida. You think it's, you know, I'm just going to do it and nobody knows, you know, but it's a systemic thing. Everybody, like a lot of people do it and then they don't trust the police because they are fed with this. Yeah, I mean, same thing was in the Soviet Union. It's funny.

But then there's something inside you where that kind of those opportunities come, like with a police officer, where you realize you could just pay a little bit of money and get out of a thing. And then you realize you can pay a little bit of money or do a favor, they get your kids in a bit of school or something like that. But there comes opportunities where all right, if I do this little thing, I can make, I can get a huge promotion or I can get a huge increase in my power or get a lot of money. And something inside you says, no, that's not right. Yeah. And I wonder what that is. Because like, yeah, because it feels different than the legal systems in which you operate. There's some kind of basic human integrity, human decency. I wonder if that's like constructed or it's always there. It's like, again, nature versus nurture. I think, you know, for me, it was looking at seeing that in somebody else

that I kind of learned about it. There's a man that I consider a mentor figure. His name is Lieutenant Colonel Elizalda. He was a Lieutenant Colonel from the Army that basically came over and took over the group that I used to work with. He was incorruptible. That was the essence or the aura that he projected. The first time he went off on patrol when he was placed in charge of us, I actually drove him around, Tijuana. He was one of the lead from the front type of people. The amount of assassination attempts he got was basically a proof of how incorruptible he was because they kept trying to pay him off. And when that didn't work, they tried to kill him several times. I think the last assassination attempt took the use of his legs. And that man is still a dangerous person in my mind. But for me, and you know, people can gather a little bit about my background and where I'm from and some of the access I currently have to train the federal institutions here in the US as far as my background and if I was corrupted or not, because there's a lot of that out there. The Catholic guilt that's kind of built into some of us is always kind of there, you know, the devil was under the bed, you know. So I don't consider myself Catholic. Consider myself culturally Catholic, I think is what I kind of say with that. I had a pretty good structure with my dad and my mom at the house and, you know, they never let me get away with things. And I think my mom was a pretty big moral compass for me. But Lieutenant Colonel, kind of leading from example and seeing his work and how much profound change he caused in the people that work with him as far as, you know, we felt supported and we felt like we had a guiding figure during this. The one that was the most dangerous city on the planet when I was working there and he took charge. What does it take to be a man, Lieutenant Colonel, who maintains integrity after assassination attempts? Is it possible for a normal human to do that? Or again, is it genetic? That's an interesting question. I'll say this. Seeing him, I mean, last assassination attempt he had that took the use of his legs, he was with his kid. There was a recklessness to it, you know, I can see that now. Like now that I have enough distance from it, I could see that there's a recklessness to being that way. And also you putting jeopardy people around you, if you take that route. So I think there's a sacrifice to it, a very powerful and hard one to make for a lot of people. For me, it was I wouldn't get picked to get on board with some of the operations groups that I wanted to work with because I was known for not, you know, taking money or not being trusted by certain older segments of the organization that I was with, with stuff because they knew that I wasn't on the, you know, I wouldn't get money. So there's always a weird sacrifice to it and you're almost kind of like masochistic in that way when you get approached with it. They're like, why are you being an idiot? Why are you driving around that beat up car? Look at the Hummer H2 that just drove in with the other guy that is doing exactly your same job. Society as a whole down there doesn't reward it or at least doesn't see it in the people that don't take that route in Mexico. You know, for them is all cops are corrupt, you know, all of them. And, you know, seeing it again from the outside, I'm not there anymore. There's, you know, there's almost like a why didn't you add, you know, that could have been easier maybe or you could have been dead long ago, you know, because people that are on the take down there are usually owned by one side or the other. And when that gets found out, you know, if you have somebody that you're paying off that hints you off of drug operations in the area, your rivals are pretty keen on killing you. Money aside, so like a Hummer aside, how much of a motivator is fear? It's a big one. You know, I'll say, you know, for me, I didn't think I was going to lift the C30. You know, I was sure of it. Did that concept scare you? Was that just a principle of life that you're operating under? I lost my brother when I was 13 on it too. Like,



you know, he was 19. He was like the VIP of the family, you know. You miss him?  
Oh, every day. He was a, you know, he was a, you know, skateboarded BMX motorcycle hunter, one of the best marksmen that I've ever seen shoot. So better than you had everything?  
Yeah, he was the best of us is what we would say. And when he died, there was a, there was, it's almost like a concert at his funeral. You know, I met three of his girlfriends that all introduced themselves like the one, you know. Yeah. To this day, every now and then I get to pull the side down and when I go back home and your Eric's brother, you know, despite all the stuff that I've done, I'm still, you know, every now and then I get recognized. That made my mom and my dad go into a horrible depression and basically, you know, left me to my devices when I was a kid from 13 onwards. I had this self destructive, you know, aspect to me after that, I think, you know, again, something that's come up in therapy, you know, after I've been gone through all that and had this notion that if I can only die good in some way, shape or form or for something that it would, it would matter and they would kind of, you know, look at me with the same reverence I did with my brother. So dying isn't the problem. The goal of life is to die for something good. Yeah. At least that was my, that was my mindset going through that job. I remember

I was in medical school before that, you know, second year medical school was doing pretty good. And then 9-11 happened and, you know, that wasn't an option anymore for me. The economy was horrible,

couldn't afford to stay there. So I saw this ad in the newspaper and my brothers, my big brother, who's still alive and he's like, you know, you're not going to do that shit. You wouldn't dare.

And all of a sudden I was in a field, having my hair shaved off and a bunch of the guys that later turned into the Zeta Cartel military men were in charge of our training, you know, and I went through that process. In what field were you and why is your head being shaved and what the hell was going through your mind? What was the leap that you took?

I was sold the idea of this being a new Americanized police force that they were constructing, you know, in Mexico. So elite, special force, kind of prestigious elite, the people in charge of our training were a lot, basically, Mexican gaffe people. Gafes are what the special forces kind of originated. A lot of their members turned into the Zeta Cartel. So they were brutal in their training. We were sold this idea of it being, you know, scientific, like educated, educated, based and like a career path. And all of a sudden we're in this refurbished prison that wasn't good enough to be a prison and they turned it into a training ground. And I quickly kind of realized that they were training us to be a paramilitary group, not a community policing organization, which in my mind, that's what I thought that's what we're going to be doing.

What was the hardest process of that training for you? Because this is like a fragile innocent boy becomes a man kind of process. It's turning us into something that they could use. So it's a breaking down. They break down the individual, you know, it's a...

Physically, mentally. Yeah. I think it's a half done initiation process, I think in a way, you know, looking at it from now to the past, the the shaving of the hair, the stripping off your identity, you know, everybody gets a gets a number, the uniforms, the running around and you know, being treated like human garbage. The first thing they said to us when we were lined up in that field was, there's bread and dick to eat here and the bread ran out a week ago, right? So it was, I mean, I can't equate it to anything in the military here in the United States because people down there could actually get physical with us. I mean,

they could actually hit us and punch us and shit like that, which is not allowed here anymore, at least in most of the military isn't as horrible as down there. Nikki47 is being shot around us to simulate reality, basically causing hearing loss, that type of stuff.

So chaos, abuse, really challenging you again, physically and mentally.

And an open door there always. So if you don't want to be here, you can just walk out and the more you go into it, time wise, you're more invested you are. So in a way, you're kind of building your own chains while you're going through that process.

Were you tempted to walk out?

Yeah, several times, several times, specifically seeing some of the ways that people that I thought were better or stronger than me were walking out or quitting because of something that happened in there. There was some sexual assault stuff happening in there as well. Were you afraid of that? Always. You're in a place like that and there's females in the environment and some of the instructors are doing what they do. So that was like a cause for alarm. I mean, these people are in charge of our safety and education and look at what's happening here. So you could see some of the smarter ones leaving, not looking at this as a viable choice for life. How did that change you, those humans?

I had this motivation, this idealistic motivation in my head of making a difference and they drill a lot of nationalistic kind of the flag marching,

it being part of a group and the group being behind you and all of this.

What was the nationalistic pride? Was it in the nation of Mexico?

Yeah. What's the vision of this great nation of Mexico that you were, did you believe, did it get into your life?

Yeah. It got into my, I mean, it's an indoctrination. It's a paramilitary group. So everything there is basically modeled after the military. So that's what they were trying to kind of instill in us. I was a team leader in there after three months. Basically, I was, we went through a bunch of trials, physical trials, mental trials and stuff like that and not some of us were named team leaders and I bought into it. I'm supposed to be here. Look at me. I'm making headways. I'm sticking out a bit and I was very proud of what I was going through there, six months. Then you get the reality check when you signed the dotted line and how that none of it really meant anything as far as what we were about to go out and do. An example of this, we were trained with a 92 FS Beretta, which is a nine millimeter pistol Italian made. We got to shoot 20 rounds out of that gun and then we, when we got out, we were handed a Glock 17, which I've never seen one in my life. I was trying to figure out where the safety was and a few other people there were handling those guns in a horrible manner. We were very under trained under equipped and there was a lot of assumptions about what we knew and all of a sudden we're being cast into this. The start of one of the bloodiest and longest lived modern conflicts in our history that doesn't get called that, but it's basically been an ongoing war in Mexico that is still to this day amassing bodies.

So the Mexican drug war? The Mexican drug war, which is hard to pinpoint exactly when it started because when I was going through training, there was already stuff going on. I went into training in 2004 and there were already major cartel related events all over Mexico by then, but not at the size or scope as I was about to go into when President Felipe Calderon kind of took office down there and actually officially kind of kicked it off by putting the military in play as part of it, basically militarized the drug war, including us.

Who are the major players in this drug war? So the politicians, the military, the police force, the cartels, all Mexican, then the United States, China, just to lay out all the pieces on the board. First off, there are giant local drug markets in Mexico that are fought over, just local drug markets that are huge in scope. So no exporting to other locations? Just to start, yeah. So a big problem in Mexico is basically those local drug markets and an example of that and one I have a lot of experience with is the one in Tijuana, which not only feeds the local populace but also feeds the populace from San Diego that crosses down into Tijuana and buys their product there. And now a phenomenon that's occurring now is marijuana trafficking is going from California down into Mexico because they produce better weed, which is fascinating to see now. So there's already a channel and you're kind of like reusing that channel? Yeah, there's not a lot of people in vehicles getting checked when they drive down and Tijuana is being called San Diego South now because all the economic migrants are living down there. 90% of old houses in Tijuana, new houses are being bought up by Americans. So that'll tell you something about the impact and change that's going on down there. So you have these local drug markets that are being fought over. You also have these drug routes that go through Mexico, up into Mexico, around Mexico, through the ocean, under the wall, drug tunnels, over the wall, and on backpacks, on migrants that go up into the United States. Not only do the cartels make money off drug trafficking but also extortion, money laundering, paid protection schemes. You know, any mining operation in Mexico will have to pay protection, you know, or else they'll get hit. A lot of times, the largest money makers for some of these criminal groups are, you know, protecting and taxing anybody that goes across the border. So that's also a big issue. And it's not just, again, some Americans think it's like the cartels, you know, they imagine this single or maybe two or three groups, there's several out there. I don't have a current estimate, but last time I checked, it was somewhere in the vicinity of 50, 70, different groups, some small that just dedicate themselves to a single little town somewhere. There are armed groups that are basically in control of that area to some bigger federations like the Sinaloa Cartel, which is probably currently the largest and most powerful one in Mexico, and the New Generation Cartel, which is growing exponentially right now. So these criminal groups are players in that conflict. Then another player that doesn't get talked about is politics, politicians. There's a, there's an ongoing discussion that has been going on, I think, since Trump was elected about cartels being a terrorist organization, cartels being terrorist organizations or not, or if they fit that description. Well, you know, we are living through multiple assassinations on political candidates on Mexico right now. And most of those assassinations are motivated by one side sponsoring one candidate and the other side sponsoring the other. What I mean by sides, I mean cartel groups. So they're, they have elected officials that are on the take. And this is, we have, you know, many governors who are under investigation on the run or in prison right now, state governors. So politics is involved in it. That's a big player as well. That doesn't, you know, when you, when you think about the cartel problems, you don't think, well, some, at least some, most people don't think about that aspect of it. So to have integrity as a politician in Mexico means you have no protection and under constant threat of assassination. We just seen the arrest and prosecution of the head of all counter cartel operations when I was active in the form of García Luna, who was the, he was,



he was the guy, Felipe Calderón, who kicked off the drug war. That was his guy. Turns out he was, turns out he was on the take at that level. Is there like a spectrum of how on the take you can be? Are there ethical lines that you can cross? Some of it is money. And then is it possible to operate in a gray area that does not result in destructive ethical violations, deep ethical violations? I have no idea. I don't think, I don't think there is realistically, I mean, anything that kind of supports some of these groups, you know, you're supporting things of a horrible nature. There, I just posted recently on my Instagram account of a lady that was in Guanajuato. She's one of seven recently assassinated women that are looking for their kids, basically. There's a bunch of groups and organizations out there in Mexico and some in Tijuana that I've actually walked with who are taking control of trying to find the bodies of their kids. That's her up there. Maria Carmela Vasquez, a mother who searched for a missing son was shot to death outside her home on Sunday. Her son, Osmar Vasquez, disappeared on June 14th, the 46 year old woman is the fifth mother to be killed this year while searching for their missing loved ones. She was a member of the Pinamo missing person collective. There's many groups out in Mexico who basically have given up on trusting the government to find their kids. The number of missing in Mexico is a debated topic because the government itself doesn't release those numbers or at least hasn't done a good job about keeping them and or releasing them. Mexico is a country that has industrialized body disposal. In Tijuana, we had the stew maker, the legendary stew maker, which is a guy that basically used caustic acid to get rid of bodies at a massive level. So there's a separate operation for getting rid of bodies and murdering them? At least in Tijuana, we saw that phenomenon and it's obvious that it's going on all over Mexico. Who's having those discussions about mass murder and getting rid of people? I've been reading a lot about World War II recently and there was aggressive innovation on the Nazi side of how to get rid of a large number of people. For the longest time, both the Soviets and the Soviets were more brutal with this. It's literally, it's an engineering problem of how you kill a large number of people and get rid of their bodies. So the Soviets were more into just laying people down into the grave, face down and then shooting them in the back of the head and then doing that on mass scale. So you just pile people on and then there was obviously innovation with the Holocaust in terms of gassing people and all that kind of stuff. I'm not sure exactly where these tradecraft skills are coming from specifically. You hear discussions of Israelis training some of the cartel groups back in the late 90s, specifically the Ariana Fuse cartel. There's a lot of stories about that. A security specialist coming down and showing them things like how to make caustic soda, how to put rocks inside of bodies and then chicken wire them around and throw them into the ocean or rivers so that their bodies don't float. When you put rocks inside of body to make sure the body doesn't float. So you open up the intestinal tract, put rocks inside, you cut where tattoos are, you take off hands and faces and throw them somewhere else and you wrap them in chicken wire. So make it not identifiable. Yeah, and throw them into a body of water. And this is a horrible thing, but it's actually just a craft. It's a tradecraft. It's a tradecraft and there's a link to the U.S. as far as that tradecraft. You have to remember that the United States had a thing called School of the Americas and the CIA and they showed things and a lot of that stuff is out there in the hands of people that are of that generation. So there's a manual. There's a manual somewhere. Like with chapters and it's like how to get rid of the body. There's manuals out there.

Under time constraints or what are how identifiable can the body be afterwards?

What are geographical constraints? All that kind of stuff.

I think that was common back in the early 2000s and maybe the late 90s when some of these things were going on. But they've lost even that as far as respect for the government or bodies being found. Right now what you usually see is just bodies being burnt to a crisp and buried in a field somewhere. That's usually what you'll see. Some of the groups like this woman, this woman belonged to basically taking upon themselves to go out to find clandestine graves in the outskirts of the towns that they're living, probing the ground with these metal probes and seeing what they encounter in the bottom of these clandestine graves. Stinks or not, if they find IDs or clothing, they gather that and they basically presented to the investigative authorities in the towns or the states they live in, which basically are doing their jobs. Over 90% of all murders in Mexico were never solved. So they've even stopped trying to get rid of bodies in that way. How does a cartel take power? How does it gain control of this local area that you mentioned and then grow, take control of a region? And how does it do so in this dynamic relationship between politicians and the military and the police force? It's a thing that happens over time. There has always been a big effort, even when I was in to buy or own certain members of the police force, even when going through training. Some people get pulled out during training because they were found out to have some sort of parent or sibling that was a cartel member or their FBI background check came back negative when they were already in the training program. So I think part of it is, first off, they take advantage of the fact that Mexico is a young country. It's a country of young people. We have a big group of young people that have little to no opportunities to come up. When I went to take that career path, a lot of my friends took the other option. They went to work for some of these criminal groups. So they have this going for them. They basically have a lot of bodies to hire cheaply. And leverage in terms of forcing those bodies to do whatever is needed because the alternative for those people is nothing. There's no options. So you have a kid somewhere who is working on a field or you have a kid like me that was out of the job, out of school. And the only options for me was this ad in the newspaper, which seemed like a long shot or going with some of my friends that had cars now and were hanging out all night at these bars. And some of them had just Draco AK-47 pistols in their cars and it would look cool. So there is a trajectory. There's many trajectories possibly in your life where you could have been still operating in a criminal organization in Mexico. Yeah. I mean, there's not a lot of options. Do you think you'd be good at it? I don't know. I mean, I'm pretty good at what I do now, which is teaching people how to detect it and kind of fight against it. So I think...

I have a sense that the skills transfer pretty well. That's also the dark side of this whole thing. A lot of the people that I used to work with, I know things and I have some training and I had some specialized training and I currently do, I've done presentations for the Secret Service and the FBI and you name it, I've gone there and shown them what I do. A lot of the people that I used to work with who are out of the job are in the wind and some of these people are way more trained than I am. It's interesting what the reason why I get looked for and they ask me questions is because I actually have the experience that my university was the most dangerous city on the planet. And when people ask me about some of that stuff, I could speak from experience as far as encountering some of that directly. Some of the people that I used to work with who were way better at it than I am are in the wind. Interesting thing in Mexico,

if you are of a police organization and you get fired or you quit, you are ineligible to join another police organization. That discounts you. So for somebody like me who is a professional operations group member or a police officer in Mexico of that region, there's no options for me outside of that. So they themselves basically have created this inescapable box for some of these people that go into that line of work and where do they go after? I've heard offers of \$12,000 to join some of the organizations out there plus they get benefits not like the government. I'm still waiting for my liquidation check. This has been out of service for like six, seven years. I'm still waiting for my check. So some of these people, it's obvious that the opportunities are presented to them out there are stronger. And again, the youth is what gets eaten by this war. And that's one of the main things that they start with, just the youth. We had a phenomenon in Tijuana. Late 90s, early 2000s, it's called the narco juniors. Narco juniors are basically board middle class or upper class families had kids that were bored and they just joined some of these cartel groups. These cartel groups saw in them opportunities to get into regular industry to go through the family businesses to kind of establish themselves, use some of those businesses to store for storage or figure out how to use some of their transportation businesses for drug mulling. So this is how they start in getting into different areas that they regularly couldn't. And that's how it starts. You owe somebody, they get into paid protection type schemes which are also common all over Mexico. And sooner or later, they start owning businesses and they regulate some of their income. So they become part of the part of the part of the local economy in a big way. I had this experience in Sinaloa where we were driving down this shitty street and all of a sudden it became a cool, nice, curvy highway type thing. And I looked around there, it's like, this is a nice road. And the guy was with me, he said, yeah, the cartels built it. You go to some of these towns and the cartels are the government there. They build the hospitals, they build the churches, they build the schools. COVID happens, they're enforcing the mask mandates.

They're out enforcing the mask mandates, the stay at home policies. They're the ones delivering supplies to the townspeople in bags, courtesy of so-and-so cartel. So they become the Robinhood characters of their environments. If they're smart, these groups basically turn into that Robinhood, stealing from the rich and giving to the poor, or at least that's the projection that they give. What's the role of violence in this operation? I'm extreme. It used to be that there were rules, as you say, like, don't go after kids, don't go after women, but all those things are gone now. They had been gone for decades, I think. The escalation of violence, you kill one of mine, I'll kill four of yours, you kill four of mine, I'll go after your family because you're hiding. There's stories of high-level cartel people getting their sons and daughters murdered, mutilated, and revenge killings. So I think it's at a point where it spiraled out of semblance of a rule set as far as who can get exposed to some of this violence. Those highly-produced ISIS videos where they show torture and executions, according to some of the sources that I've talked to here in the United States that were looking at that phenomenon, they said that it seems to be that that was influenced by some of the Narco blog videos that were coming out of Mexico in the early 2000s. Basically, some of these groups were the first ones that got wind of the fact that you can export terror over the horror that an execution has through social media. Way back when Facebook was a bit more of a wildland area, you could see these in news feeds, videos of executions, tortures, and stuff like that coming out of Mexico.

On Facebook?

Way back when. This was a different time.

For people who criticize social media and the moderation, it's a tough job because of the brutal world out there.

I mean, I remember seeing some of these ISIS videos on Facebook way back when, and they cracked down on all that. But one that's kind of clear, and I'm not going to say where to find it, but people out there might have seen it because some of these videos get shared through WhatsApp groups and chat groups out there. One of the ones that caught my attention

way back when was a guy getting two guys getting executed by chainsaw. People can imagine what that would be like, but-

This is produced on purpose, like it's videotaped on purpose.

It's a cartel group caught two rival cartel members, and a way to send a message to those that the rival cartel is to basically execute these people in front of a camera.

I mean, you can't get to your rivals, but you can make them see what they're doing, or at least make their people look at what happens if you made their territory.

It's just an escalation of brutality and the violence as well, and at least a terror, and a mass communication of terror.

Yeah, I mean, you have videos of some of these people engaging in cannibalism in front of a video to see how brutal they are, or people taking out somebody's heart while they're alive and filming it. You used to be social media as a whole. You would see some of these videos. They would get put down in a few days, but now there's telegram groups. There's live leaks. There's a bunch of other sites out there that kind of disperse some of these videos, and it's basically a bulletin board for them as far as, hey, you got into my territory.

Well, this is what's going to happen to you.

Is there a game theoretic way to remove this kind of brutality, to de-escalate the brutality? Because it seems like if a cartel takes power that exceeds the power of politicians in a locality, there's a strong incentive to reduce the brutality, to crack down on this kind of chainsaw executions. There was a recent leak of government files called the Huacamaya leaks.

It's our version of WikiLeaks, I guess, and it was mostly documents coming out of the Mexican military. I haven't seen it talked about a lot here in the state side, but it's a pretty big thing down in Mexico. In some of those documents, it reveals how powerless the government is, I mean, as far as the military goes. That's another player in Mexico, the military.

The military has been out in force in the streets basically doing a policing role since Felipe Calderón was the administration. He basically militarized the drug war. Felipe Calderón was up to the right of the political spectrum, and his main rival, who was way to the left, is now in power. One of the campaign promises he had was to demilitarize the drug war, to send the military back to its barracks and all that, and he's basically continuing on. They just passed some legislation that basically keeps the military on the streets for a few more years. I think some of these documents that were leaked are very telling as far as why that is. The military now has a vast amount of power when it comes to security industry. I mean, they're in charge of building airports and train lines in Mexico now. Their documents themselves show how certain regions in Mexico who have a specific military presence work for one side or favor one side of the cartel.

So they're corrupted too. So there's these military forces that are in part corrupted. Yes. And the cartel who operates with violence somehow finding a balance between each other. It just feels like throughout human history, there's dictators or leaders that come into situations like this and really crack down on the violence. It seems like that's not happening. It seems like there's a kind of market of violence happening here. There's a systemic amnesia that happens every presidency in Mexico. So the president comes in, he has five to six years to do whatever he needs to do, and he does everything. And as soon as he's gone, everything he did, even what was working, gets chopped off. Police organizations get defunct or the names get changed. Uniforms change. So there's a lot of turnover everywhere? Every five years, federally, there's a turnover and things change. What about the cartels? Do they persist? The leadership persists? I mean, the Sinaloa cartel has had a figurehead behind it since the 80s, the same one. I mean, it's a federation of smaller cartels that are all kind of linked up, but pretty much historically, he was considered the head of the Sinaloa cartel. El Maya Sambada has been there since the 80s. So in a way, yeah, he's persisting. He's surviving all of these presidencies. Again, these documents that were leaked are a clear sign of what strengths and weaknesses there are as far as the government's main weapon against some of these criminal groups, which is the military. And if people doubt this, they can look it up now online because all these documents are out there. But just a clear thing, the Mexican navy or the marina doesn't work with the Mexican army. They don't speak to each other. So that should tell you everything you need to know as far as trust. That could be just bureaucratic dysfunction. They don't trust each other. Are they both struggling with the problem of corruption? Some of these documents that are already out there talk about the ports in Mexico, which are probably the main conduit of precursors of methamphetamines and precursors of things like fentanyl into the country. They're operated and guarded by the marina. So these things are happening under their watch. And then you get talks about the army in certain places, basically working counter-cartel operations to specifically one side, not another, as far as the rival groups out there. And we have a long history of some of these military groups going rogue, losetas, or prime example of this, these special forces units that basically turned around and went to work as bodyguards for the Gulf cartel. And then decided to, but what they basically did was an internship with a cartel. They went out there, did bodyguarding for the Gulf cartel, and then realized they can do a better job than they were doing. So they started their own, sparking off one of the, again, one of the bloodiest kind of like internal cartel wars in Mexico's history. Who was El Chapo? El Chapo was a part of the leadership or at least a faction of the leadership in the cartel. It's a federation of different small organizations. Well, I'd say small organizations, basically families or organizations that conform this larger group, which is the Sinaloa cartel that is based out of Sinaloa. Basically, they are people that have family and power nucleuses there in Sinaloa. I mean, who was he? I think he was a high-level operator for the Sinaloa cartel. He had his own drug routes, his own networks, his family, nucleus down there is still in control of some of those operations. So his arrest really didn't change anything. But he wasn't the mastermind, number one leader that I think the media and the government kind of portrayed him as. Who was the mastermind?



If you go down there and you read what most of the brave journalists in Mexico that we have, say another aspect of this war is that a lot of journalists get killed. I think Mexico has some of the top numbers in the world. And this is not no secret to anybody. El Maio Sambada is the name of the historical figurehead of this cartel, or at least somebody who people theorize or suspect to be the main guy or the main person that is in charge of some of this criminal group has worked. Is he still alive? That's the going rumor that he's still very much alive. And the interesting thing about him is that he learned his craft in Los Angeles. So people thinking that Sinaloa cartel isn't a Mexican thing. It's actually, he apparently learned a lot of his craft from people in the United States. And that's the craft of leadership, the craft of business, the craft, which aspect of the craft? The craft of getting a product from Colombia, putting it through Mexico. And the logistics. The logistics part of it.

And he somehow is operating in the shadows. So he's not a known entity. I don't have a clear number of this, but he was interviewed by a magazine called Proceso in Mexico. And some pictures were taken of him. This was over 10 years ago, probably. And that's the last time anybody's ever seen a picture of him. What's it like to be a journalist in that? So can a journalist have a conversation with him and live?

Nonetheless, he asks to have that conversation. I think he reached out to this journalist to talk about it. There's a media wing to the work that we do, a sister page called Demolair. And it's run by some pretty good people. And the way we met is that I was basically training them how to work in hostile environments. And they were like, Oh, we're going to go report on cartel activity in Mexico. And I was like, you know, that is a year and a half ago, a reporter went to the president's daily briefing press conference that he has, they call them la mayaneras. President and the president Manuel López Obrador and told him to his face, like, I have threats on my life. They're trying to kill me. And it happened. There's been a slew of assassinations and murders of members of the press all over Mexico. It's not an easy job. Either they say too much, or they say things that favor one side or the other, which is another aspect of it that is interesting. I don't consider myself a reporter. I don't report on the news in Mexico. I have friends that do that very well. I commentate on some of it only. But you see a lot of these cartel reporters go down there, talk to a specific side and basically speak one side of the story. And that is not something that the other side wants. If you go down there and speak to one side, you're saying what they want people to know are here. So in a way, you're kind of spreading some of their cartel propaganda in a way. And that's how some people get shot.

Do you think it's possible to go in there and have a conversation with a cartel leader or somebody like me, for somebody like Sean Penn?

This is what I will say. After that whole Sean Penn thing, I think a lot of people would reconsider a meeting with anybody of any level that has any variety here in the United States. They wouldn't trust anybody to get that close. There are people out there that will talk to reporters, people that are working on a laboratory somewhere in the hillside, somewhere down south in the Sierra, low-level people that get authorization to speak to reporters and stuff like that. But they don't say anything that isn't being taught or shown in various different ways or outlets out there for them. I mean, some of these guys have Instagram accounts. Some of these guys have a blog about it.

But not the leaders.

Tiktok, no, not the leaders. I think after what happened to Chapa Guzman, I think that opportunity, that window was closed for some of the leadership down there. I think I disagree. I think they're just more sensitive, realizing that there has to be a deep trust. It's not just anybody and not any high profile. I've gotten a chance to speak to some very high profile leaders that don't speak to journalists and they understand the value of trust. If they have something to say, which I don't think they do, I don't think they, unless at some point in the future, which is something I suspect might be coming, that there is some sort of armed intervention and or external attack on some of these criminal groups that really puts the pressure on them. You don't think there's a human aspect to this of a human being wanting their story to be known versus this is different than the propaganda machine of, I have something to say, I have some message to put out there to play the game of politics and power and money and all that kind of stuff. Isn't there also a human being underneath all that armor that for the sake of perhaps ego, legacy wants to be understood? I think in a way, they already do that. There's corridos, which are basically Mexican folk songs that get sung about some of them. In a way, some of these singers are reporting on some of their lives and it's a great honor to have a corrido made about you. Somebody made a corrido about me based on my interviews. I didn't pay for it, so it's a real one. It feels cool. So creating a myth, the legend of the man. I think it's about a way you can find somebody like that is somebody that wants to get their story specifically clear and straight coming from that culture and getting to work for the government down there and then not working for the government down there and being on the outside, being critical of not only the government that is in place now, but also the government that actually work with. I can tell you that there's villains all over the place down there. Everybody's a villain at all levels in some way, shape, or form. And some of these people, I think in a way, including El Chapo, I think that some of that meeting was about film rights and stories and being able to get his story out there, I think. I'm not too sure because I wasn't there, but I suspect that some of that was going on. If you can bring an honest voice down there, they can trust to put that out there. I mean, I think you could try. I'm interested in that kind of thing because ultimately in some of those places, inside a cartel at the very top is when you can really look at the raw aspects of human nature in a way you can't necessarily elsewhere. There's a youth coming into power down there. And when I say a youth, I mean, some of the old guard is going out and some of the new guard is coming in. An example of this is El Chapo Guzman's sons who are now in their own right, kind of gaining legendary status. There was an attempted arrest on his son that led to the famous Kulia Canazo incident, which we are now learning more about because some of the Guacamaya leaks are kind of speaking more about what happened that day. Basically, a federal operation, they say to arrest El Chapo Guzman's son, turn into a siege to try and get him free. They called in the Calvary. Basically, the whole of the Sinaloa cartel showed up to try and rescue him. Interesting thing about that is in reading some of the documents and also just seeing some of the videos and stuff like that came out of that incident. The cartels were the ones evacuating the citizenship from the area. They were the ones going restaurant to restaurant, saying, hey, if you want to exit the city, go through here. Take your families, get down, but you have to leave because the army's coming here. They're going to fight us.

So there's like a deep morality to all of that. Underneath the violence, there's a humanity. I mean, it's their home. It is their home. And they were fighting for their home and they were fighting for leadership from their home. There is a morality. There is a humanity there. And again, if people want to paint them all with the villainy aspects, you know, that's, I mean, everybody's a villain in somebody else's story, you know, if you kind of look at it that way.

People should check out your Patreon, should check out your field notes. You're a really good writer. You're Instagram too. You write about, you have a quote in your field notes about villains. Quote, I once worked for a villain, a savior to some and a biblical demon of all to others. A true product of his environment. He was the best and the worst of us. We're all potential villains in someone else's story. He would say to us as you, as we would head out into the unknowns that the night had waiting for us. It was during one of these nights that I looked around me and saw horns and pitchforks among my people and realized what he meant. We were no knights of their own table. Whatever we were, we were needed. In the end, I guess that justified most of what was about to happen. Do you think El Chapo, do you think people like him are good or evil? I think there's no one without the other. I think there's a, there's a cost to, there's a cost to their goodness that they do, you know, the roads they build, the hospitals, the career paths that they pay for. There's, there, there are doctors in Mexico that their careers were paid for by some of these groups. And they do a lot of amazing good for the community.

I remember there was a, a surgeon reconstructing cleft palates in one of my travels that I did out there. I had, I spent some time actually going out there after I got out of the job to train people and the, the type of stuff that I show people. And they, they told me like, I'm told them like, you're doing God's work. The stuff, the stuff is like legit. This is God's work, you know, building smiles for people. I said, yeah. And then can I talk to you? Yeah. He said, you know, my career path was paid for by cartel, a group of cartel members. They paid for my career path because they wanted somebody on hand that could fix their teeth. Do you think some aspect of that is just sort of manipulative control or is some of it also just again, a care for the population for fellow human beings that are one of your own? I think both, you know, I think there's, again, it's hard to, it's hard to just make them saints or devils, you know, the, the, some of the good they do in some of their communities and don't ask anything for in return, you know. And even if they don't ask it for anything in return, where the military shows up, they are immediately met with rocks and roadblocks and everybody's main weapon down there, since most Mexicans can't buy or own firearms. The main weapon down there is silence and their eyes to report to the people that they consider the good guys in their environment, right? So that's a hard question, you know. I think, I think there's a bit of both and both the government and the criminal groups that are operating down there.

Silence is their main weapon. So El Chapo is currently in prison.

Is he worth talking to? I'd say yes. Is there things that to you are interesting about him that are still not understood? Is he a window into something that you don't understand about that world still or are curious about in that world? I think he's a window into the family dynamics of that world. When I say family dynamics, Mexico has a big thing about compadres, you know, hermanos. We have people that we call family that we're not necessarily a family. He is somebody that witnessed the, the, the construction of what is now

the Sinaloa Cartel. Like he was in it way back when he started off as a, as a farmer and then went into trafficking. He's from a town called Bandira Watta, which is basically, you know, that's the, the Wakanda of cartels. Basically, that's where a lot of that originates.

The, the things that he saw as far as how some of these things got built, I think would be an interesting topic of conversation with somebody like him.

So that story is a story of evolving family dynamics. So part of the story of the cartel is individual humans. Marrying other families, uh, getting, uh, getting named by the, you know, basically godfathers to other people's kids, um, forming family and blood ties and influence ties to people not only in Mexico, but in the United States. It's seeing how that dynamic and family dynamic is still there. You know, so he's gone. He's in prison, but he is, he's probably on his way to be our next, uh, clandestine saint. You go to the, uh, the chapel of Malberde.

Malberde is basically a Mexican Robin Hoods, the folk saint down there who, uh, is a saint of traffickers and at his shrine, you have a small little chapel shrine right next to it. So he's on his way to St. Hood in Mexico, you know, not, not recognized by the Catholic church, but that doesn't matter in Mexico anymore. Speaking to somebody like him, who you can consider him somebody that lost, you know, he's arrested, but his family's okay. His, uh, his legacy is out there. He's going to be named. He's probably going to be the next folk saint when he passes away. Do you think he feels like the new wave of what the cartel has become has betrayed him and left him behind or, um, because it seems like the way the cartel operated has changed over the decades. Yeah. Well, number one, their power and influence is bigger. You know, uh, they, there are seeing a lower cartel operations in Columbia straight, straight to the, like in the source of it. And, uh, then there are clear, uh, they have a clear presence in, in places like Chicago, Los Angeles, uh, they're in the United States. The whole thought process that a lot of Americans have like, oh, we don't want that, that, uh, trouble over here. We don't want them to get here or like build the wall and all this. So they're deeply integrated into legitimate businesses. I mean, they've been having kids and families up here since for a long time. Some of these people have passive American passports that works not only directly for them, but have blood ties down there. You know, there's been dragnets and arrests of some of these, uh, criminal organizations, uh, states, uh, new generation cartel had one, two, three years ago where the guess operation on the condo, I think it was called, there was that over 80 of their operatives. And this is a new cartel that is very militaristic and growing in Mexico. And they had over 80 arrests in the United States, you know, that, uh, of members of them operating here. And so you could be a legitimate operator inside the United States. That's hard to detect. It makes you wonder how many in, uh, the U S government, the politicians here is that it's the, the role of the United States in the drug war financially in terms of power is very big. Yeah. Surely there's politicians that have a finger into this. Immigration is part of it, uh, illegal immigration as part of it. And the influence of that has as a, as a bargaining chip and a political chip. We saw this with the first caravan kind of coming up and how it was politicized. The money fast and furious and guns being basically let walk down into Mexico. People that don't know, basically the ATF had this operation where they were looking at straw purchasers of firearms, basically people buying up a specific type of firearms that were on a shopping list that the cartels wanted to buy, including, uh, you know, 50 cows, uh, FN five, seven pistols, which are small pistols with a high velocity round that will go through a bullet proof vest, um, AR 15s of all kinds, uh, that could quickly be modified into full auto down in Mexico

with a, with a drilling a few holes and making a few things, uh, to them. So these people were buying all these, the ATF was watching them and allowing them to walk those firearms into Mexico under the guise of trying to track them somehow, which doesn't make a lot of sense for most people that kind of look at that operation. The only people found the, the only reason people found out about it was because of the murder of a few federal agents of the US federal agents that were killed with those guns. One of my friends was shot with one of those pistols outside of his house and they shot him and they shot her, his wife. Uh, both of them were killed. Daughter was in the back seat, lost, uh, part of her arm. When that happened, the guns were unique. They were like, wow, we didn't never let the mata policia is what they call them. They're the cop killers. I haven't seen those before. So they were unique and interesting. And later on in life, I was watching CNN and seeing the hearings going on. I was like, oh, that's where they came from. Two federal agents changed a lot and it was politicized. There was a whole scandal up here, but in Mexico, how many people died with those firearms, you know, being let down, being let go down there. And also what type of sentiment do you think the local populace has of the United States after all those guns were basically handed over to some of these groups? You know, gun trafficking is another giant part of the equation and part of the problem down there as far as, uh, as far as the amount of munitions, uh, weapons. And now we were also getting, uh, tradecraft material from conflict zones outside of Mexico. So weaponized drones. The first time we saw, uh, some of those weaponized drones was, uh, in Syria. And, uh, like, like a few weeks later, you know, grenades were being dropped on the roofs of some, uh, public officials, uh, building. The cartels are using drones? Yeah, that's been going on for a while. There's a place in Michoacán and has some pretty interesting videos. And the interesting part of it is because the federal police down there are actually working hand in hand with a United Carteles Unidos group, which is basically the local cartels, to try and fight off the new generation cartel moving into Michoacán. So even the federal forces are fighting with the cartels to try and keep this larger cartel out. And there's videos of these, uh, civilian drones basically dropping explosives. Uh, they found some explosive testing ranges out there that are basically replicating stuff that you would see the IRA use during the con, during the troubles out there from homemade mortars, um, you know, IEDs have been used in Mexico that not that much, but they're, they're making like a presence again. You know, we don't have a lot of ordnance around like Iraq, but we do have a big mining industry down there. So mining, mining explosives of all kinds are pretty easy to get. So you start seeing that. And also, I mean, there's some exotic weaponry coming in from the south now and from the ocean that some of it is probably, uh, U.S. military equipment sold to various South American governments that are now not as stable as they were. And they're kind of making their way into black markets. So a lot of those, uh, 50 cal and vehicle mounted technical type machine guns and some of the RPGs and, uh, man pads or remote control guided missiles that you, that have been found in cartel hands are probably making their way up from down south to get these like multimillion dollar systems, like the high mar system in the, in the Ukraine. You get like super sophisticated advanced technology or not. So like this is like military grade. I'm not sure what the application would be exactly in Mexico. Some of the sophisticated stuff I see in our man pads, which is basically remote guided missiles. I've seen some of those found down there. What is the application exactly? A display of power? There are no fly zones over parts of Mexico.



For this reason, the new generation cartel took down a helicopter.

There's been incidents of military helicopters falling from the sky and it they said that it was mechanical issues. But again, I'm not, I'm not going to do conspiracy theories out there, but there's, there's a lot of videos on TikTok of, uh, Cina Laura cartel forces at parties, you know, carrying around, uh, rocket launchers on their backs and, you know, so.

So there's an increased probability of mechanical failures over those areas when you're flying a helicopter. Yeah, there's no fly zones over some parts of Mexico. Okay. And, uh, another thing you're seeing now is night vision, uh, night vision equipment, uh, that is clearly military grade from the US that was probably abandoned in some more field out there. Uh, maybe Afghanistan or somewhere like that. And it's, uh, it's being found in safe houses and in the hands of cartel forces. You want to talk about a scary opponent, somebody wearing night vision with a suppressed firearm, those types of capabilities are now out there. Also, there's this, uh, tendency to think, uh, in every now and then you'll see these cartel videos with these guys carrying around these 50 cowl and they should stand there like, you know, the boasting about the rifles and everybody laughed at them because the 50 cowl or anything like that, you know, without an optic on it, you know, is like, you're going to shoot, you're praying, shoot basically, see if you can hit anything with it. Uh, but now there's a, a few of my sources have seen, you know, sophisticated, uh, laser guided, uh, range finders and, and sighting systems on some of these that are being found out there.

How much damage can 50 cowl, what was the application?

They started getting them specifically with the proliferation of armored vehicles in Mexico. Mexico has a giant industry in armored vehicles as far as.

So there's a race in terms of, uh, armoring, like protecting, especially high value targets and then weapons that can deal with those armored protected high value targets.

There was, uh, an attempted assassination of a state prosecutor somewhere in, I think, central Mexico, I forget exactly where, but she was, uh, riding around a up armored, uh, jeep. Cherokee, I think it was, and their main means of, of, uh, firepower was 50 cowl and that car was left in pieces. He survived in it. So I think the armored vehicle company that sold her that vehicle has it in the display room. Uh, then before my time, probably two, three years before I was actually active, they tried to kill the head of public security and, and, and the state of Baja. And with him, it was a grenade launcher, 40 millimeter grenade launcher. It, uh, it skipped off the V of the armored vehicle and landed in the car behind and made the back explode. Uh, one of the guys that I used to work with was actually in that car. He survived it. Um, but you started to see how they're, you know, using our vehicles now, let's get 50 caliber now to try and defeat that armor. Uh, so that, yeah, there's, there's, there's always this, uh, this race of technology basically down there, armored vehicles, you know, how did you take on an armored vehicle? Well, there's a few ways, 50 cowl, you know, if you can mount them in a right

way and shoot at a car like that, or a bunch of kids with balloons and, uh, acrylic paint on the front windshield and blind the vehicle. So it doesn't, so they can't drive it anymore. There's another way. Um, a tow line across a road painted like the painted, painted black, so you can't see it and cut the thing in half. Again, I'm not saying any secrets. These are things that people have seen out there. Uh, if you shoot at the radiator, you know, uh, some of these radiators are not, uh, even the more sophisticated, uh, vehicles out there don't

have a sufficient, uh, armoring around the radiator or the battery housing of some of these vehicles. There was a case of a guy, I think his nickname was at Pella Lacas or something like that, I wouldn't see in a low level cartel guy. He had an armored vehicle. He was, you know, riding around and he got ambushed. He shot at his car. He was like, ah, I have armor. You can't shoot me. And somebody went up to his car and just put the barrel right in the locking mechanism and that got him, you know. So it's an interesting place as far as people getting certain types of guns. Armor is prolific down there. I mean, everybody down there, the cartel, the cartel, you'll see them wearing plate armor. So that's an issue. It's not like you can shoot somebody square in the chest and it'll go down. Are they afraid to kill Americans? So I know I was traveling in Ukraine on the front. So like a lot of the journalists would travel in like armored vehicles. And at first I was like, it seems like this would attract attention. Yeah. Like it seems like they would want to hit those targets. But then, then I realized over time, as I learned, there's a fear of killing Americans. There could be a drastic escalation of conflict. It's not worth it. It's kicking a beehive. Yeah. Yeah. There's a tendency to shy away or stay away from that. You know, I mean, they don't want the heat or the attention. Outside of that, everyone's game. Everyone's game. But also there's been many cases of Americans being killed down there. I mean, we saw the Mormon massacre happen down there and all of them were American, Mexican. They had both nationalities and the blonde kids, you know, white being a massacre in the middle of a desert. And the cars basically catching fire. This happened. And, you know, the Americans sent the FBI down there to kind of review some of what happened down there. And I think that was when Trump started talking about kind of reviving this whole notion of cartels being labeled as a terrorist organization. Probably more of a political pressure point he was using to try and get Mexico to reinforce its southern border, which it hasn't. But there's escalation. You know, oh, this already happened and nothing happened. So we can probably get away with it, you know. And again, there's a newer generation moving forward now of people coming into power. More brutal, more technically savvy. Well, they have the experience of their parents and the people behind them and what they've done and when gone away with. And now, yeah, more savvy about information warfare. Their main recruiting tool is TikTok. You go to TikTok and you'll see a bunch of these kids at an archipelago dancing around. And some of these are videos by cartel members filming other cartel members in cartel control territory. And that's a window into that life for who's on TikTok now, kids. And the enticing aspect of that is the money, the fun, the high roller life. And the possibility of making it to a level, you know. Yeah. A fame of respect, power, money. Here in the US, somebody might, you know, I want to mansion. And I would have like that, that's their mindset. I want to live, you know, like that rapper down there. I mean, if you can buy a house for your mom, you know, or pay off some debts that you might have or a car, that's enough to kill for. Yeah. So you also, one of the many things you did is you did security, try to protect in this war, try to protect people, high value people. How do you do you and others, how is it possible to protect a high value target like a celebrity or an important politician in the situation? So I was tasked to protect the governor of Baja and his family. I was basically replacing a whole contingency of people that were already there that turned out to be corrupted. That wasn't

my field. I was operational. I was working with other people doing the counter narcotics stuff. And the director of the institution that I was in basically called me and said, you're going to go and replace this with these people. And I, what happened to them? So you were known as a person that could be kind of trusted. I was tasked for that. So I think they considered that. And I specifically worked for a governor named Jose Guadalupe Osuna Mian, who was probably one of the best governors we have had in the state. And people want to see if I'm trustworthy or not. They can ask him directly. And I still speak to some of the members of his family. And we're still, you know, friends in that way. It's protecting people like technically a difficult problem to solve. For my experience in that time and in place, he was basically spearheading, you know, counter the drug war in Baja when he was in power. So he had threats from all over, not only him, but his family. First thing I realized working that job in Mexico is that we had, we had people coming in to do specialized training of that regard, Israelis, you know, teaching us how they would do things in Israel. That didn't make a lot of sense for us in Mexico, you know, we had people that had some secret service experience kind of shows how showing us how they would do like celebrity, the bodyguarding or bodyguarding somebody maybe in California of that nature didn't make sense for us. Then we got to experience some cross training with NSW Naval Special Warfare people who were coming off protection details in Afghanistan and Iraq. Is there some useful crossover there? We were struggling with the acceptance that we were basically doing protection details in a war zone. So the approach that had to be taken in Mexico was similar to the approach he would take in Afghanistan during a war. Some of the overt militaristic type approaches to security that we had to adopt, you know, from, we didn't move him in a single armored vehicle. We had two of them that looked exactly alike. So when we would move around, we would switch one car through the other every now and then we would arrive to an event. They would open the door and it would be one of us and they were like, hey, where's the governor? He's in the back one. So they would move to that. So we had to do stuff like that. And again, this is a young me who didn't have any specialized training. I was on YouTube learning some of these things, going online, learning about armored vehicles, learning about architectural armor. I think you just described a large percentage of the Ukrainian military, how they operate, which is on YouTube, trying to figure out how to use some of this technique. And that's actually incredibly effective. You know, I do quite a lot of stuff where I'm totally not an expert, totally uneducated and so on. It's kind of surprising how quickly you can get caught up as we're talking offline. If you take a course, if you talk to an expert, if you learn from an expert, you can like catch up really quickly. For me, it was all of a sudden I have this director calling me in and I'm wearing vans, you know, and jeans, you know, t-shirt. And all of a sudden I had 80 some people that I had to move around. And I was in charge of securing planes. And what do I know about that? Yeah, airport hangers, armored vehicle maintenance and purchasing and figuring out how to set up a counter assault group for a protection detail. And I was like, where I'm going to learn all this? Were you able to quickly figure some of these things out? On the fly, basically, you know, as I was going, I remember having this experience being in our security office on my laptop, figuring out how to set up a counter surveillance side to our protection detail, basically how to have people looking for people that might be looking for us, you know, type thing. And then going to San Diego to Coronado and training with some people from former SEAL guys and NCIS people who did that job in war

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and seeing them critique some of the solutions that we came up with on the fly and being like, oh, we never saw that before. Oh, yeah, this is we're doing it down there. So getting that compliment and also getting their, you know, feedback like we probably do this or do that. And it was a learning process on the fly that was pretty, I mean, seat of your pants level. Is it possible for the family and for the high value person to have a sense of normalcy? To have a normal life? I mean, I tried. I was already starting off on the wrong foot, basically, because trust had been violated by the people that I was replacing. So I had to gain that back. Then young kids in that family that wanted to have a, you know, go out and stuff like that in the most violent city on the planet. So I had to do my homework and figure out places where they were safe to go to and make friends with certain club owners and figure out ways to put security in some of these places. And having to create this bubble of normalcy around some of these people was pretty difficult. And there's no way that that is a normal for anybody. And, you know, God bless them. I know it didn't, I know it wasn't easy and I know they've affected their lives and they lost on a big part of their youth. Being under that security supervision and bubble does, probably does a lot for somebody specifically growing up like that, you know, you lose opportunities of things that we take of granted, you know, just going out, just not telling anybody and going to the store, you know, because you want to get some snacks or something like that. That's not available to some of these people. I have to be honest, when I was in Ukraine, that was a really big benefit. You'd escape? No, I couldn't hang out. I couldn't eat when I'm stressed. I would fast and not eat much. So I get lost weight. So it's great. It's great for the diet. That's a good idea to be basically under protection with custody. That's a good idea for a new diet. And just life. It allowed me to focus, get a lot of reading done, focus on the important things in life. I mean, I joke, of course, but there's some complexity to this in terms of normalcy of the family, but also just how to operate, like have a mental clarity and a lack of fear. Just basically be good at your job, whatever that job is, as a politician, as a leader, even as a soldier. Somebody that I like, and I think Elizabeth Lizaola said this to me, or said something like this to a group of us, that there's nothing wrong with being paranoid. It's about educating your paranoia and knowing what to be afraid of. If you're afraid of everything, you're basically overwhelmed. But if you start educating yourself as far as specifically what to prioritize, as far as what to worry about, in a war zone, working, protecting somebody, you're not looking at everybody's faces, you're just looking at their hands because that's what's going to kill you. That's an example of focalizing what you're paranoid and what you're afraid of. So looking at the hands, that's the specific to the particular situation, but also figuring out which situations to avoid and which is okay. I mean, that's ultimately one of the biggest things you could do. Route analysis. You have to get to the airport and you send off two cars to analyze two routes, and then on the fly, you just change trajectory to create randomness, unpredictability, and have that as a security feature. Having a convoy of four vehicles separated into two convoys and show up in different parts to, again, make it hard for people to guess where you're going to be, putting out false information as far as where it's going to be and who's going to be and that type of stuff. It's kind of amazing how many assassination attempts Hitler avoided just by having a pretty strict schedule and being a little bit off in terms of timing, just like showing up 15 minutes late or to a slightly different location. We're going through

training specifically around this type of stuff and operational training, basically showing us how to ambush people. When I started making a group for myself as far as counterambush, this cap teams that they call them up here in the US, basically a group to respond to a high violent ambush. First off, the first rule, if you find yourself in an ambush, it wasn't a successful ambush because if you find yourself in it, you're alive. But if you want to create an amazing counterambush team, you have to make them ambushers. With ambushing, you figure out where all the opportunities of not only successfully doing what you need to do are in your favor, but also to escape with your life. We're not going to be received by virgins in heaven. That's not the type of mentality that we had down there, but we started learning about some of these things and also seeing cartel forces apply some of these ambush tactics to the military or the federal forces. What is an ambush? What are we talking about? That's a surprise attack with an asymmetry of power kind of thing. There's a contingency somewhere moving towards a place that you control and own where you have the advantages, where they can't see you, but you can see them, where they can't predict you, but you can predict where they're going to pass, go through places where they forcibly have to pass, places where they're predictable, places where you can not only predict, but also have a plan for yourself to escape and exit that place. How do you transfer counterambush? You turn into like a perfect ambusher. That's how you train for counterambush. Also always trying to make sure you have more information about other people. You have the element of surprise, all of those things. And Masashi would say, you know, your enemy know his sword, you know, basically that, you know, simplified. There's a lot of enemies around you in Mexico. There's a lot of uncertainty, right? Because it's, well, I guess that's what route analysis is. Yeah, you prepare for the probable. And if the impossible happens, you're halfway out of it, hopefully, you know, and if you find yourself in an ambush, it wasn't a successful one. You, as far as our training and kind of the mindset, my experience with it, you, the adversarial thinking part of it has always been a very powerful one. I think one that a lot of people ignore, kind of like leave to the wayside, specifically in all conflicts out there, there's a tendency for a military force or a conventional force of any kind to be trained in a way where they dehumanize the enemy. And when that happens, you become blind to the enemy's story, it's his capability, his story, his ability. If you treat the other side like an inhuman monster, it's hard to take notes, you know. So there's a part of this is a radical empathy for the quote unquote enemy. At least for me personally, I wasn't, I wasn't one of the guys that would be and grab them, beat the shit out of them and put them in the back of a van, just tie them up and gag them. So you were able to see them as human. I learned that from my mother, you know, she said, nobody's against you there for themselves. Learn this and you will, you will make friends of enemies. She said that when I graduated and I carried that with me throughout my whole career. But isn't there then a pain of killing another human? Always. But there isn't. Again, I apologize to go back to Ukraine. It's my only experience of this kind of harshness. And it is a powerful experience. There's a dehumanization that happens.



I suppose this is common in war. There's something like a video game aspect where people are almost having fun. There's a humor. And I think underneath that, the prerequisite is to see the enemy in the same way you see the enemy when you play Call of Duty. You don't really think, you're thinking of them as NPCs, the bad guys.

The Russians are called orcs in Ukraine. I mean, there's all kinds of other names.

For us, it was mugrosos, you know, malandros mugrosos, like dirty people.

You know, there's always something.

Over time, those are just words. But over time, it gathers a kind of

like a meaning to it. That's more than just the words orcs. They're less than human.

They're dirty. They're too dumb to understand the evil they're doing or whatever the...

It's useful. It's useful. It's part of the program.

But like, that's what I've talked to soldiers. And some of them do have stories of momentarily remembering that there's a human on the other side. I talked to one woman

who was this really badass soldier. And she saw this really brave soldier on the other side

do something that was almost stupid, how brave it was. And then she was trying to shoot him

and she missed. And she said she could sleep the night after thinking, why did she miss?

Why did she miss? And then she thought she missed because he was a hero. And she had this brief realization that there was a hero on the other side, like the other side is heroes.

Yeah. But then that quickly disappeared.

Again, but she had this moment, there's a human being that rises to defend his nation, to defend his people. And he could be heroic on the other side.

There are things that we're trained to depress or conceal or hide and kill in us when you're trained for something like that. Or when you're in conflict zone like that and you hear the narrative constantly being blared out that the other side is an orc or whatever word you want to use. But, you know, we live in a day and age when you can see Americans going off to Japan and shaking hands with some of their former enemies. I mean, some of us have seen that and how things change. I think years from now, a lot of the stuff that we are taking right now is of the utmost importance won't matter anymore.

The question is how many years? That's a question I asked of a lot of people

in that part of the world. And a lot of them currently, they're also self-aware about it.

They're like, I'm not sure I trust my current feelings. But the current feelings are generational.

For decades, I will not just hate the leadership, I will hate all Russian people.

I can't understand that on my side of my life experience because our war has been an internal war amongst our people, our monster houses. Wow, that is the propaganda. There's also a deep grain of truth that there is a oneness to the people of that region. But people will get very offended at that idea because right now it's a very strong nationalist borders. But there is a cultural history that connects people. I mean, in some deep sense, we're all connected. We all come from Western Africa and then all came from fish before then depending on your view of history,

of life on earth. But there is a oneness to us and often you forget that in conflict.

I had an experience working. There was a friend of mine who took the other path

and went to work for some of these criminal groups. I was operational and I was,

we saw a bunch of people in a gas station parked. Back then, the main modus operandi that they had was that they would impersonate or dress up as federal police and that's how they would move

around the city. We saw these suburban in a gas station and some of the guys were carrying our AK-47s and that's not a standard issue firearm. We saw that and I got off on foot and walked by to try and get a better sense of what was going on. I took everything off, wearing jeans and a t-shirt and I got a whistle from one of the guys that was there and my name was called. It was one of the guys that I grew up with, redhead kid, looked like El Canelo. There's redheads in Mexico, by the way. I think it's probably some of the Irish that betrayed the American side during the last Mexico-American war that stayed down there, had a bunch of kids. It's probably from there. Love is stronger than anything else. I think. There's a redhead kid. When I say kid, I mean, he was my age. Now, to my eyes, he's always going to be younger now. He whistled, told my name. I said, hey, got the key code. I'm like, what are you doing here? It's like, gosh, I don't just, going home. I said, look, I'm going to get a taxi. I said, oh, okay. Walk as he walks over. He has a plate carrier with AK round magazines on his chest, AK without a stock on it. Just carrying it in his hand. He comes over and he hugs me. I can feel the magazines on my chest. He goes, remind you, I have a gun on me, tucked. And a neck still is buzzing in my back pocket as people are trying to figure out what's going on. He asked me, small talk shit, like, hey, it's like, what are you doing? Like, what do you work at? And I'm like, oh, I'm just looking for a job. You know, you used to work at a video store. So he's like, God, I haven't seen you in a while. How's so-and-so of your family? Good. How's so-and-so of your family? Good. It's like, yeah, it's like, this is an interesting job you have. He's like, yeah, it's pretty good. They pay us well. You get a car, you know, there's money, and nobody fusses with you. You get respect. It's like, that's awesome, you know. And if you want, you can get you in. You know, if you want that, it's like, oh, I'm too much of a coward for that, I told them. Conversation like any other. Yeah. Between two friends. He hugs me before I go. I accept something to him. I can't remember what. And he says, hey, in my ear, I know what you do for a living. It's not a safe place for you to be. And I walk off. A few moments later, the army showed up. And you could feel the amount of rounds going off from two blocks away. We came back with our guys, and it was over. So he didn't survive? I looked through the bodies and the cars that were left, you know, there was bodies all over the place. People left there. It was a mess. It spent like an hour looking for him. The only way I could recognize him was his hair. I stayed with his body all night. There's a bridge in Tijuana that goes over the river in a place called La Mesa. And that's where the forensic offices were. The body was taken there. And I stayed with his body until it was released. I told his family about because I knew them. That aspect of us versus them or they're the enemy and you're like that. And my mom told me those words. Nobody's against you. They're just for themselves. So don't make the mistake of dehumanizing anybody. And those roles could have been easily reversed. I could have been shot in the face there. That aspect, the conflict brings where the bad guys, good guys, you know, heroes, villains, you know, there's an innocence to that that goes away. Is your mom still with us? No, almost three weeks before I decided to quit. She passed away. Did that have a role to play?

Major one. After I got done on the protection detail with the governor, uh, like everything down there again, the whole cycle, you know, he got his turn. So when he went away, uh, you know, politics change and down there, basically, if you're a can, uh, gubernatorial candidate, you have either a friend, a friend of a friend or a family member be the head bodyguard guy. And the guy that won the elections had his head bodyguard guy already there. So all of us were sent back to whatever we came from. So I went back to work on the streets. Uh, I was, uh, back on the operations group. I was working with the sub director, uh, directly with him, basically back on the ground doing the stuff that I was doing before that job. We were moving away from the successes that had been had by people likely as old and when they were in charge of that whole process to people that I used to work with. Um, some of the only successes in that counter push against cartels in, in, in Mexico, and you can kind of like, it's documented. You can read about it out there. A bunch of people wrote papers on it. Some of the only successes were had by Liza Olan, the place where you had leadership. He not only pacified Tijuana, uh, he also did the same in Juarez. He was sent, uh, to be the police chief in Juarez too. But politics change and, you know, heroes become villains. Um, a lot of people started, uh, calling him a villain because of his, uh, unorthodox approach and human rights violations and all of this type of stuff kind of come through the forefront and people forgot, you know, people forgot what it took to get Tijuana off the most dangerous city lists of the planet. And, uh, people were vilified, uh, people like him, uh, and, uh, the police force that I was a part of started getting compromised. A lot of the things that were put forth to try and keep us honest. There was a program. They had these centers called, uh, C threes. Basically, you would go there every, every year you would get your financials checked. You would get a physical, psychological evaluation. You would get a polygraph exam done on you. All the works. They're trying to see if you were somebody doing something wrong. And all of that was canceled because it violated your human rights. If you get, uh, fired from a job because of a failed polygraph exam, because that was not an actual admissible way of firing somebody. So all of a sudden you had people that were known cartel, compromise people that were fired five, six years ago, showing back up to work, back up to work with their back paid and everything. So this is, so this started happening and it quickly, I quickly realized that it was going to be hard to stay there. Um, I was, uh, driving home from work and I got a call from my brother that, uh, my mom had been going through some health issues that, uh, had turned into psychiatric issues. So we were basically taking turns trying to take care of her, you know, locking the doors so she wouldn't wander off and stuff like that. So not only was I dealing with the job on the street, but I was dealing with that. And also I had a, a two year old and a marriage that was difficult, uh, that had time. So I was trying to figure all these things out and made more difficult by your job. Yeah. It's not a financially secure job, you know, and the pressures that it has and the odd hours and all that made it really hard. And then all of a sudden, um, uh, my brother calls me and tells me that let's go to the hospital and my mom, something happened to my mom. It wasn't my turn to watch her. So I felt pretty shitty about that. I got to the hospital and the doctors, you know, came out and told us that she was gone. It was a massive heart attack. She, she had a pacemaker by then. So she was gone. She was in her sixties. So we kind of expected something, but not, you know, that, that was like hard for me. She was my center. She was going to be the one that I would ask for advice as far

as work, you know, if she leaves or not, the ground was removed Monday. There was nobody, there was, yeah, there's nothing underneath me. I get three days off work. That's what they gave me. And, uh, I'm trying to grieve as I go back to work.

Darkshank crosses my mind as I'm going through that process of trying to figure things out. Like darkshank, like suicide, darkshank. Yeah. So it was very low for you. Very, very hard. Yeah. I wasn't allowed to grieve basically. And I wasn't allowed to grieve for a few years, uh, for different reasons. I went back to work and I went to a lot other people, also you, yourself, were not allowing yourself to grieve. Is it like, um, there was, there was other people with me that didn't allow me to grieve, you know, um, I went to work, got called into the office, and I was basically told that I was going to be reassigned after I just, what I just went through, uh, the reassignment was going to be something that I saw as unacceptable. It was, uh, the people in charge at that point were obviously corrupted. And what I got from their conversation was that they wanted us to work for a specific side. And I knew that that was the time to go. So I asked for a license, basically licenses, uh, unpaid absence for work, basically leave of absence. I think it's what you call it up here, which by law is allowed. And I was denied for no reason. So I'm invested in this job, you know, uh, I have a, I have, uh, uh, I have a good salary, a salary, and I have a category in there. So you, uh, by the level of, uh, time you spend in there, you get a category. So it was a pretty high category, uh, agent. Out of all this training, and again, training that would be useless in the private sector or in the public sector in Mexico, I couldn't change from one corporation to another. I couldn't go to work for another police institution. So I took a deep breath and, uh, I resigned. I went to the office. I said, I need to resign. They said, what? I need to resign. Some of the people in the office that knew me from a long time were like, what's wrong with you? They thought I was having a mental breakdown. I handed it all over the, all the paperwork, uh, took a big trash bag, put all my stuff in there, uh, plate armor, tear gas grenades, uh, gas mask, uh, satellite radio, mp5 magazines, uh, an mp5, uh, submachine gun, Glock, Glock magazines, all of it, helmet. And I put it in the, I handed it over in the armory, uh, and I, I left. I made some phone calls. Um, I was married to, uh, an American and my daughter's American. I never envisioned myself coming to the United States, uh, do that process for myself, you know, because I was invested in that job. I thought I was going to die or retire from that. And, uh, it quickly became like an issue because everybody was wondering why I left the job so abruptly. So there was some threats made, but when I left by people inside the office and I probably, you know, it's anonymous yet. So there's significant pressure not to leave. It's hard to leave this kind of job. Yeah. The system makes it difficult to leave the individuals to the degree they might be corrupted. Really don't want you to leave. There's no support. Yeah. There's no support. There's probably the opposite of support. Yeah. Yeah. Almost like implied or explicit or implicit threats. Yeah. Luckily I had developed some friendships in the United States for some, with some of the people that I used to work with and cross-train with and, uh, some friendships that I developed with people that I would, uh, just talk to and make friends with stateside. One of them was, uh, is a Navy SEAL reservist whose name is Dan Stanchfield and his wife Kelly. They opened the doors of their house to me and my kid and my wife at that time. As I seek to basically look for the American dream, um, I crossed the border with my kid and, uh, nobody knew anything. You know, I hadn't, I didn't tell anybody, just, you know, my wife and, uh, and I was off. Uh, when I came to the States, I already kind of

dabbled in the whole training field and showing some of my experience to people. So I had at least a seed of that out there. People knew me for that. Um, but all of a sudden I was, uh, uh, in the middle of an avocado orchard, uh, in the middle of California and everything's quiet and there's no more radios going off all of the night. There's no more three cell phones on the counter. There's no guns. There's no rifles. There's no, um, 80 people calling to, to calling to see what's going on. There's nothing. It's just quiet and it's during the time when, uh, Trump got elected. So the immigration process that usually would take at, I had most things going for

me and my immigration process that would take at the most of the year took two years. So it was, it was not a, it's not an easy process to not only come to the US, but, uh, you know, come to the US with, uh, with that pressure, kind of underlying pressure as far as being an immigrant at that time here. And then you're on personal psychological, the PTSD of, of going from a war zone to, uh, avocado orchard. The word PTSD and TBI and all of these things, I did not, I didn't know any of them. Uh, it was through people that I got to meet, uh, in the training field, uh, that were, you know, Marines, uh, uh, seals, uh, Marysock guys, those types of people that started giving words to some of the things that I felt, which I didn't really know, you know, uh, we would treat, uh, post-traumatic stress with alcohol and vacation time. Yeah. The bottom is cow. Yeah. When you see the bottom of it, your troubles are gone. Cured. Yeah. Immediately. I was, I was an alcoholic as well as all the other stuff. I was, I was drinking myself to sleep every, every third night. Uh, my marriage obviously was failing. You know, it was, it was an easy for her, you know, she, she was brave and she did what she could and I, I totally respect, understand her process with it, but, you know, when it's quiet, that's when it hits you. That's what I, I think that's what a lot of people experience when they come back from a conflict zone, you know, the, uh, everything that was life and death, everything that mattered, all the noise, all the chaos, all the people that are around you that would die for you, kill for you, you would kill for them, uh, all the millions of dollars worth of equipment and stuff like that. You were responsible for, now are all gone and it's just you, uh, walking into a circle K and buying three cans of fosters to drink yourself to sleep. Yeah. You write on your Patreon brilliantly about PTSD, about, uh, the cost of things you've done and seen, quote, when it's over and we're far from that chaos and noise of death, being close and life being real. That is when some of us remember in the quiet nights in a field in Tennessee, looking at fireflies, walking through a fair, holding hands with a lover, asking you what's wrong and your kid's birthday party, leave early to avoid the ending of a celebration. That is what the quiet means to some of us. So that's speaking to that silence, the quiet. Um, how do you live with and thrive with this newly learned term of PTSD? If anything, I would recommend people that have any of these issues to go to places where other people have their issues. So you can, it's not a competition, but you get to see the scope of problems in the world and you sometimes feel kind of lucky as far as you're on. Like it humbles you. Yeah.

It makes you appreciate all the different kinds of struggles that you go through. Yeah. I mean, I went through some whole shit, but there's some people that went through other more whole shit or stuff that I don't think I could have survived. When I went through that process of figuring things out, you know, the first thing that glaringly pointed out or stuck out to me was my inability to process things.



Like there was a big pause button there, a giant one. Everything was on pause. My grieving, not only my mom, but my brother. So I had a pause button on me as I was 13 basically. Then I got to bury many of my friends and form their wives or girlfriends of what happened. And that all again was paused because I wasn't allowed to process. You know, I spent years without going on vacation because I was a workaholic. And I found at the core of my issues is alcohol, a giant pause button in the form of alcohol. Basically, I drink my problems away or specifically I would, it's like if you have a mess in your house, you just put a big tarp over it, you know, to cover it up. And alcohol, it was that for me. And it festered more and more as I not only went through the process of learning about PCC, going through therapy, but refusing to let that go, you know, like going through therapy and seeing what other people's problems were. And I don't want to, you know, this is the only thing I have. I'm not, you know, I'm not hurting anybody with it, you know. Why do I need to get rid of that? By this point, I was traveling across the country and training people and showing some of the experiences that I had to other people, speaking, being on podcasts and having conversations like the one I'm having with you. So speaking to the skills that you've developed. And in a way, basically reliving and reopening a bunch of shit for myself every time I do it. So I was getting triggered and the way I would manage that was I would drink, you know, at the end of the night, after a weekend class somewhere, when I talk about the fireflies in a field in Tennessee, it was a moment where I was forcing myself to try and be sober. And we did this medical class out in the, out in the hills in Tennessee. It was a beautiful green place, beautiful family there that, that hosted us. And it's the first time I ever saw fireflies. So I was like, I thought I was having a hallucinogenic experience. When I say, why is the, why are the, why is the dust glowing? You know, is what I thought a friend of mine is a, is a veteran. He's ran off to the woods and grabbed one and brought it to me and showed it to me. I was like, holy shit, what is that? That's a firefly. Wow. How do they glow? I don't know. And he's crushed it in his hand and said, it's gone. And that, you know, brought me back immediately to holy shit. You know, it kind of like, I was off somewhere and I was back and I had to go drink. I went through that process of like going off it, getting on it, going off, getting off it. My marriage separated. And that was a, another end of the world aspect to, to everything. You know, you know, I lost my mother. I lost the job and then the marriage failed. And it was on me. I basically went somewhere and did a stock of everything that was going on. And made a decision to stop drinking and had some bad relationships after. And I just came to a place where I need to stop drinking.

You've gotten to a point so low.

Was this a decision you arrived at by yourself?

Was there some inspiration or was it just the point is so low?

Lost so much.

It was the start of COVID.

So this is recent.

That's probably two.

I'm going to, I'm going to, I'm going to have two years over in December.

So when you talk to Rogan the first time, you're still struggling with this demon?

Yeah.

I was in and out of the car, basically is what I would say, you know?

I was in and out of and then trying to get rid of it.

That must be a super stressful experience talking to Joe Rogan the first time you drank that night.

You remember?

The second time I was there, I went somewhere and got shitfaced.

It was, it was stressful, not, not for any other reason than I felt the responsibility to the people that couldn't speak about it.

So that's a pressure.

It was a start of COVID and things got started getting shut down and slowed down.

My dad got really sick and almost died.

We had to set up like some Jason Bourne level shit at, at my brother's place.

We, we, he was in Mexico, you know?

So we had to bribe a guy to get us an oxygen tank.

And I had a Jimi Riga respirator and it was, it was, it was, it was some shit.

But my dad was like, you know, he survived it, you know?

Everybody, the doctor was like, say goodbye.

And then my dad was like, yeah, say goodbye to him, you know?

Okay, so he does gangster.

I got it.

Tough guy.

He did, he did some gangster shit that day, but on my end, I was being isolated basically as COVID is everybody's slowing down, no more classes, no more excuses to go out there and drink and no more socializing.

So social drinking turned into a loan drinking more and more and more.

I bought a bottle of gin because I was, I was down in Mexico taking care of my dad and they closed down beer production in Mexico.

So beer went away and beer was a way I kind of managed it, you know?

It's not hard alcohol.

It's just beer.

So, you know, but that went away.

So it was just hard alcohol that was, was available down there.

I one night alone at the, at the house, my dad's house, I drank a bottle of gin, a whole bottle of gin and I almost died.

And after that, you know, some people started noticing that, that I was isolating more and more and it was kind of eating away at me.

I was in a relationship at that point when I started seeing everything just kind of fall apart around me and I drank half of a glass of wine and it made me sick to my, like internally in my mind.

And my kid said to me, and I don't know, nobody coached her.

Nobody said anything or she's, she's pretty intuitive kid.

So I don't drink anymore dad, I don't know where in the middle of the night.

And I stopped, I stopped that night, I stopped that night.

I remember waking up at three in the morning and taking a cooler that I had and just dumping all the beers in it and chucking them in the garbage and with a knife poking each of them to not, you know, be tempted to go back for them. And then the second day I went around and started finding the hides that I had because I had some, you know, hides.

And then I went somewhere and blocked myself in for two weeks.

I had the, the withdrawals, the clearest nightmares that I've ever had in my life for two, three weeks.

I went somewhere and I want to keep them private, but I went somewhere where they offered a place for me and when I asked them about it, it's a community.

I gave them some money for their school as a donation. I gave them like a few, a few thousand dollars. I said, yeah, sure, come, you know, you can, you can go through this process here, cool as fuck people. The first thing I, they did when I got there is they stood me up in front of everybody to thank me for the donation and then told everybody that I was an alcoholic. And if anybody saw me drinking, I was to be kicked out of there immediately.

And I felt horrible. So that's, that was where I started.

Is that temptation still there?

There was a moment when it was and some therapy circle. There's a, there's a rodeo clown friend of mine who, his body's, his spine is basically fused together, you know, type of guy. We've been friends and enemies and friends again, you know, in during the, our therapy circle sessions. Oh, so like there's an intimacy there?

Yeah. He didn't know anything about me. One time when we were telling our story, he stood up and told his story and then he heard mine and then he was pissed off at me and didn't want to talk to me for a while. And then later he told me that it was because he saw what I did with my experience and how much of a difference that he's perceived that I was making with it. And he felt jealous that he can do the same with his experience because he was just a broken ex rodeo clown. He told me when I was going through the process like, Hey, you're, you're an internet celebrity person, you know, you're, you're known.

Are you worried about people finding out that you're, that you're recovering drunk? And I said, yeah, it's fucking scary as shit. If people find out that I am going through this process, it's scary that, you know, the critique, you know, I already get a lot of shit for being a ex police officer in Mexico and all that, all the negativity that comes from that.

And he said, don't be, you know, that you can't pickpocket a naked man. So just get naked.

And what does that mean? Write about it. Post it online. You never know. Somebody, somebody out there might get inspired to do their own kind of process. So I started posting cowardly in a way because I wanted to make other people keep me on the path, you know, but in other ways, you know,

desperation, you know, I don't, I don't want to drink anymore. I don't want to go back to the, I'm not bathed, which I know leads directly to a bad death. I'm not afraid of death. I just want a good one. I don't want a bad one. I think that was going to lead me to a bad death. I started writing about it and sharing it online, you know, through my fever dreams post and just being humorous about it online and getting a lot of hate on one side, you know, having a few people and companies that I worked with kind of step back and seeing this guy's has some issues to having other people kind of make fun of or make light of that weakness portrayed. Also getting hate, getting criticism, because here you are, a counter narcotics police officer, there's no, there's a drinking problem. So is that like supposed to be what like flaws revealed weakness or a perception of alpha in the US, I guess, that some people have, you know, you were supposed to be strong and here you are. I mean, I'm not, I'm not Jaco Wilnick. I'm not David Goggins. You know, I wake up at 10 in the morning sometimes and I'll have cornflakes with my eight year old. You know, I like days off. I used to wake up at 330 in the morning every day to review what happened during the night and then go off for a jog and then the gym and just be ready to be able to murder somebody with my hands if I had to. But that is, I couldn't maintain that during the whole process of getting out of it. Now, leaving alcohol, I remember just being honest with and just seeing the two sides of it. You know, Joe told me never read the comment section, right? Which is a beautiful, it's a beautiful piece of advice, but they get you sometimes when you talk about some of these things openly. And some of the comments were positive. And I've been seeing people comment, sending me messages and meeting people on the road that are five months in, 10 months. Some people that have been on that wagon for way longer than I have. And there's, it's what's cool when you meet people that are superhuman or perform and take an extreme ownership of things and are just amazing people that are thriving out there. It's inspirational. I see some of these people and I'm like, holy shit, I need to figure out how to get to some semblance of that. But I'm not that. I've been through the ringer. I fucked up a shit ton of times. My nose is an example of that. I have a few missing teeth, but in a way, I think all of that is part of the process and not a lot of people want to talk about, you know, independently of the experience I got down there and some of the things that I show and talk about and some of the advocacy I do related to women like her that are, you know, trying to look for a better life and trying to find their missing kids, training people to not get into those situations, but also showcasing the fact that people that go through some of these processes have a journey to go through. You know, I just came into your studio with a duffel bag straight from the airport and I'm going to leave early tomorrow morning to somewhere else. I've been on the road for almost, I think, five years nonstop. I go back to a specific place every week to see my kid for two, three days and then I'm back out. You know, some people are like, are you running? Like, are you worried? Is this afraid of us? No, but I am, you know, on this weird path, I guess, trying to look for something that I think I've been missing as far as my afterlife of a sort, you know, coming out. We think that is, are you looking for some kind of a deeper understanding of humanity? Like, from the specific experiences you had to get some deeper understanding of what the hell

we're all doing here? I meet people every weekend with different stories. You know, people come to some of my classes, you know, I show them how to weaponize the environment, how to arm themselves, how to not get abducted. I meet people that have gone through those experiences and are basically trying to work through some of their own issues by going through the training like that. I get to meet people that are, you know, people that I've only seen online, you know, or the seen in videos. I remember meeting Royce Gracie in Harbor City.

I heard of that guy.

He's a pretty interesting character. I remember seeing him in a bootleg VHS video. I told him about it. We were doing a class out at Emerson Knives. It's a knife company, but Mr. Emerson also has like a jujitsu gym there where Royce straightens out of. That's his space.

And, you know, they're teaching how to defend against somebody trying to stab you. And I'm showing them all the ways you can get around that and fabricate and improvise and smuggle things, basically the adversarial side of that. That's just, that's what I'm known for.

The psychology and kind of the ways that people do that. And I remember him seeing some of the stuff that I was doing and just being like, where are you from? Mexico. Makes sense. You know, somebody from Brazil, you know, tipping the hat to somebody from Mexico as far as with him seeing the violence and some of the mentality behind it.

So for people who don't know, Royce Gracie is the legendary martial artist that probably introduced Brazilian jujitsu to the American audience, to the world, to the process of UFC and showing the effectiveness of it in practice that a little skinny guy can defeat a big, aggressive guy. So an anaconda, a small anaconda walking into that ring with his family behind wearing pajamas, wearing pajamas and everything. What is this guy wearing pajamas for? And then he would strangle people with those pajamas. I remember seeing that and just having it, I think, probably what a generation before had with Bruce Lee, I guess. My generation was Royce walking into that, walking into that octagon and changing, you know, paradigms. Seeing him in that gym is also a avid gun owner and shooter, which is interesting. You know, having, seeing somebody like him who is, you know, well-versed with his hands also be a man that has gone into the realm of being well-versed with weaponry, which is an aspect of martial arts and the martial way of thinking that, you know, some people kind of, the purists will stick with one side of it, but he's obviously a warrior in a lot of ways.

So just as a small tangent, so you're somebody that you don't just look at armed combat, you look at the full spectrum of the chaos of combat that's outside of the realm of jujitsu and even just mixed martial arts, unarmed, armed with knives and beyond.

Was his mind open to the fuller spectrum of violence?

Yeah. I mean, he was in the middle of this class that we were doing where people were basically focusing on both Ernest Emerson, who's famous for his knives. He has a knife company, some knives for NASA, you know. Not only that, but he's also a very avid martial artist. He's trained with a lot of Filipino martial arts related to knives and stuff like that, but a different mindset, you know, a defensive mindset to train people how to defend against that. And you have Royce, who's, he's from Brazil. I mean, he has some street in him. That's something that, you know, those guys didn't guy, as we say in Mexico. Seeing the ways he would, he stepped in there and provided some encouragement to the people there as far as, you know, how people sometimes focus on the, this is a system and this is a way, but there's other ways out there that might negate or defeat the ways that you are concentrating on, you know. So kind of get out



of that bubble. My whole kind of speciality or what I focus on is mindset and figuring out the software that some of these people gain and gather from. If I need to arm myself, you know, the easiest thing to manufacture in most places is a pointed object. So I can take that crystal big pen that you're writing on that notepad with and using the friction from the carpet. I can turn it into a hyperduran needle that you can then poke into somebody's neck. What's the process of doing that? I can do it right now if you want to. Can you use your words for the listener and also because I'm terrified? No, I could basically, you can take the heat and friction created from this carpet. Yes. You can grab that pen in and of itself. It will pierce flesh, but it will slow itself down because it has a few angles on the tip. Oh, you want to wear it down the angle. So if you take that tip off and you grab it and grind it on an angle on the carpet, the heat will actually turn it into a hypodermic needle if you know what you're doing. Hypodermic meaning like it smoothens the entry. It'll make a point in an angle that will guide it its way into your flesh. So you can actually go through a torso with that if you know what you're doing. As a small tangent, you also gave me a present. It could be one of the most epic presents I've ever received. You give it to Rogan. Can you explain what I'm holding in my hands? There's a guy online, Coffin Tramp. This is a moniker. It is a G10 rod. G10 is a very strong material basically capable. A lot of people make actually G10 knives, which are basically non-magnetic, non-ferrous objects that can be utilized as a stabbing implement. The core of it isn't an actual pencil core. It's a G10 core and it's encased in oak, hard oak. So that is capable again of stabbing through a torso. Now, the guy that made that is an artisan, you know, it makes that it looks like a pencil. It's concealed in the nature of the object itself. But that small object is capable of being introduced into a chest cavity. You know, all it takes is about the half of your thumb or the length of your thumb to stab into your chest cavity and now your pericardium is pierced and that's being filled with filled with blood or your whole heart is pierced and you have a few minutes to live if you're at a standing heart rate. So this is, this has the effectiveness of a knife, essentially. It has the effectiveness of a shank or an ice pick, you know. It's not going to cut, but it's going to make a hole where it doesn't shouldn't be. Here, the pen is literally mightier than the sword. This is really epic from like a perspective of an academic. This is a symbol of both intelligence and violence. I love it. And also the current state of affairs where people need to arm themselves with things that are concealed as far as their purpose in a place where in a country or in a society that limits their ability to arm themselves. So if you're going to a safe place, you're going to a place where no weapons allowed, which means a rich, target rich environment if you're a predator. That's a sign of rebellion. Let this be a signal of everyone should be terrified when you're around me because even a pencil can murder you. I intend to use this. Nobody owns life, but anybody that can hold a frying pan owns death is a quote that I heard once, which is a beautiful one. I'm looking at you. If anyone betrays me, this is the way to go. Can you, given all your experience in all the different ways and you think about martial arts and violence in Mexico, in the world, speaking of hoist, what is your approach to conflict like a street fight? What advice would you give people

in the full spectrum of what a street altercation might entail? What is the best way to approach it? I think before you get there, you have to prepare. One of the first things I tell people is if you don't have a basic TCCC training class behind you, you should reanalyze your life and your ability to prepare. TCCC.

Basically how to stop somebody from bleeding out or dying from a stab wound, gunshot wound, or any of those types of wounds, or an amputated leg during an IED scenario. Anything you would see in a Boston Marathon type event or a Vegas shooting event where people are getting shot, stabbed, cut. So understand how to help people, how to help yourself post violence.

You're no good to, you don't want to be a detriment to the situation. You want to be an asset. So build yourself up as an asset in a situation like that because you might be doing that on yourself or on somebody else. And also it helps you understand what situations are going to result in a lot of, in a difficult situation to deal with afterwards. Yeah, it also teaches you what to stab and what to shoot. If you're thinking about it in a full, on all the dimensions of it, you know, there's all weapon, all knowledge can be weaponized. And I think that's the approach of all people should kind of figure out for themselves when they start getting ready or if they want to take the responsibility of their own safety in their hands.

So in a self-defense situation, there's a lot of questions here, but what does one stab? There's the carotid arteries, which are used commonly in jiu-jitsu as something to choke because they feed a computer, you know. So there's a lot of blood flowing through that required for the successful operation of the computer. And not a lot of stuff is guarding the outside world from your carotid arteries. It's a really weird design, by the way.

It is not a smart one. It doesn't even make sense because with mammals, they bite each other's neck. Like, why can't you have more protection? Is this the only, like us humans don't use their mouth to kill each other? But most mammals, most predators do. And it's like, why the hell don't we protect this? We do have a defensive mechanism. And you see it sometimes when people are ambushed

and people try to open up each other's necks from behind. If you push somebody's neck forward, the carotids will actually lower themselves and be encased in more flesh and muscle.

If you pull a head back, not so much. So that's a way that at least I think the evolutionary we have a defensive mechanism for that. There's a few videos out there of peoples getting their neck sewn back shut after somebody pushed their head forward to try and slice their necks, and they survived, you know? So this is a viable target. The heart is another one.

Interesting about the thing about the heart and people get alarmed when I talk about this and show it in classes. Again, a lot of the classes I do are for orientation and for people to recognize that behavior. So a lot of law enforcement comes to some of these classes to, oh, that's horrible. That's how somebody will kill somebody. Yeah, this is how people that know their thing, their shit will try and approach somebody and stab you to death. This is how they would do it.

There's a tendency to view what we see in John Wick or view what we see in this martial arts community where they're slicing and dicing people different myriad of ways. A lot of that is based on dueling-based cultures, like the Filipino martial arts or some of the Italian martial arts out there where somebody's facing off with somebody else with a similar weapon and where both of us are agreeing to basically get into a stabbing competition. That would make sense in that scenario, in that context, but I've never seen a lot of people actually get into these one-on-one knife altercations. What we see now in a modern context when it talks about weaponry

is an ambush, counter-ambush-based scenario where somebody pulls out a knife during a grappling situation on the street or when somebody turns a striking exchange of punches into pulling out a cheap gas station knife or a pen or a rock from the ground or a handgun. Most modern combatives, when it comes to weaponry, should be kind of based on the whole aspect of ambush and counter-ambush. There's a lot of people showing valuable type of material and coursework on this out there. My whole approach and my specific kind of realm is in the aspect of how people go from the process of learning some of these things from experiential stuff, people that grow up in rural places, grow up on pig farms that actually get the experience of processing the pig, for example, or processing an animal. Those people will have more skills at hunters. Those people will have more skills with a knife if they pick it up as a weapon than most of the martial arts that I've seen kind of approach some of these classes, where I go and have a simulated torso in the form of a pig hanging in a room somewhere. Some of that has to do with just the familiarity and the comfort of just the biology of a living organism. If you cut off certain things, if you cut a certain thing, it's just a meat vehicle. The same thing, the medical training should come first. Or if you don't have that, be a hunter or go to a butchery class. That will teach you more about how to use a knife on somebody else than anything. That'll give you the experience of flesh. I do this example every now and then where I have people bring in a tactical knife and they'll bring in a butter knife and I ask them, which will go through a torso? We have a pig there, so it simulates a torso pretty closely. Most people will say, that butter knife is not going to go through, and it does. It does go through. It's thin enough, strong enough, sturdy enough that it'll go through. Kitchen knife, a cheap one that cost \$0.89 at a Walmart and an expensive \$400 one. The cheap one will outperform the expensive one. It'll the tippie snap off during some of it. Yeah, I have to say that just as a small tangent, I went to a farm and just seeing the butchering of meat and so on in the processing of meat and pigs and cows, that's uncomfortable. Yeah. But I think it also, it's honest and raw, and that's something that probably everyone should experience regularly, because it's also humbling to remind you. When I had a dog, Homer, he's in Newfoundland, I was very close with him. We lost him. I just remember that carry him. He's like 200-something pounds. I had to carry him. I had to put him to sleep. One of the biggest realizations is, oh, this is just a biological thing. To realize that this is just meat, this is not, and you can cut it, and then if you bleed, you all of a sudden, the life can disappear from you. It's all gone. It's like, holy shit, there's this meat vehicle that some people have referred to as Lex. I'm just a few stabbings away from leaving goodbye as a soul that just flies away. It used to be that we had to hang around. People would come back from battle and we would hear things next to the campfire. As far as, oh, he stabbed somebody here and this happens, but now we live in an age where you can, when I do a class, this is a stab to the heart, and here's five videos of it happening live on live leagues or whatever. We can deconstruct that, not only that, but what weapon was used. Oh, it was a gas station folder. It was a pioneer woman knife from Walmart with flowers on the handle, whatever it was. People start realizing that it doesn't take a lot of training because a lot of these people are not high-level assassins trained by ninjas in the hills or anything like that. They're people that grew up rurally or learned by seeing that behavior in others. When they start coming to the realization that it is pretty easy to do that and they start figuring out, how do you counteract that? Well, number one, learn the behavior yourself so you can recognize it. The whole aspect of being a good counter-ambush team is to be the best

ambusher in the planet. Again, the whole aspect of Musashi saying, know your enemy, know his sword. You figure that out as far as learning that behavior. When you start seeing how some of these stavings occur, the first thing you notice is that one of the hands is always kind of out of the picture, or there's a lack of symmetry in the people that are about to do something horrible. When you see lack of symmetry in the environment, somebody with their hands going backwards, there's a crowd of people and two or one individual is looking counter where everybody else is looking, or there's a hyper aware individual in a crowd. The hyper aware are always usually out there to fuck somebody over, or they're trying to keep those predators from fucking somebody else over. Unless you step back and you put yourself in the process of learning how they learn and you become that potential nightmare person, it's hard to recognize that in a crowd. It feels like one of the significant ways to win are, as Street Fighters, to avoid it by sending pacifist signals in every way, meaning avoiding the situation whenever there's a hyper vigilant people. You just avoid signaling that you're one of the players of interest. If we're talking about counter ambush, at which point do you do that versus shift to the aggression? I think violence should be always an option. Everybody should have that option, and you need to be good at that option. I think I heard Jordan Peterson talk about the fact that everybody needs to be dangerous, but keep that shit under control. I think he was referring to a different context. I know. I'm referring to the ability of... The little physical conflict. There's two cases that I saw of people just utilizing social engineering to a beautiful degree, to de-escalate shit. One guy somewhere. First off, if you're in a place where people are grabbing your wife's ass or something like that, what are you doing there? There's a load of things that are wrong with everything that you're doing in your life to be in that environment, but let's say you're in an inescapable situation. There was this guy who was in a compromised position. Somebody wanted to fight him, like legit kick his ass, and he said, okay, let's go, but I just need to warn you that I have hep C before we go outside. That's masterful. I was getting my phone out to film this, maybe. Yeah. Even I was just lowered my phone to give him a slow clap. That was a beautiful move. Then there was this other man. There was a riot somewhere in Ensenada, the municipality of Ensenada and Baja. They were protesting. Some of the people that picked those fields down there, part of a tribe called Los Triches. Very hard-working people, but the various people, too. They're pretty good at their thing. There was a riot line they couldn't break, and this old man walks in the middle of the riot line and yells, grenade, and throws an avocado in the middle of all the cops. You broke that riot line with an avocado. That could have gone wrong in so many ways. I don't know. To me, there's small lessons there. There is a case to be made about social engineering, about learning about behavior, about learning how to lie and how to move your way or navigate your way around situations like that. Small things like bartering, knowing how to bribe people in conflict zones is the thing that I show when I talk about or train people to work in hostile environments, de-escalation, specifically figuring out what is of value in the environment, what things you shouldn't be doing in an environment that might be considered disrespectful or out of place. People have a tendency that it didn't grow up in places that are violent to make continuous eye contact with somebody that might be an issue or smiling when there's nothing to smile about. I think there's a picture I saw somewhere of Russians taking a portrait, and there's Americans there, and the Americans are smiling, but the Russians

aren't because what is there to smile about, which is true.

And of course, it's not as simple as smile or not smile. There's subtlety to it. Like you said, eye contact is a super interesting one because I found in my own life, like not making eye contact is, other people would be joking, but it's a really powerful way to de-escalate. And there's such a fascinating thing, though, because you could talk about drunk fights that are harmless, but I feel like the same dynamic applies to the most violent conflict, including wars. I feel like ego is part of this. So to me, the question of conflict, whether it's a street fight or anything else, is the calculus of, are you willing to take an out in terms of psychology? Somebody grabs your wife's ass, you mentioned. Boy, if you let that happen, you go home, you're gonna have to pay the price of you were the person who didn't defend you, like in your relationship, you didn't defend your wife's honor. You're gonna psychologically pay that price yourself. And depending on your wife, she might secretly also lose a little bit of respect for you. Now, how do you play that calculus? Because now we see the war in Ukraine. I would say there is elements of similar posturing in the United States and in Europe, in Ukraine, Russia, China, leadership. At a macro level.

At a geopolitics, it's still somebody grabs somebody's ass and you're not backing down. So to take those losses and basically just posture, lower your head and live to fight another day type situation. The thing with modern violence is the access to weaponry. Again, nobody owns life, but anybody can hold a frying pan can own death. I've seen people get double leg takedown somebody on the ground. It's a different thing doing in the mats versus concrete.

That's a good way to kill somebody. The most prolific impact weapon on the planet is the planet itself. You can see various videos of people online where they fall and they hit their head or somebody hits their head and they go into the stretched out fit basically. That might not kill you then, but it'll kill you that night or the second night if you don't get checked out. People bleed out internally, get an edema. Again, the whole aspect of me showing how some of these things, not only some of these methodologies and somehow people prepare for violence and how people

experience violence, how they make their weapons, how the people fight in the streets and stuff like that. It's to recognize that behavior from the inception. There's a video I show where there's a bunch of street kids in Rio de Janeiro, I think it's during the Olympics where they're snatching chains and cell phones from people. It's a fun video. See it? The first thing you learn about it is how they target people. Now, who are they going after? There's a bunch of people there. Why are they going after that specific person? You start learning about profiling and how they identify victim mentality or the perfect victim, lack of awareness. They keep on a straight line, avoidance, avoidance of eye contact if they're doing something, if areas are wrong, and how they pick who they're going to go after. The small people, the women, even some of the men

and they separate the men that they're perfect victims versus the men that's going to turn around, punch them in the face. What are they looking for? Well, first off, you notice that the men that are in that environment that look at them and are aware of their presence, the hyper-aware, are the ones that are not good to target. That's the first lesson there. It's probably a good idea not only to be hyper-aware, but to recognize that hyper-awareness in others if I want to separate myself from the victim crowd. Another thing you notice is these are kids going after some



grown adults, and some of these grown adult men are with women. You see them getting outside of the grasp of the kids that are trying to rip their chains off their neck or their cell phones, and they have no consideration for the women around them. You see other men that are with women,

and you see them grab the women and put them behind them. Immediately, they'll say, this is the wrong one. Let me move off to the next one. That small little lesson in those videos will show you first how these kids are growing up to profile and target who the perfect victims are. That's a school for them. That is an adversarial school. We should look at that school and apply it to ourselves. In general, you think ultimately the people that are doing conflict are looking for weakness? They're looking for opportunity, opportunistic. That's the predators. That's what they do. They look for an opportunity from jumping down from a tree and getting the slowest gazelle to looking for the opportune moment to pounce on something that's probably big, but the risk is worth it. I feel like there's several motivations, but isn't there also a power hierarchy motivation as well? There's something about the big guy that attempts you to send a message, especially with gangs. Aren't they constantly trying to signal that they're the alpha? There's a different situation. You could be facing a sociopathic predator who is looking for something in you that you're the resource that they're looking after. Maybe it's a woman. It could be a group of people that don't like the fact that you have a specific nationality or your passport is stamped in a specific way or that you pray to whatever God. All these have a factor in, but in the end, they all do the same thing. They look for an advantageous position. If I were to target you, I would put you in between that wall and me, so you have two avenues of exits. I will step on one of your feet to keep that avenue closed so you have to go this way. This is where my knife is going to be. You see that behavior mirrored everywhere in the world. First off, you look for advantages. If it's something that's unavoidable, like you're in between me and my ability to go home or you're in between me and my ability to feed my family or you're in between me and my ability to posture to the people that are behind me, the young guys that I'm in charge, I will do everything in my power to end you. The motivations are not my realm, but the ways they do it are basically the advantage part of it. So desperation is dangerous. It's a dangerous school. When it's a dangerous school, I mean, the most dangerous people usually come from those desperate environments. You can have people in Coronado holding on to logs in the ocean and go through this millions of dollars worth of training and just be professional killers for the government and just be these incredible human beings. Then there's a kid that will walk up to one of them when he's off and put an ice pick right into his chest when he's least expecting it. That doesn't mean that one is superior than the other. It just means that there's more than one way to become that.

Teenagers terrify me. It feels like the intensity of desperation, like the capacity of a teenager like 16, 17 to be desperate and also not have the matured understanding of ethics of the world. They have this intensity of feeling that is unlike anything else. They don't have a volume knob to that. So it's like a garden hose without a nozzle on it so you can regulate it. They haven't developed that. They haven't learned that maybe from somebody else or it used to be warrior cultures. You would be an apprentice under somebody or you would learn some of these things from other people. Even some gang, modern gangs have a little bit of that. But if you're not and you're just this kid that's been playing Call of Duty all of his life or has been witnessing violence in media and there's no

sense of, it's probably a bad idea to go off and do this because all of these repercussions. I could see how that could be a danger to society and some of the volume knobs, some of the countermeasures, the people exploding on somebody else with a weapon. You see videos constantly online. I remember seeing this one of these two teenage girls somewhere in the US and one of them just, there's a fight, there's a hair pulling competition and all of a sudden one of them takes out a knife and it just happens like that. And it's just pure and restrained downward stabbing. You're like, wait, where does that come from? Well, she's from an environment where she saw that as an option. She didn't see the repercussions of it and she found herself in a place where she thought that was the only viable option, pulling out a weapon. I think that's the dangerous part of it. So how do you prepare to win those kinds of situations to escape those kinds of situations? Like you said, this training, it's exposing your mind. I always tell people, if you don't have a combative base, you don't have a base, boxing, jiu-jitsu. And that gives you like an awareness of your body kind of thing. It gives you an awareness of your body. It gives you a spatial awareness. If you can't see the points with your peripheral vision, if you can't see the points of somebody's feet in your peripheral vision, they are in range to stab you in the heart if they wanted to. And that's something you learn from boxing, that you learn from jiu-jitsu, you learn from a bunch of combat arts where you're learn about distance and angling people. That comes from this experience that you have. Again, a lot of these things were just horse play when we're growing up in some cultures or rough and tumble with your brothers and shit like that. But some of us are growing up in single kid homes now. And we don't get that. We were missing that. And if you don't have it, then you find it in the jiu-jitsu gym. You find it in the boxing gym. You find it in a Thai boxing gym. You find it in places where they specialize in focusing on certain aspects of this whole combative hole. It used to be before UFC, the Kung Fu man, Kung Fu guy, street lethal of shit. You can't use it in the sporting car. You can't show you this because it'll kill you. Now we pretty much know that most of that was flights of fancy or BS. It pains me too, man. I wanted to learn some of the D-Moc Kung Fu single punchy and killing technique. I remember those books, but that's just not... I'm still on the lookout for that. Maybe somewhere. Maybe you should put a pen in your hand. That might turn into that, but that's the only way, right? But a lot of these myths are faded away. Now you see people that have different combative bases combining them all and becoming a fighter. Now, UFC fight two people fighting each other is one thing. You being in the middle of the Portland Rites and a bunch of state troopers throwing gas at riders and then riders themselves fighting each other and you finding yourself in the middle of that, that's a completely different thing. And if you think you're going to go on the ground and get in the guard with a guy swinging around a shovel, a piece of a shovel handle, right? As tear gas is going on because you got stopped there and your car was, you know, windows were broken and your family's in the backseat, you know, that is a different situation. So you don't get medical learning about weaponry, you know? I personally don't really like fighting on the ground, but that's why I forced myself to go to the train with different people out there, you know, on the ground. You get to catch wrestling. To the top and bottom, neither. You don't like either. I personally, I like being in a car and running everybody over. That would be great, you know, if I could or driving really far away. Or I had this experience in Utah, some friends of mine, a military, some of your best shooters, some of the best

shooters in the US, you know, coming from the Marine Corps were showing me how they, you know, would shoot something from really far away. And I was like, oh, you don't even have to be in the same vicinity. The scope of violence, how far you can be from it or how close you could be from it. Just wait till we get to see what we can do in the cyber attack world.

We can destroy your whole well-being, your whole life, your identity.

That's another aspect of it too. Financial. And then figure out where you live, in terms of ambush. Yeah.

Figuring out everything about you such that hurting you is easy.

I have a class where we specifically work on social engineering and kind of how you can go about something that, you know, on a micro level.

We, I do a class with a guy named Matt Fiddler who does basically, he's one of the premier experts on how to get into and bypass locks, basically. He'll show you how to open up every single or bypass every single commercial lock available in the United States. Like, he'll spread it out and open up everything. And that's like, right.

And my part in his class is I talk about how you can pull some of that off in the public space and not get caught or how you would employ some of these things in a context where it's like useful for law enforcement, for the military, stuff like that. And so we have this exercise in a public space where there's a bunch of padlocks in the environment, right?

And they paint them pink. So people know it's our padlocks and we're not breaking into anybody else's padlocks if we get approached and asked about it. But I asked the students like, so you have to gather all these padlocks from this public space, you know? So how would you do it? So a lot of them are trying to pick them. You know, they're like very suspiciously picking them and stuff like that. They get caught and it's a whole situation. But the smart ones will basically develop a social media campaign related to the padlocks, right? A beautiful example of this. And this actually happened here in Texas. I did a class out in Dallas. We put the padlocks over this public mall. And the students basically came up with a breast cancer awareness campaign online that they made fake, well, they made flyers for it. They did the social media page on a campaign.

They did this email chain. So when they went there, people were expecting them.

So they normalized the behavior through social media and they were walking around bull cutters in the middle of the mall, cutting these things off. That's a beautiful solution to a complex problem that nature. And again, the weaponizing part of it. Anything can be, whole knowledge can be weaponized. And it's, if you focus on getting in a street fight with somebody with your fist or a knife, you know, you're missing out on the whole complexity of violence and the way that it's now being utilized. So in terms of breaking out locks and restraints and captivity, let's talk about a dark topic that you're one of the world's experts in kidnapping. So you teach courses on counter kidnapping and terrorism. I read an estimate that criminal gangs get \$500 million a year in ransom payments from kidnapping. So just at a high level, what is kidnapping? Who does it and why? What are some insights that can help us understand

what is this problem in the world? It happens in different ways in different parts of the world.

I mean, I just sent off a group of people that trained some of the Ukrainians and some of the stuff that they were showing them was some of the counter custody stuff that I showed them, friend of mine named Vince went out there was showing them some of the aspects of how to utilize

things like Kevlar cordage and how to infuse it in their uniforms. So if they get zip tied to cut them open, it's a war setting. So it's, it talks about being captive in a war zone, but the information or the methodology actually comes from Mexico, that methodology as far as how I learned it. In terms of how to escape from restraints and stuff like that.

So in Mexico, you have abductions happening where cartels who hold control over a specific place or zone are having a hard time with financial situations as far as maybe they're not making enough money to pay everybody off. So they let them freelance basically and a lot of ways some of these criminal groups freelance or some of these groups actually professionalize and to abduct businessmen, abduct the sons of businessmen or people that have money to ask for ransoms for them basically. And they've taken, you know, captivity and abduction to like an art form in places like Mexico and has a history all over the world. But specifically my experience with it was going to cartel safe houses that turn into holding places. You would see homemade prison cells and stuff like that and people being held in captivity for months, if not years, as they were milking their family for everything they owned.

So it turns out into a business, they're not actually even interested in hurting the people physically. They're interested in hurting them financially.

Financially and also if they get hurt, they're hurt for a purpose, which is to make their family pay up faster or more. Some of the abduction groups that I've seen out there, professional ones in Mexico basically make it a living to target people that have abduction insurance or that work for companies that have good abduction insurance. So it's almost like an ATM for them. You know, it's like, ah, here again. So there's some of that going on. Some not so much. Some abductions are expressed. I mean, I'll grab you with a in gunpoint, take you to an ATM, you empty it out and then you're on your way. That's an express kidnapping. That might not be worth you doing anything insane. You know, you just go with the motions. But some people do get picked up.

I have trained people with prior experiences of abductions in Mexico and here in the United States, people that have spent some time in captivity with loved ones here, like ex-boyfriends or boyfriends that tie them up and beat the shit out of them. And the restraints they utilize are zip ties and handcuffs sometimes or duct tape or their own clothing, things of this nature.

Basically what somebody's looking for when they tie anybody up is to convince you that they are in control, that they are God and that any hope of you releasing those restraints or getting out of that situation is hopeless. From a cartel group picking you up in the middle of a dirt road somewhere in Cancun to ex-boyfriend showing up at your house and tying you up till you agree to get

back with them. That's the same thing. And some of the restraints that are being utilized come from different places. I mean, I remember an instructor I had way back when told me that the proliferation

of zip ties as a restraint and criminal abductions came up after the movie Heat came out because everybody wanted to be Robert DeNiro zip tying people in the bank robbery at the end of the movie. Criminal saw that and it became like a thing.

Can you actually speak to the, is it possible to systematically learn how to escape restraints like handcuffs, rope, zip ties? The best at it are not the military. They're not seer program people. They are criminals. I learned how to get a handcuffs from a 15-year-old. It was in charge of meth sales in La Avenida Revolucion in Tijuana. Is there a system to it? I mean, it's not specifically a system. It's usually what happens is they'll buy a set of handcuffs and they will

mess around with them in a playing feature. So one thing I do in a class is first off, I'm honest about the fact that some, you know, all restraints are temporary, even marriage. Can we just pause in the deep philosophical, you're like the immortal Musashi with that statement. All restraints are temporary, even marriage. I'll just like adding that one in there for last because this is a dark subject. Every cage can be escaped. All restraints are temporary. You either free yourselves from the restraints. Somebody else takes them off or you die and your body rots our way around them. You know, those are the options. And I like that first option myself. The second option is pretty cool if you can convince somebody to do that for you. But that first option is an interesting one. You have to deconstruct restraints. Not all restraints are made the same. You can train to get out of handcuffs here in the US and, you know, focus on a pair of Smith and Weston handcuffs, which are kind of the most common brand of handcuffs here. But if you find yourself in detention somewhere in Russia, the handcuffs out there are completely different. You know, the key way is different. The mechanism is different, but some of the same ways of bypassing those mechanisms are-

Let me write this down. So in Russia, what kind are they using in Russia? I think they're traveling there. I need this information. I'll send you a specific model and details on how to get out of those. Just asking for a friend. I'm sorry.

So what I do is I take a pair of Smith and Weston handcuffs. I put them in the middle of three people in a class. I spread them out and I have them placed them on each other in a just playing manner. I have handcuffs there and I have a pair of bowl cutters there in case somebody gets stuck. That's stupid. So they play with each other as far as putting them on randomly. I show them how to put them on appropriately and then I show them a handcuff key and a handcuff key will open up handcuffs, interestingly enough. But the thing about a handcuff key is it's not made to be used by the person that is in those handcuffs. So that's their first lesson there. If you have a handcuff key, handcuff keys are the most used tool to open up handcuffs in custody situations. You know, both criminals escaping from the police to people escaping from criminals. Just a standard hidden handcuff key. So I show them how to modify the handcuff key so it's more optimal to use on yourself with just basic garbage that you can find. A piece of wire, a zip type piece, basically how to put a leverage arm on the handcuff key so you can actually spin it in the keyway behind your back or in front of you. I'm trying to think. I don't think I've ever been in handcuffs. An appropriate way to handcuff somebody is palms out. How much restriction is there in terms of... There's a lot. If it's a hinge handcuff, there's a lot of restriction with no changing. Can you reach back? You could try and reach back or you can basically put yourself in a not compromised position and feed the most of your palm meat into the handcuff way. So when they shut it on you, you have more space to work with. So you can spin your hand. We call it passive resistance. Again, you go through a process with them when you deconstruct how people are handcuffed. Handcuff keys and how to modify a handcuff key to be able to use on yourself and all of these things they're constructing as we go. So they basically, hey, what's a grinding surface? Well, there's concrete outside. So they grind an angle on the key so you can get a key not to go straight into the keyway, but you can get it into the keyway at an angle, for example. It's something that is out there as far as a



method. You can't spin a key behind your back because it's small. It's designed to be used by somebody else opening those handcuffs on you. So you put an arm on it so you can leverage our arm so you can spin it behind your back. You learn how to put yourself in not a compromised position. If somebody asks you for your handcuffs, your hands so they could be cuffed, you don't do this, you know, you do that or you put yourself in a gable grip behind your back, which is a pretty strong grip and it's hard to spread those hands apart. It's also something that people go into automatically when they're in fear. So all of these things are advantageous for you. And you learn how not only people get restrained, but you see videos of them because I show a bunch of abductions that are actually happening live. Again, the best thing is avoidance, but specifically when you work around restraints is number one, learn how some of these restraints work. Number two is learning how some of the ready-made tools to get out of the restraints look like function. And number three, which is the advanced level, is learn how to construct all these things yourself, which is, I think, that is the best thing you can show somebody. For handcuffs, I just use a standard pair of handcuffs and then we deconstruct other very specialized handcuffs that might be out there. And you show them, if you're going to travel somewhere, learn what restraints are commonly available in the environment. Somebody going to north of Sub-Saharan Africa carrying a plastic handcuff key is that's going to be useless out there because there's not going to be standard handcuffs out there that would be open with that type of key. Out there, you're probably going to be tied up with a chain and a padlock of some sort, maybe a 40 millimeter Chinese padlock with a plastic core that you can open with a lighter if you can burn the core, melt the core open, or if you can leverage that open, that's a pretty easy thing to open, or a bobby pin you could reach all the way in the back and open the latch. What about rope? Is that common? Yeah, it is common. This is one of my favorite things for rope. Something I usually carry in some places. Another gift for you if you want. The ceramic razor blade. Nice. Is it capable of cutting? Nice. Small. You can put it behind a label. I've seen some students put the Levi's label on there and just sew it back on. It is non-magnetic, non-ferrous, so in and out of that type of situation, you can get in it and it's something you can have with you everywhere. This is a pretty fancy one, or you can just grab a simple razor blade. Actually, learning how to use or leverage a razor blade between your palms and know how to go up and down with it to be able to cut yourself under a rope. Of course, that's just practice to do that well. It's practice and it's also exposure to just, this is a possibility. This is how you could hide it. Again, the whole smuggling aspect comes from a criminal mindset type setting. How things are hidden, where they're hidden. When I talk about concealing objects of this nature, it usually comes from smuggling. The fact that I have something in a notebook comes from heroin smuggling. If you're not looking at the school of criminality, you're missing out on a big part of the equation. For people who want to learn about this, do you teach courses on this? Yeah. Do you know what's the rec? How to get in touch with you or learn from you? Do you have stuff online or is it only in percent? I have some stuff on my Patreon specifically. I have a Patreon where I share a lot of the online material. This is my notebook. I have a bunch of stuff that I just met somebody in Philadelphia that showed me a pretty unique way of utilizing a box cutter as a weapon. I wrote some of that down. I filmed some of it. It's not for any other reason. I'm not trying to create dangerous people out there. It's like, hey, look at this. This is something

that's out there. A lot of that information, some of those notes and stuff like that, I keep on my Patreon. I used to share it openly on Facebook and Instagram, but that has not been possible anymore. Well, I'm a member of your Patreon and I recommend people sign up. It's really great because you also have philosophy. You're the Mexican Miyamoto Masashi. It's not just these skills. It's also the philosophy around it. I got that book of five rings before I went into training. I took that with me through training. The whole aspect of go to places frightening to the common brand of men. Be put in jail and extricate yourself with your own wisdom. I think he was speaking about experience, the whole warrior's journey, the hero's journey of going out there and actually risking. I think that's a pretty big basis and aspect of what the work I do in showing some of these things. There's a tendency to people to say, hey, I'm afraid to go to Mexico. What do I need to know? Well, if you're afraid to go to Mexico, go to Mexico. I was in Detroit. I was pretty afraid when I was in Detroit in some parts of Detroit and the South Side Chicago. I don't want to be dictated where I can go and where I can't go because of safety. I want to take responsibility for that myself and figure out ways of being more capable and an asset to the people around me and myself. That comes through experience. People don't want to risk getting a shoulder injury, rolling a jujitsu or don't want to risk getting a bloody nose in boxing, but that is the way. Well, there's some aspect to fitting in. You quote Hatori Hanzo on imitation. The most important thing you should keep in mind when you go on a Shinobi mission is to imitate well the language of the target province and the ways of the local people. This includes their appearances, the way of wearing clothes, the way of shaving their head, the way of making up their hair, the way of making up a sword or short sword, and the way of refinement and luxury. How do you fit into some of those places? You know Mexico, but a person like me that doesn't know anything about Mexico and say I'm interviewing somebody in a leadership position in a drug cartel. How quickly do you learn how to fit in? It's not about fitting in. It's about coming up with a narrative for yourself. That's a quote from the book called a shounenki, which is like an actual legit ninja manual from like the 1500s or something like that. And they're not talking about blending in. They're talking about creating a narrative or a lie through your appearance and your behavior in your knowledge base. That's what they're talking about.

So I would say first, if you're going to go to a place like that, first off, learn what is common there, what type of common restraints might be placed on you, what criminal groups work out there, what type of guns they have, not only what type of guns they have, but go to the gun range in Vegas and learn how to fire some of these firearms yourself so you know how to load them in case you run into a bad situation. How they tie the sword, how they wear their short swords, could equate to how, you know, if you run into some issues. Also, it would give you a good idea how many rounds those hold so you can run at the right moment. I like how you focus in on the tools of violence. But there's also the social engineering de-escalation, right? Yeah. So if you are in an environment like that and you are carrying around a camera, that might be an issue. Or the opposite and not be an issue. Well, if you're asked like, were you with, I'm with the news organization or am I with a Christian aid group here? Yeah. And if you are with a Christian aid group, it's probably a good idea to learn some of the Bible, right? If you want a quick way of having somebody out there try and stop talking to you, you can start talking about Jesus in the middle of a little cartel territory when they approach you and take out the Bible. That'll quickly de-escalate. What I usually prefer to do is I find somebody

through The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal and beat them up in front of the, just to send a signal to my journalists and I too don't like journalists. That could be a way. But... To send a message.

I think a lot of us miss the fact that we are capable of taking control of our own narrative and what we communicate to people around us. I can show up here drinking a monster energy drink, dumping it on the ground, scratching, you know what? Then just sit down and just be a rude motherfucker. That's not who I am, but I can do that. And you will believe me if I am good at it. Some of us miss the, some of us don't know this aspect because it's something we consider predatory

or something that is wrong or negative or bad. And some of these aspects are actually, you know, they're pretty useful. I learned most of my tradecraft and skill craft from panhandlers and street performers. And when I had some training related to social engineering, those were the people that I learned from. I remember we were doing surveillance and there was a guy there that showed us how to do surveillance, you know, on the street. And he said, if you can find a way for somebody to smell you before they see you, you will become invisible. And I was like, that's bullshit. If you can find a way of somebody smelling you before they see you become invisible, I didn't understand what that meant. So we went on a three

day bender, didn't take a shower, smelled like shit, no deodorant, you know, you smell like a homeless person, you look like a homeless person, and you approach somebody asking for the time and

they smell you before they see you. And you are not there. You're not a human. You don't exist. Human, you don't exist. So that was a pretty valuable lesson that I got there.

Yeah, that's interesting. But like, I have this belief, it has to do with the way I operate in this world, I suppose. But if you come off as a person legitimately, I guess you could fake it, but I think it just feels like you can be extremely good, possibly the best in the world, if you practice it your whole life at being you, at being authentic, at showing like you have nothing to hide. And a true believer is what a true believer. So like, yes, you can come up with a fake narrative, but then what I mean is like, live that narrative your whole life then, would be like, and then never falter from that. Like you are this person, that's what I'm trying to have that's what I'm trying to have nothing to hide. I consider I consider that a true believer. And yeah, that is a unique person when you meet them. And they are out there. There are people that will fucking walk into places. This is why I am. I don't give a fuck. This is why I am. If you don't trust me, well, shoot me, fuck it. This is my honesty. And if you don't trust me, well, look at all these people that I've interacted with in the past, and you can ask them about it, or you can see my effects on other people. That's going to be my presentation card.

And so the way you said it now is using words and it's blunt. Usually somebody is blunt like that, like I'm a no bullshit person. That means they're not. That means they're a full of shit, actually.

But you do that through, I mean, I'm saying I'm verbalizing your behavior, you know, just walking somewhere. You know, let's say you're going to interview somebody very dangerous down

there and you walk into a room without worry. That is, that is a presentation to you. You know, that's a pretty interesting introduction. You know, you're not a threat because you don't consider yourself a threat and you're walking in there with the confidence that you

don't consider yourself a threat, which is an interesting way of going about it. My life experiences have been different. I was in program that way from an early age and it's hard for me to go into that line. Although more and more as I get older and as I learn more about the world and I've failed a few more times, I can understand or more cognizant of the fact that you don't really have to try that much if you believe in yourself and who you are. If you know yourself, I think that is at the core of it. If you know yourself enough to be able to kind of communicate that to people around you. And you're not hiding from yourself or from the world your flaws too. That was the other thing you spoke to that is probably inspiring to others is being honest about your flaws, about your weaknesses as a human being. You can't pick pocket a naked man and if you know how to be naked and again, I'm not there. I think I'm working towards that just by, you know, hopefully going through shit and showing people not telling them is a show me don't tell me is another valuable lesson that I got long ago. I travel across the country and I don't not only get to show people what I know how to do, but I give examples of it through things that I do out there. And I say this a lot, you know, when I travel out there, I'm never alone. You know, there's couches out there waiting for me, you know, there's homes that I can go and stay at and friends that I have out there that I have never even met. But that's been about me not only wearing some of those mistakes and past failures honestly, but also turning them into lessons for people and just telling people the fact that, you know, I know how to do all this weird stuff, you know, and I show people how to do it. Yeah. But here's a bunch of weird memes that are very humorous about my culture and about being it through going through therapy. And this is me doing something goofy. And this is me being an idiot in front of all you guys as well. You know, this is me being the fool. I think that is another aspect of it. I love that as part of that journey, you made enemies with the rodeo clown and made up with them afterwards. We're still wearing a very toxic relationship. You know, he knows who he is. He's probably out there listening. He's a love and hate. We stop talking to each other for months and then, you know, just send a dick message or some sort and just, you know, we're back at it, you know, back. Yeah. Love expressed through anger. I love it. It's therapeutic. You have both very interesting career paths. If we can just jump back to a really interesting topic that I wanted to mention on narco cultism. What are narco cults? What's the relationship between, you kind of mentioned religion a little bit. Yeah. What's the relationship between religious culture and drug culture? First off, Mexico is one of the most Catholic countries on the planet. It's not the most Catholic country on the planet. Not only that, it is a country that has a root in spirituality through its ethnic culture that other parts of the world got most of that taken away and or suppressed or killed or taken away. When the Spanish came to Mexico, they were a product of a recently liberated group of people. They just got done being invaded by the Moors, basically. And they brought with them the image of the La Virgen de Guadalupe, the version of Guadalupe. And Hernán Cortés's vision of that or version of that was a lady holding a crystal scepter, baby Jesus, and standing on a crescent moon. That's what he brought with him to the Americas. And when the conquest happened, you know, a lot of people say that the Spanish came and conquered the Aztec Empire. The enemies of the Aztec allied themselves with the Spanish and they took them down. That's what happened. And then the rest was famine and sickness. That's what killed most of them.

They realized that it was going to be hard to suppress some of the spiritual practices in Mexico, so they decided to meld them with Catholic iconography. So you see this cult Tuanazin, which is like a fertility variant of a mother goddess in Aztec culture. And they turned her into La Virgen de Guadalupe, which is the icon that a lot of Mexicans venerate as the La Virgen, the Virgin. But in her, she conceals cultural elements from the past. She has a black sash across her stomach, which means she's pregnant. It's something common in the Aztec culture, in the Mejica culture. She's standing on a cherub that has eagle wings. That is a war god. That's the symbol of the war god down there. She has stars on her, which is a veil of certain stars that are related to some of the spiritual practices from before. Basically, they hid these things in that setting. Now, you skip forward hundreds of years, and you start seeing things like Malverde, who was a bandit that lived in Sinaloa way back in the day. He would rob rich farmers that would go through the countryside. One time, he was almost caught and he was shot and injured, and he was wanted by the government. So he told one of his friends to tell them where he was and to give the money, the reward money to the townspeople. So we did that.

He was hung from a tree, and the order was not to bury him just to let his body rot, and his body rotted away until it fell onto the ground, the bones. Each of the townspeople would go over and put a rock on top of his corpse until it became a pile of rocks, and then he started granting miracles. So again, this whole aspect of these criminals become in saints, and also a middle finger from the downward local populace to the church in a way because he's not a recognized saint, but he has an altar and people venerate that. Then you have cartels that have a spiritual practice or spirituality behind what they do, which is part of their culture, but is also like a tool they use to ingratiate themselves with the local populace or the population around them. They're icons of power and sometimes of almost a symbol of rebellion. You see El Chapo's son, when he was arrested, had a Santo Niño de Atocha on his chest, which is a holy kid of Atocha, a Spanish legend during the Morris Conquest. He said that a statue of that saint would go around and feed some of the hungry. That was the legend, and he's a saint of the persecuted. So the fact that when he was arrested, you see him with that wearing that, and then he was liberated, is a miracle in and of itself. So it's proof that that works. You can find one of those Scapularios anywhere in Mexico that was the most highly sold one. So you see them utilizing some of these aspects in their own belief system as a symbol or as iconography, basically, for some of the things they do. Then you go into some of the other aspects of it that are out there, like Santa Muerte, which is actually a faith that I grew up in. Mexico has a weird relationship to death. We have parties at the cemetery on Day of the Dead, and I just went through one recently. This is November the 2nd. So we celebrate our dead, and we celebrate death in a way that I don't think a lot of cultures out there do. So it's a joyful occasion.

It is a celebration. My eight-year-old put two beers on an altar, one for my mom, one for my brother. She bought a Snickers bar for my mom and a bag of pops for my brother. Flower petals and marigolds and pictures of them on an altar.

This is amazing. What kind of beer?

Tecate Roja for my mother, because she was hardcore, and Tecate Light for my brother. He was more of an endurance drinker. And it's also for me. The relationship to death down there is different. So there's an icon in Mexico. It's actually one of the fastest growing



alternative spiritual practices in Mexico. And not only in Mexico, but here in the U.S., I've been to Santa Muerte temples across the country. I found one in Connecticut out of all places. How I grew up with it, or I saw it, is my family was on Guadalupe Annas. We were a Catholic, and we venerated the Virgin of Guadalupe specifically, the icon of the Virgin of Guadalupe. But every now and then there were winks and nods to a skeletal saint in family practices. And even when I went to work, the older guys that I was working with would tell me, like, hey, we've got to go ask for protection. So they would drive me over to the church, and I thought I was going to the cathedral. And then we made a left turn, and it wasn't the cathedral. It was the market next to the cathedral in Tijuana. And in the little corner, there was a big Santa Muerte Reaper refuge. And then I knew why I had to bring a bottle tequila. It was like, why am I bringing a bottle tequila to the church? It was for her, for death, la muerte. It was partly hazing. And also, they did believe that they were basically imbued with the being agents of death in a way. So it was like a cultural thing as well, something that they wore on them as not only protection, but also like a samurai would wear this death iconography on them or how the Maori would do haka dances to some of these guys in their kind of warrior culture that they were growing up with or trying to envious on us, the young guys, they would take us there and they would envious us with iconography of Santa Muerte to be like a psychological thing. So that gives you strength and meaning in the face of struggle, like in the face of difficulties in life. I think if you're close to death and having a relationship to death in the form of a symbolic representation of it like Santa Muerte or an icon like that makes it not as scary, I guess, or not only that, but it's also something that the other side, the enemy, the cartels groups, they would venerate it as well. So when they would see it on you, it was almost debilitating to them. They were like, oh, are you guys cops or you guys, why are you wearing that? So there was an aspect of that to it, a momenta moiti type thing where you remember death type thing. There's some aspect in which you don't want to mess with a person who meditates on death. There was some of that, yeah. There was a saying, I think they probably took it from a movie or something like that, but I don't know where they got it. May I earn your need and be your wrath. Oh, man. It's a good line. They would say that to the statue of La Santa. Another thing people, it's not a cartel specific saint though. It's like everybody, like at all levels, from the lady that sells tortillas to the cops, to the military. There's some people in the military that venerate it. There's a very specific symbol of how this is like a weird relationship specifically in Santa Marta in Mexico. There's a shrine outside of Tijuana right across the presa. It's like a water reservoir right outside Tijuana. And there was a big Santa Marta altar there, like on the roadside. And my former boss, Lezaola, ordered that thing destroyed. So he ordered a truck to destroy it. It was a famous thing. And it was rebuilt the next night. And I know for a fact that some of the people that rebuilt that were some of the same guys that were there destroying it. Oh, man, that's pretty symbolic. So it's just not something that can be killed. It's a part of the spirit of the people. It keeps getting destroyed by ultra Christian groups or Catholic groups, and it keeps getting rebuilt. Personally, for me as a, you know, I don't believe that there's a Reaper skeleton in the sky protecting me. But I do believe in the aspect of an ending, you know, and how it's important to, you know, the ending is important in all things and death should be present in life. And if it's not, then you're delusional about things. So the, to you, it's a mechanism to meditate on death once again. Yeah. And, you know, having my daughter, who's eight, view it as a benevolent thing,

you know, she's a kid and she sees a skeleton that represents death. And Jesus does, it's like, I think, in a way, Mexicans have taken some of those aspects, be it day of the dead, some of these practices related to some occultism aspects around, you know, St. Judas, you know, San Judas. St. Judas is the patron saint of lost causes. And it's one of the most venerated saints in Mexico, you know, Jesus is probably the fourth or fifth you pray to, which is pretty funny and ridiculous. But the reason why, and this is something I heard from somebody that was actually, we found him with a gun and on his gun, he had a St. Judas effigy. And he said, like, why St. Judas? Why St. Judas? And he's like, well, he's the last saint you pray to. What do you mean? Well, on the list of saints you pray to, he's the last one, because when you pray to Judas, you might get the other Judas on the line. That's the last one you pray to, that's why he's like the lost cause of the saint. I remember, like, even how we try and bribe or like maneuver our way, even in spirituality, in spiritual practices, you know? Such a fascinating culture that's unlike anything else. And it's right next door. And it's here too. Again, I found an altar in Connecticut, which is pretty fascinating. There's one in Arizona. Again, it's one of the fastest growing spiritual practices in the, not only in the US, but across the, there's somebody from Russia reached out, there's an altar out there, and there's a group of people praying to Santa Marta. And I've been posting and writing a lot about it recently, just from my own experience and some of the stuff that I gathered for myself. And all the way out there, you know, people are fascinated by some of those aspects. So I got to ask you about the dark turn of that spirituality, or maybe you will place this elsewhere, but who was Adolfo Costanzo, El Padrino? This is a guy that comes up in a period, I think he's at that initial period of cartels. This is before my time. And I've talked to some of the people that were there for some of that. I mean, he kills a lot of people. He was exposed and learned through his family ties about some of the Afro-Caribbean spiritualities that are now also exploding as far as influences across the world, Latin America and in the US. When I talk about that, I mean, Santería, Palo Mayombe, basically some old spiritual practices coming out of Africa that utilize things like engangas, which are basically spiritual vessels that have to be loaded with human remains in some cases. He was basically a spiritual practitioner that certain cartel groups would hire for them to curse the other side, to envenom them with invisibility to be able to transport their drugs or protection spells and stuff like that. He was very successful at it, apparently, or at least that is the experience of the people paying for some of these practices. As his spells and his work kept getting bigger and bigger and more and more complicated, the ingredients he needed for these engangas or these spells, these cauldrons that he would fill with certain elements grew in complexity. Finally, he said he needed the brain of a highly educated American of some sort, which led to his eventual downfall. He was basically responsible for abducting and murdering a young American who was a university college student, I think. Do you think he believed the, so this guy's murdering people to create what magical potions? Vessels, yeah. Vessels. Yeah, I think he truly believed that he was capable of doing what he was doing, I guess. And there was a culture that spiritually inclined that kind of was on the same wavelength as him. Yeah, it jived. I mean, some of these spiritual practices, again, there's a ritualistic cannibalism done by some of these cartel groups out there. Was he involved in cannibalism as well? He wasn't involved in cannibalism that I know of, but most of the things that he was kind of known

for was basically requesting human body parts for some of the spell works he was doing and then going to such a level where he needed a specific brain or head of somebody that was educated and American. So that, again, led to his eventual downfall. His ranch was raided. They found the body parts inside of these cauldrons that he was preparing. That's an interesting example of somebody.

There's a cartel head somewhere in central Mexico as well. El Masloco was his nickname. And he basically forced the citizenship around him to turn him into a saint. So he made a statue of himself. He was very big into Christianity, specifically kind of like the crusader mentality and all that kind of in viewed himself and some of the people that were around him with that. And there's still alters to his death, to him after he died. He died two times. One time the government declared him that he was killing a shootout and turns out he wasn't dead. So that was his first miracle. And then when he was really dead, some of his people and his loyal followers were gunpoint kind of still forced to go and get flowers and venerate these effigies and statues of him as a saint. It's a powerful weapon, spirituality in Mexico is a powerful weapon. And the church, Catholic church in Mexico was a pretty bad track record. But as far as that being used to control populace and stuff like that. And I think it's just another aspect that is being exploited in Mexico in some communities as far as the spirituality and the desperate need for people to believe in something and how that leads for some people to go into some horrible predatory behavior around it. There's a fascinating dynamic of play here. So it's not just the United States and Mexico, it's also China that you talk about. China is the primary source of fentanyl in the world. So fentanyl is an opioid that leads to 70,000 plus or minus overdose deaths in the US every year. So reading from Wikipedia, quote, compared with heroin, it is more potent, has higher profit margins. And because it is compact, has simpler logistics, it can be cut into or even replaced entirely, the supply of heroin and other opiates. What do you think is important to understand about fentanyl as a drug? There was a prescription opiate epidemic in the United States that kind of went down or stopped. Well, still out there, but the epidemic specific around it kind of petered out. And there was also marijuana legalization happening at kind of the same time period, which people talking about marijuana legalization thought it was going to hit the cartels in their pockets and it was going to be like a death blow to these criminal groups. Well, now there's illegal pot grows in the United States being run by cartels in federal lands. And there's the legal pot grows that are in some way shape or form influenced and or run or own by some criminal groups. And they're kind of utilizing that. The marijuana fields in Mexico turn into poppy fields once again. The problem is that some of these lands were leached of all the nutrients and they're not as good as something you would find somewhere in Afghanistan. So the yield and the quality of it wasn't as strong as it could be. So somebody thought about the right idea of putting fentanyl into the mix. And not only that, but also figuring out a get fentanyl into Mexico. Mexico has a giant pharmaceutical industry that people kind of also don't kind of know or factor into this equation, which leads into the free ability of chemicals going in and out of the country and legal means of it happening. So not only the precursors to make it, but also the chemists and the industry to create it in Mexico as well. Some clandestine factories of fentanyl have been found in Mexico, but realistically it's not needed with the ways that the ports and the borders are down in Mexico.

So you started seeing an influx and a flood of fentanyl into Mexico specifically related to infusing it into heroin and not only using that to feed local drug markets, but send it up into the United States, which started off this process that we're kind of going through still. Are these like similar highs?

And drug-wise, why do you infuse? I mean, probably you're not the right person to have this biochemical discussion or how? I don't know about the biochemical aspect of it, but like speaking to guys that do Chiba down there, that's what they call heroin down there. It's like a nickname for it. Having them describe some of the older, stinkier, darker heroin they used to get before this whole fentanyl thing and the highs they would get and how much they would have to take versus some of the stuff loaded with fentanyl that they have to, you know, also there's more higher potency. Yeah, there's a higher potency to it and also there's a, you know, more money to be made, easier to transport. Yeah.

But then is this how China starts becoming part of the picture?

One aspect to it that people kind of miss is that, you know, there's no Chinese cartel, you know, there's no criminal Chinese organization working unseen, getting around government oversight in China. I don't know of any such organization. So anything that could be labeled as a criminal organization is deeply integrated with the government. So it's, I mean, I've never heard of a giant criminal enterprise in China operating. So we have to assume then. Independent of the state. I would have to assume that some of these things are happening with the know-how and inaction of the government out there. When COVID hit, there was a shortage of fentanyl on the northern side of Mexico, specifically related to the Sinaloa cartel. These guys were actually trafficking fentanyl from the US down to Mexico to infuse their product. But not the new generation cartel, which operates out of the central part of Mexico, Colima area, which have access to the seaside ports. So even during the shutdown, they were getting supplied, which means to me, at least for anybody observing it, that the supply chain was not cut. And whatever was coming out of China was being let out of China by whatever official channels would be able to shut down or stop it. And I would love to know the organizational structure, the governmental structure of China, how they enable it. Because I can't imagine at the very top, there's a portfolio of things we're doing and one of them is fentanyl's right. I think it's more inaction or just the know-how that is happening, but just like hands off, just let this, I don't know. If I were to understand how large bureaucracies work, it's looking the other way. Yeah. You are now seeing pill presses brought to Mexico, industrial level pill presses found in clandestine laboratories, where they're not only infusing the yields that they're doing with fentanyl, but also making fake pain medication that is flooding US markets everywhere. Is that pain medication or is that fentanyl? Who knows? You know, and that's how you see a lot of people dying from ODs that are supposedly taking pain pills and that's not what they're doing. So the evolution right now you're seeing is making something look legit as far as pain medication that it isn't. And I mean, fentanyl is everywhere. They're infusing cocaine with it. I've been getting stories from the US of people buying it through Alibaba or just weird online sources and it coming in different packages and then just infusing it into whatever is out there. It is killing off a whole generation of people and it comes from one place or it's manufactured somewhere where it's being manufactured with the precursors and the elements and know how it comes from one place. Are we talking about China?

We're talking about China because Mexico seems to have, what's the world, this is such a complicated

and how do you start to talk about the drug war when more and more and more China is the source of the drug? Is there a drug war going on with China?

There's probably an economic war while you talk about, there's another side to China.

Most, and this is something that's come out recently, a few years back I think, but basically the ways you would move money back into Mexico after you have a load up here is that you would give it to a Chinese money broker. They would put it into a Chinese banking system and it immediately would just disappear from American eyes and then another money broker in Mexico would receive it through a money transfer from China.

So China is incredibly good at money laundering.

That's another aspect too. I mean, their banking system is invisible to the US basically.

Which allows?

Which allows the monies to move from one point to another. So money brokers and people moving money for the groups down there are Chinese. So that's another aspect, their element of China as far as its presence.

What's the role of intelligence in all of this? FBI, CIA, the Chinese intelligence agencies?

Right now, Mexico is going through a nationalistic resurgence and left this presidency, which is not friendly to US interest in a lot of ways. The US has had a pretty bad track record with its foreign policy in Mexico, with a lot of damage being done by the last president as far as his rhetoric.

Donald Trump?

Which has been weaponized and utilized by the left down in Mexico.

So America is not seen positively?

No. Every now and then I post something about Mexico, some horrible thing happening down there. It's like, why doesn't US send people down there? Are Mexicans looking for US intervention?

It's like, no. That is beyond what anybody in Mexico would want. Specifically, you see the sentiment out there. They don't view the US as somebody that's going to come in and fix anything or somebody that's going to help or as a friend. When the Ukrainian conflict happened, Mexico basically is abstained from saying anything, which is a wink and a nod to Russia.

It has openly been promodural and openly celebrated to some of these regimes popping up across Latin America, which is that is what people voted for. That is a sentiment down

there. They're going towards the left of the political spectrum because they've been basically violated over and over again by all these different presidencies that have promised change, brought corruption with them, and they are choices. So this is the best we have right now. All of the enemies of the United States are taking full advantage of that.

We recently had a general address the Senate committee hearing. I think he was talking about the prevalence of foreign intelligence services in Mexico and why that is.

Well, Mexico has a lot of the mind of a lithium on the planet underneath the parts of it, specifically in the north. It is going through a process. They call it la cuarta transformación.

The fourth transformation is what the president of Mexico calls it, which is in a way it's basically we're here to stay type thing. They just nationalize mining lithium and taking control of that and using that leverage. If the United States ever wants to go to Mexico, it's probably not going to be



related to cartel issues. It's going to probably relate to energy, I think. They're kind of thinking ahead, I guess. Well, what about also just imagine a world where India and China are doing fentanyl trade with Mexico or whatever transport. Imagine Chinese military moves, makes an agreement, a NATO type of agreement with Mexico. That's pretty possible. Again, we're seeing militarized Mexico. It's another aspect of Mexico that, again, I haven't seen talked about a lot here in the US. The main promise that the current president had was he was going to make the police, the federal police and the security issues in Mexico civilian. He was going to do exactly the opposite as his main rival, Felipe Calderón, the guy that started off the drug war officially. What does he do? He dissolves the civilian leadership of the federal police, dissolves the federal police, creates the National Guard, which is a military unit, and he puts the military in charge of that. Now, the military has full monopoly over all federal policing. When you cross into Mexico, you'll see them wearing these white camouflage uniforms. Those are National Guard people, but they're the military. You're now seeing a militarized Mexico with some of these leaks that happened during the Guacamaya leaks. You're now seeing that Mexico has been hosting members of the Haitian military, and they've been training them up to go back to police their country. That's not something that Mexico has been known for, to hosting other nations and training them in such a way. It's an interesting maneuver. Mexico has been historically neutral about getting involved in foreign conflicts, about voting and resolutions as far as invading or not invading or doing all these things. Mexico has been historically neutral when it comes to some of these things. Now, we're training foreign military forces to go and do that role somewhere else. We have the military building airports and building infrastructure in Mexico, and a lot of their higher ups getting very wealthy around it. They basically have a monopoly over who gets to have guns down there. There's one gun store in all of Mexico, and it's run by the military. The only way you can buy a gun there is if you can buy a plane ticket to fly there and have enough money to sustain that right or that privilege. You're seeing the military not being in its traditional role of just being the security force. Now, it's policing. It's getting involved in politics in a big way. The legislation has passed to keep it on the streets in a policing role for more years now, so that should be looked at closer by anybody observing it from afar, the militarization of Mexico and the words going. Because if you move towards a world where a World War III happens, it feels like Mexico will be the center because a hot war would be fought on the ground. And so you have a very difficult parallel between Mexico and Ukraine. Both don't have nuclear weapons, both have relationships. So Ukraine has a relationship or a pull towards the European Union and NATO. Mexico, at least currently, has a slow pull towards China, India potentially, and Russia. And you have this divide between power centers in the world. And in terms of, just imagine hundreds of thousands of Mexican troops, hundreds of thousands of Chinese troops on the border, on the US border, on the Mexican side. And also, the fact that that border doesn't mean anything to any sort of conflict that would happen regionally, because that's a very easy to cross border. It doesn't matter how many walls you put across it. People are already here. This is not going to be a war fought off in some overseas place. This is something, if it happens, if destabilization is utilized in Mexico

to cause a conflict there. And it turns into a Vietnam or a proxy war down there of a sort, which I think in a way you're already kind of seeing some of that through some of the conflicts going on down there. You have a new generation cartel that is being fed fentanyl from the Pacific side ports. And suspiciously, you want to think that maybe it's favored by a foreign government of some sort in some way, shape, or form. Who knows. And then you have a historically in control Cina law cartel that may or may not be favored by the US in some way, shape, or form. You can imagine further conflict down there and people fostering it and seeing the effects of basically setting a fire on the feet of the United States. Its second largest consumer of US products is Mexico. The massive wave of immigration that is going to be basically weaponized. You saw the collapse of the border security structure with a contingent of 3000 Honduran Guatemalan immigrants in that first wave of caravans coming to Tijuana. You saw it was pretty bad. It was pretty bad and it could have gotten worse. Now, what is going to happen when that wave is no longer 3000, but a million people being displaced by violence or being in fear of whatever conflict might originate down there and just that massive wave of migration and move? I think that's an interesting thing that people should look at and how can you affect change to try and stop some of these things that happen.

Well, let me ask you a philosophical at a human level. What do you think about immigration? Illegal and illegal immigration from the direction of Mexico to the United States.

So we have an estimated 11 million illegal immigrants in the United States and estimated 45 million legal immigrants in the United States. A few things about that. When COVID hit, there was no shortages of produce in the supermarkets, which means that, I mean, illegal immigration is pretty much the backbone of all produce and some of the farming industries out there, most of it.

So illegal immigration and illegal workers in those fields are essential workers in a way. I think there's a weird relationship in the United States with some of these workers and how they're demonized and how they're called criminals. I think there was a state out there that passed anti-illegal immigrant worker legislation. The farmers had to look elsewhere for people to show up to work in some of these fields, which basically caused millions of dollars worth of losses for some of these farms. Anywhere you go out there in the United States, you go into the kitchens and there's going to be paisanos there, you know, high-level French restaurants. You'll see people from Puebla there that made their way illegally and might have legalized or regularized their way into the country or in a sanctuary city. You go to the service industry, hotels, you know, those are the people changing the blankets. Those are the people in the washrooms.

You have them doing jobs that no American wants to do realistically and they're everywhere in this country and they are the backbone of some of these industries that are essential in this country. Do you think there's a deep sense in which they are American? I think they're indispensable and anybody that says they aren't is delusional. If you take every single legal worker out of the industry in the United States and send them back, like there's a movie out there called like that, yes, in Mexicana's A Day Without Mexicans, you know, everything would stop. So the relationship is there. People talk about the history of slavery in this country, like it's a thing that's in the past. There's endangered slaves in the country right now, people that are paying off their people smugglers because they brought them into this country and they haven't been able to pay that fine or that fee yet and are basically being held hostage by that here in the United States. So there's slaves right now in the United States, you know, people are talking about it's a historical

context. What do we do about it? How are we supposed to think about it? We're going to have to rethink

how we look at immigration, illegal or illegal immigration from Mexico and how we view Mexico as a foreign country. Your relationship to Canada is one thing, your relationship to Mexico is another. The foreign policy towards Mexico has been pretty nefarious and as far as the United States in a lot of ways, you know, you can go back. There was a student massacre during the Olympics and the president in turn at that time was on the CIA payroll and it was a counter communist type maneuver that we're doing down there. But there's some bloody hands on the US side of some of the things that have been happening in Mexico as far as destabilization and influencing and meddling in foreign policy out there. Most of the guns that are used down there come from the US, you know, and that's another interesting aspect and responsibility that people shouldn't kind of think about up here. So there is on the drug war side a machine that's fueling the drug war. I mean, there's a giant drug habit up here, you know. But also a governmental intelligence and military support through the sale of weapons.

I don't know about the sale of weapons, but, you know, there's some very, you talk about porous borders coming up. There's porous borders also going down, you know. There's a flow of guns going down and munitions, which again, gun, they don't kill anybody by themselves. They get put in the hands of the desperate that are trying to feed a giant drug market to the south, to the north. You know, Mexico has a saying, Mexico, Mexico lejos de Dios, pero cerca de los Estados Unidos. Mexico far from God, but close to the United States.

And there's definitely a responsibility on both sides. This is no longer a Mexico problem, a US problem. This is a regional problem. And if we don't think about it as a regional problem with our brothers on the southern side of it and with family, we're related in blood.

They're like, we are Mexico and the United States are like this, but it's become popular in politics. They just throw a line, right? And I think we need to get to a place where we can figure out how to make those connections and repair some of the damage done by just years and years of bad policy on both sides of the border.

Policy and rhetoric, the way we talk about it, the way we think about it, not just the actual policy, but seeing the humanity and the people that are here.

Yeah. It's an easy thing. They're coming to take our jobs is something you hear.

There was a state out there that passed some anti-legislation as far as illegal workers on fields. And it led to massive losses. Nobody wanted to show up for those jobs, basically. People would show up one day and they wouldn't come back and they were doing jobs that people just don't want to do. Are they taking that from the locals? Or are they feeling an essential role that we feel guilty about and the rhetoric around it is more about guilt than anything?

I am an immigrant myself. I've gone through the experience of doing it legally and I've seen people not do it legally and are in way better places than I am, basically, by going around some of the system. The immigration system here in the U.S. is there's something wrong. It's kind of broken. And people coming here illegally are not only they're looking for a better life for themselves, a better life for people. This whole aspect of vilifying them and they're like, oh, this immigrant did this horrible thing, this immigrant did that horrible thing. And people saying, go back to your country. At the same time, they go to a hotel where all the service staff is from that part of the world and they're here irregularly or they go to the whole foods and they get some produce there and it's picked by some of the same people

that are vilifying. And again, we need to kind of like think about that and analyze that for ourselves. The idea of go back to your country and finding the other and having a disdain and a hate towards the other. Ever since I had a recent conversation with Yay, formerly known as Kanye West, I got to hear a few things from, let's say, unfriendly messages from white nationalists and I got to learn about this world. I continue on the journey of learning, which is the idea that the United States, this country should look a certain way, should have a certain skin color, should have a certain religion and everything else is a pollution, is a poison to this. I made it sound hateful right now, but they usually frame it in a positive way, like the purity. I'm sure Hitler also phrased everything in a positive way, especially in the 1930s about the purity of Germany. But the reality of the United States and one of the things that makes it at least the ideal of the United States is the soup, the mix. Unlike so many nations I've traveled to, the diversity, the good kind of diversity is what makes this country great. I think it needs to be based on accepting the different subgroups that make up the United States versus trying to purify. I think Mexican immigrants is just another flavor of saying, this is the other. Let's reject the other. Yeah, I saw that interview, by the way. That was, you showed a basic restraint in that interview. My experience, and I came up here, again, Trump was elected when I came up here, so it was a weird time for me as far as being an immigrant and the immigrant experience for myself by both being basically the ones that were talked about in that way. And also having a bunch of my friends who were very conservative and wearing some of those MAGA hats around me and like, hey, Ed,

like, well, I mean, I'm a guest here, so I have to, but it's a balancing act is what I've been looking at it as. On one side, there's the woke side of it, which everything goes. And then the other side is like, let's hold on to some of these things that make us who we are. On my end, you know, I want to get to a place where I can smoke a joint, conceal, carry our firearm, be it my gay best friend's wedding. And I want the government not to say anything about it. And I think there's parts in the United States here that kind of feel the same way. But there's extremes on both sides that are pulling you to one side or the other. And I've seen more of the United States than most Americans. I'm in a different state every weekend. So I get to go to Tampa in a bit tomorrow. Then I'm going back to California, then I'm going to Tennessee later, then Kentucky. So I get to see all types of people and all types of mentalities and ways that people live in this country is more diverse than most would think, you know, if you only see it through with the lens of television or media. What I keep seeing out there that for me is like the reason I came here, I guess, and a lot of the reasons that I feel a vested interest in this country, not just because of my kids American. So I have a very, very big interest in this country doing well. But a thing I see is the, there's still the opportunity and the ability to do something with yourself and opportunities out there for people like me that come here with nothing. I came here with an experience base, a truck.

And some demons.

And yeah, and a bunch of demons in a bag. And I'm here with you talking right now about some of those experiences. To another immigrant. To another immigrant. And both of us are reaching people out there that, you know, might not, might haven't heard a voice of people like us that come here with our own bag of demons. But where else in the world can two people like us have a conversation

with an audience like us and not be shot outside of this because of the stuff we're saying?

Yeah, listen to with love and respect, not derision. Let me ask you for advice. What would you say to young folks? Wherever they come from. So in high school and college, they're thinking of how to live a life, have a career they can, they can be proud of. And especially if they're struggling, especially if they're at a low point like you were when you came here.

A travel, travel is one of the biggest things in the world that I would ask people to kind of go out to see how other people live. Don't go there with your own preconceived notions or trying to make people act like you act like go out there and travel and actually experience the world. It doesn't have to be another country going from Tennessee to Seattle. It's a pretty interesting change of a scenery. Who's better at knife fighting? Just kidding. You don't have to answer that. Tennessee. But the traveling is one and knowing how other people live is one aspect that I would tell people. It's risky. It's dangerous. But that is part of the journey, is one of the things I would ask young people to kind of consider. Service is essential and it should be at the basis of all of our lives. Service. Start there. Start with service.

In any industry, you're going to go start your own restaurant. You have to work in the kitchen for service. If you're going to be a part, a productive member of this country, service. And I'm not talking just about the military because the military, it's a process and it's a lifestyle and it's a thing for some people out there. It's not even a choice for other people if they want an education and I get that. Community service of any kind is an essential thing. The ability to go out there and interact with the people that you would normally not interact with, the homeless population that there is in this country, the older population that in Mexico, our old die in our homes. But here you send them off somewhere else to die, which is an interesting weird detachment that I've seen in the US as far as how the elders are cast aside. If I can say anything to the young people is to start figuring out a life of service and that's going to expose you to a bunch of experiences, to a bunch of people out there that you might not regularly kind of meet and see and realities. Education is out there. It is expensive, but I've sat through a bunch of really expensive classes that I've managed to see on YouTube and learned a lot from them. So education is out there, but it doesn't have to be as expensive as they make it. It's all about the individual and what he does with that education. The dream is free and the hustle is sold separately. Something else I would watch somewhere online, but the ability to take information, process and use it. We're expecting everything to be safe, processed and given to us in a platter and taking that and digesting and thinking that's going to make us somebody that's going to be productive or valuable in society. What's up to us? The US talks a lot about freedoms, but doesn't talk a lot about responsibilities. I think that's a big part of take responsibility for like I came here without anything. And the first thing I thought was I have responsibility for the people that I've worked with and the people that are going through the same problems that I am. How can I figure out a way to help? Yeah, the dark side of thinking a lot about freedom is thinking too individualistically, meaning thinking about me, how to optimize my situation, forgetting that the deepest growth you can do as an individual is by taking care of others, by helping others, by being of service, by being useful to your community locally, and then hopefully also at scale. And that's how you grow. And that's responsibility of helping those around you. There's an isolationist aspect to culture now. It's like we are separate. There's almost like a spiritual or cultural amputation in a way where when I was a kid, the house where all the bikes outside of it, that was where all the kids were hanging out. And now everybody's on their phone, separate houses chatting on whatever. There's a detachment to there. That's a weird



aspect to it. And also the aspect of I need to be safe. I can't be offended. Don't hurt me, say spaces. This is my right. This is my right. This is my reality. You need to respect it. Respect is earned. And when I come from, respect is earned. There's freedoms, but there's dangerous

freedoms. Any freedom you have in Mexico is a dangerous freedom in a way. You can drive home drunk in Mexico. You can if you bribe a cop on your way there and if you don't die or crash into somebody else. That's a dangerous aspect of freedom. But there's a responsibility to all of it.

It is a twisted responsibility and a twisted way to kind of talk about it and describe it. But I think the aspect of people screaming for freedom up here or their rights or their privilege without the responsibility, what are you doing for your community?

You're complaining about this. What are you doing about it? Another thing I've noticed in traveling around that's scary is the whole people getting shouted down or cancelled because of what they express or say. Some of the creepiest experiences I've had in the US has been through universities or just seeing young people that have an opinion that is completely outside of reality. People telling me how things are in Mexico because they learned it through a college course and seeing sons of immigrants criticizing me because of my opinion of Mexico or what I have to say about it. If you want to encounter the worst enemy of a Mexican, it's usually a second, third generation Mexican up here that shouts you down for what you're saying.

I mean in general, entitlement, all of those kinds of things. Some of that comes with just being young in general. But yes, humility at a societal scale would benefit significantly, especially the young. I would say some of the service that you're speaking to comes with being humbled. That is one of the best things you can do as a young person while maintaining the dream and the ambition, humble yourself to the reality of the world. One small example, a micro example of this. My kid, there was a homeless guy. She was out with family members. This homeless guy showed up. He was erratic, mentally disturbed, created a scene. She was upset. There was a little bit of trauma there. She was like, oh, now all homeless people are bad. So with her, she does art pieces sometimes for me and helps me make designs for the clothing brand that I have. And we take some of that money and we buy socks and underwear. And sometimes I have them in the

car. Sometimes I drive around and see somebody that needs something and I give it to her.

And it says, you help me earn this money that's going to help these people. So you should just give them these. And she's like, oh, thank you. She used to roll up the window really quick.

Now she doesn't. They cease to be scary because now some of them have names. Now some of them know her name when she crosses by there. So there's contact there. She's more connected than I am in some of these places now. She has friends in low places and in high places. That comes later, I guess. But she is learning about service. She's learning about not everybody out there is an enemy or bad or scary. She's learning about service. And she's basically learning that lesson that I got from my mom long ago. Nobody's against you there for themselves.

Don't take anything personal. And if you're not doing something for other people while you're working, then you're not doing anything. So when you were young, you were pretty sure you're

going to die before you're 30. What's your relationship with death today? Do you think about your mortality? Are you afraid of it? I'm not afraid of it. If anything, I'm afraid of meaningless death or at least a meaningless walk towards it. I'm afraid of losing the

use of my legs, I guess. I'm afraid of not being able to go out there and do things anymore. I'm afraid that I'm not physically capable of doing the job that I used to do. So if anything, I'm afraid of stillness. It's something I always quote a lot in my writings. Stillness is death. So you always want to be challenging yourself, moving, growing, like you're traveling. So you get all these experiences and filling your life with all these experiences. And if it ends, when it ends, you're ready for it. Yeah. I'm not afraid of the end. The ending is important in all things. First time I got a promotion, I got two silver coins handed to me. Here's a silver coin. And this is another silver coin. And he said, I'll give you the other one when your job ends. It depends on you if you wanted to have it over your eyes or in your pocket. And the lesson there is that this job you're getting, it's pretty cool and you're going to be in charge of all these people and it's pretty important, but it's going to end. So you always have to, the ending is important in all things. If we don't keep that in mind, then if you think we're immortal and nothing's going to end, I think there's an atrophy, a spiritual atrophy in that. For the sake of spiritual flourishing, this conversation too must come to an end. So I think a beautiful way to end it. And I'm a huge fan of yours. Thank you for being a man with a life well lived and for talking with me today as an honor man. This is an awesome conversation. Thank you for having me on. Thanks for listening to this conversation with Ed Calderon. To support this podcast, please check out our sponsors in the description. And now let me leave you with some words from Al Pacino's character in Scarface, Tony Montana. You don't have the guts to be what you want to be. You need people like me so you can point your fingers and say, that's the bad guy. Thanks for listening and hope to see you next time.