

“You Should Meet My New Girlfriend, She’s Six Feet Tall”: The Story of Rayful Edmond III

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Abstract

Rayful Edmond III is an important figure in contemporary Washington, D.C. history, but he is relatively unknown and has not previously been researched. Edmond brought crack cocaine into the District, hired numerous employees, and became by and far the largest drug kingpin of the late 1980s. Because he grew up in the drug world, learning to bag cocaine and hawk pills at an early age, and perhaps because of his own exceptional brilliance, Edmond lived in the lap of luxury. He used his trade to support his family and community, but by doing so, he infected his city without conscience or remorse. However, in 1986, he was arrested and, in a widely publicized case, he was sentenced to spend his life in jail. Edmond was one of many kingpins that emerged in the country’s major cities, but Edmond symbolized success in a community known for deep poverty and unrest. This paper is an attempt to capture Edmond’s life and times and analyze his movement through and prioritization of multiple communities, including his family, his neighborhood, his economic unit, his peer group, and law enforcement.

Introduction

“All of us are loving, caring people who have kids. We’re just like everyone else in Washington, D.C. We’re ordinary people,” said Rayful Edmond III to reporter Elsa Walsh in 1990.¹ Edmond saw himself as an icon and as a breadwinner, a leader and a community member. But to the outside world, Edmond was simply a drug kingpin who was convicted of “engaging in a Continuing Criminal Enterprise” as well as seventeen other charges in that same year. Notorious for supplying the capital city with crack cocaine, he grew enormously wealthy and controlled the drug scene through his empire. He did not see the devastation that coke brought upon his neighborhood and his city and he felt no sympathy for the drug-addicted customers he serviced. Edmond became a drug lord through sharp wit and intelligence and he reconciled the pain and suffering of addiction and its consequences by always remembering “people be trying to survive.”² Edmond moved through different communities, playing a specific role in each. In his family, he was a young provider. In his neighborhood, he was simultaneously a son-like presence and role model as well as a seller, running drugs while maintaining a popular reputation. In his economic community, Edmond was a clear leader, exploiting the system to achieve the American Dream. In prison, he engaged with his peer community, collaborating with others for joint success. Finally, he became a part of the law enforcement community and infiltrated his peer community in order to preserve and protect his most important family community. In turn, this affected his position in all other communities, as he was then excluded from both his peer community and his economic community. This dichotomy of multiple communities creates a compelling study on Edmond’s American Dream and his motives for engaging in illegal activities. To explore Edmond’s career, I have used numerous primary source documents from local magazines and newspapers. Government documents are also used as reliable reports. Due to the relative danger of the subject, no first-hand interviews were conducted of those in prison. Many scholarly journals and publications were used to gather background information about the crack era of the 1980s.

Historiography

¹ Juan Williams, “The Mind of Rayful Edmond,” *The Washington Post*, June 24, 1990, p. W16, LexisNexis Academic.

² *Ibid.*

The study of crack cocaine and drug dealers of the 1980s is a relatively modern phenomenon and a budding group of scholars have expanded the research and analysis of “*the* social problem of the decade.”³ Some scholars have begun to look specifically at the causes of and attention to the drug epidemic. For instance, by the late 1980s, drug abuse achieved what scholars Hilgartner and Bosk call “celebrity” status.⁴ However, in a matter of years it was also believed to be a moral issue. Soon, the United States saw changes in sentencing laws and conviction rates. Levine and Reinerman argue that this panic occurred because the “War on Drugs” campaign essentially siphoned off funding for public programs that supported inner city youth and public health care. In essence, the epidemic began in full swing when the government tried to stop it. This central argument has gained national attention among intellectuals as they begin to decipher crack’s history and continued presence.⁵

A broad look at the study of drugs includes everything from opium use in 2000 BCE to the modern day drug wars. Particularly telling are those works, like *The Pursuit of Oblivion: A Global History of Narcotics*, by Richard Davenport-Hines, which give a sweeping account of the legacy and relative prevalence of drugs for centuries. Davenport-Hines reports drug use in many cultures and societies, describing the evolution of drug laws in the United States and abroad as a reaction to drug use. He also discusses “drug propaganda” as a means to victimize certain populations and he ends by considering the growing drug problem between the United States and other countries: “The War on Drugs [in the United States] is not a war waged by allies, but an unequal partnership in which the USA judges, certifies, impoverishes, and degrades human rights.”⁶ This essay will only address a small case study on the international drug trade, but it is important to remember the politics of the time as the international migration of drugs has increasingly garnered attention.

³Erich Goode and Nachman Ben-Yehuda, “The American Drug Panic of the 1980s,” in *Moral Panics: The Social Construction of Deviance*, (Oxford, 1994).

⁴Stephen Hilgartner and Charles L. Bosk, “The Rise and Fall of Social Problems: a Public Arenas Model,” *American Journal of Sociology*, 94 (July 1988), p. 53-78.

⁵Joseph F. Spillane, “Historians and Harm: Toward More Thoughtful Appraisal of Policy Consequences,” *Governing the Global Drug Wars*, (2012). See also P.A. O’Hare et al., *Reduction of Drug-Related Harm*, (London, 1992).

⁶Richard Davenport-Hines, *The Pursuit of Oblivion: A Global History of Narcotics*, (New York: Norton, 2002), p. 359. See also Sarah W. Tracy and Caroline J. Acker, *Altering American Consciousness*, (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004) for a history of changing American perceptions of drug use in the United States and James A. Inciardi, *War on Drugs-Heroin, Cocaine, Crime, and Public Policy*, (Palo Alto, CA: Mayfield Publishing Co., 1986) for a discussion on the relationships between multiple drugs, crime, and trafficking.

David Musto's *The American Disease*, originally published in 1973 and subsequently released with up-to-date information, essentially explains the making of drug policy in the United States as a reaction to a kind of social hysteria from the impending epidemic. He claims a cyclical pattern of acceptance and restriction from the American public, dating from postbellum public policy. He also explains that drug users cannot simply stop using, causing underground and black market industries to pick up. Sentencing laws became tremendously strict for small amounts of crack: "possession of 5 grams of crack cocaine, [was] equal to the penalty for possession of 500 grams (about one pound) of powdered cocaine, a ratio of 1:100."⁷ But dealers were not deterred. The debate goes on that although punishments became harsher, people still bought and sold, making their livelihoods on the extremely addicting and lucrative crack.

Meanwhile, Jill Jonnes' work, published in 1996, explains "America's Romance with Illegal Drugs."⁸ She echoes Musto as she explains another cyclical theme of recreational drug use: emergence in inner cities during World War II, middle class youth use in the 1960s, and the famed 1980s crack epidemic. Unlike Musto, who treats users almost as victims in dire need of treatment, Jonnes is more apt to say the drug-induced world is "unmotivated" and "unwilling" to participate in the larger American society. She explains that they are deadbeats, allowing their children to go parentless and lose their dignity. More interesting, though, is Jonnes' new attention to dealers. She points out: "While the new crackheads were crime-prone lost souls, even more terrifying were the youthful new drug dealers, the alienated young men."⁹ Further, she describes the "instant gratification and hedonism" of recreational drug use, during which people do not care about family life or ascribe to a set of morals. Jonnes is one of the few modern scholars who have addressed drug dealers. Through this paper, I hope to include a new profile to contrast or perhaps affirm her views.

Although it seems an odd connection, the American Dream also plays a role in understanding the drug world. Steven F. Messner and Richard Rosenfeld's *Crime and the American Dream* explains that society has approved the American Dream as a cultural goal and any means by which to achieve it is also acceptable. They argue that the idea of the American Dream drives crime and the drug trade because illegal activities, when

⁷ David F. Musto, *The American Disease: Origins of Narcotic Control* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), p. 274.

⁸ Jill Jonnes, *Hep-Cats, Narcs, and Pipe Dreams: A History of America's Romance with Illegal Drugs* (New York: Scribner, 1996), p. 377.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 378.

used for the purpose of realizing the American Dream, are not condemned.¹⁰ Thus, people overlook the effects of their actions on communities in the name of their own personal success. This parallels Edmond's use and abuse of his community to follow his own version of this ideal.

Finally, the modern demographic history of Washington, D.C. itself must be explored. Most contemporary texts note the increasing gentrification of the city and the residential choices of newcomers and immigrants. The report "Race, Immigrants, and Residence: A New Racial Geography of Washington, D.C." finds that whites and other ethnic and racial groups, primarily blacks, are very segregated from one another. While this report does not specifically suggest differences in socioeconomic status and rates of illicit drug use, it may be gleaned that the city is highly segregated by many means and results in different economic and social behaviors.¹¹

One important moment in contemporary Washington history was Mayor Marion Barry's arrest in 1990. Many recent histories and books attempt to unpack his amazing rise, fall, and subsequent rise again in politics after being caught smoking crack cocaine.¹² He is an important person to consider in the scheme of the Washington drug scene since he rallied the support of his constituents even after his crack cocaine debacle. Although there is very little about Rayful Edmond specifically, the history of contemporary Washington helps to set the scene for his story.

There is much debate about crack use as a whole, especially the analysis of the American government's response to the growing panic. While drug dealers themselves have not been widely dealt with by scholars, their stories are entangled in this quest for understanding: why did the United States become a breeding ground for substance abuse and who is to blame for this continuing issue?

¹⁰ Steven F. Messner and Richard Rosenfeld, *Crime and the American Dream*, (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2001), p. 1-17.

¹¹ Samantha Friedman, et al. "Race, Immigrants, and Residence: A New Racial Geography in Washington, D.C.," *Geographical Review*, 95, no. 2, New Geographies of U.S. Immigrants (April 2005), p. 210-230, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30033988?seq=6>. For a more complete look into neighborhood change in Washington, D.C., see Paul L. Knox, "The Restless Urban Landscape: Economic and Sociocultural Change and the Transformation of Metropolitan Washington, DC," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 81, no. 2 (June 1991), p. 181-209.

¹² "Marion Barry," *Jim Kobak's Kirkus Reviews*, 10, (1991). <http://search.proquest.com/docview/917174963?accountid=10267>. See also Michael W. Homel, "African-American Mayors: Race, Politics, and the American City," *The Journal of American History*, 89 no. 2. (Sept. 2002), p. 724.

The Crack Era in Washington, D.C.

Cocaine was not new to American shores, but in the early 1980s, an influx entered the country. East Coast cities received shipments from drug-producing regions like Colombia and the Caribbean islands. These drugs made their way into the hands of users all over the United States. Cocaine was not always considered addictive, but by this time that was clearly false—instances of its use increased tremendously throughout the country. As Jonnes describes, cocaine “enjoy[ed] renewed popularity among the affluent and the creative,” being characterized as a “safe, classy, and purely pleasurable drug historically used by brilliant, creative, and powerful people because it made you feel smart, energetic, and sexy.”¹³ Because so much cocaine entered the United States, its price dropped a startling eighty percent and traditional drug dealers actually lost money.¹⁴ This prompted the production of its revolutionary counterpart: crack.

To better understand the epidemic that ensued, one must first understand the drug itself. Crack is a form of cocaine, made by cooking pure cocaine with a baking soda or ammonia. When the substance hardens, it can be molded and chipped away to make sellable “rocks,” which look like shards of off-white paint.¹⁵ When it is smoked, the chemicals in crack enter the blood stream in as little as eight seconds, producing an intense but fleeting high (produced by brain stimulation that gives the user euphoric feelings).¹⁶ According to Dr. Michael Fauntroy, an associate professor at George Mason University, 1985 was the last “pre-crack year” in Washington, D.C. until the craze petered out in the early 1990s; during that time, the inexpensive drug became extremely lucrative.¹⁷

Cities across the country seethed with the influences of heroin and cocaine, but crack brought violence to previously unseen heights.

¹³ Jonnes, *Hep-Cats*, p. 306.

¹⁴ U.S. Department of Justice, “DEA History Book 1985-1990,” 1991, Accessed 25 March 2014, <http://www.justice.gov/dea/about/history/1985-1990.pdf>. Exact statistics were not found.

¹⁵ *The Crack Cocaine Epidemic: Health Consequences and Treatment*, General Accounting Office(Washington, D.C., 1991), p. 1, <http://archive.gao.gov/d21t9/143293.pdf>.

¹⁶ James A. Inciardi and Karen McElrath, *The American Drug Scene: An Anthology*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 207.

¹⁷ Michael Fauntroy, “Crack Cocaine’s Legacy Lives (and Dies) in D.C.,” *Dr. Michael K. Fauntroy*. http://www.michaelfauntroy.com/site/index.php/site/comments/crack_cocaines_legacy_lives_and_dies_in_dc/.

Homicide rates for inner-city youth more than doubled and drug arrests skyrocketed. In reaction, criminal sentencing became ever harsher for crack users and traffickers than their cocaine-peddling counterparts. The “War on Drugs” had begun with no end in sight. In Washington, D.C. the use of crack cocaine was prevalent, yet because of the deep racial and socio-economic divisions of the city, certain areas were much more adversely affected than others.¹⁸ The District used its budget on police and corrections, which grew 61.5 percent in the decade in response to the growth of crime.¹⁹ However, by 1990, Washington was considered the “murder capital” of the country and many were afraid to take public transportation for fear of death. In that year alone, 472 hundred people died in the shadow of the Capitol.²⁰ Further, in 1992, 8,568 aggravated assaults, which included non-fatal shootings, were reported.²¹ Although there is no single cause for this trend, many experts blame crack cocaine. In any case, the city was not *safe* by any means, providing a context for Edmond’s childhood.

Revealingly, Abe Pollin, owner of the NBA Washington “Bullets,” decided to change the team’s name because of its association with the violent crimes of the capital city. Pollin announced, “I realized this some time ago when I picked up the newspaper and saw the word 'bullets' in a headline and thought for an instant that the article was about my basketball team. Unfortunately, far too often these days, 'bullets' in the news does not have anything to do with basketball.”²²

About twenty five percent of youths charged with criminal acts tested positive for drugs. In fact, cocaine-related hospital visits rose by four hundred percent and the city was completely unprepared. Thousands of middle-class, mostly white families retreated to the suburbs and family units that developed in the wake of crack became distraught.

¹⁸ Craig Reinerman and Harry G. Levine, *Crack in America: Demon Drugs and Social Justice*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p. 23.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Ian Urbina, “Washington Officials Try to Ease Crime Fear,” *The New York Times*, July 14, 2006, http://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/13/us/13decece.html?_r=2&cn=Top%2FReference%2FTimes%20Topics%2FPeople%2FW%2FWilliams%2C%20Anthony%20A.&

²¹ Eric Tucker, “Washington, DC, set to Post Fewer than 100 Murders this year—A First since 1963,” *NBC News*, Nov. 23, 2012, http://usnews.nbcnews.com/_news/2012/11/23/15391905-washington-dc-set-to-post-fewer-than-100-murders-this-year-a-first-since-1963?lite.

²² Dan Steinburg, “Why Abe Pollin went from Bullets to Wizards,” *The Washington Post*, Feb. 2, 2010, http://voices.washingtonpost.com/dcsportsbog/2010/02/why_abe_pollin_went_from_bulle.html.

Not only were there more single parents, more immediate family members were categorized as drug users or sellers as well.²³ As Kenji Jasper, an author who grew up in inner city Washington and whose novels revolve around drug use and crime, remembered, Washington was dangerous and dirty: “I saw a lot of spent shell casings. I saw a lot of empty crack vials.”²⁴ Growing up in this atmosphere left children stranded with little community support and guidance. Many, in fact, turned to the drug trade as a way of escape, as Jasper explained; “I knew most of the guys I knew who dealt, they had nice clothes, you know, they had pagers, they had all these things I really wanted at the time.”²⁵ Though Jasper was ultimately spared from a life of crime, he went on to say that there were days when people asked him to run drugs: it was a quick way to make money and everyone was involved.²⁶ Though the economy boomed across the country, few of the most obvious and basic benefits appeared in the nation’s inner cities.²⁷ Thus, unemployment hovered around seven percent citywide and it was even higher in these neighborhoods.²⁸ Seventeen percent of those living in Washington were under the poverty level.²⁹ Economically, this made the crack industry even more viable. There was a large, young workforce ready to take jobs in “crack preparation and sales” because legal jobs simply could not compare to the “working conditions and pay” that this new industry offered.³⁰ These struggling people in their rapidly deteriorating neighborhoods stood in a breeding ground for corruption and death.

²³ Eloise Dunlap and BD Johnson, "The Setting for the Crack Era: Macro Forces, Micro Consequences (1960-1992)," *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs*, 24 no. 4, (1992), <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2761228/>.

²⁴ “Remembering the Crack Epidemic,” March 17, 2007 in *NPR News and Notes*.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Dunlap and Johnson, “The Setting for the Crack Era.”

²⁸ Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, *Local Area Unemployment Statistics: District of Columbia*, Accessed May 7, 2013, <http://data.bls.gov/pdq/SurveyOutputServlet>.

²⁹ U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 1990: CP-2-1 "Social and Economic Characteristics," Table 154, Washington: Government Printing Office, 1991.

³⁰ Reinerman and Levine, *Crack in America: Demon Drugs and Social Justice*, p. 2.

Rayful: The Beginning

Rayful Edmond III grew up in this age, born to Constance “Bootsie” Perry and Rayful Edmond II on November 26, 1964.³¹ Edmond grew up with six siblings, but in his own words, “[I was the] little baby brother, I was king. I had anything I wanted.”³² Twenty to thirty people lived in Edmond’s home on any given day, including his “grandmother, sisters, half-brothers and half-sisters, cousins and aunts.”³³ His tight knit family crammed into his M Street Northeast home and as Edmond described it, they “just look[ed] for ways to survive.” As his mother recalled, “as long as he took care of me, I didn’t care what he did.”³⁴ The family never asked too many questions and accepted fluctuations of legal and illegal incomes. His mother and father both worked for the government (Perry worked for the Department of Health and Human Services) and they hustled pills and other drugs to make ends meet. Little else is known of them at this time; however there are allegations that Edmond Jr. was a major heroin distributor in the Washington, D.C. and Baltimore areas throughout the 1970s.³⁵

In a recording from a hidden bug, Perry described how her son began his drug career. Edmond started as an apprentice by watching his parents sell narcotics and other prescription pills. Royal Brooks, Jr., one of Edmond’s closest friends from Hamilton Junior High School, commented that Edmond “was raised bagging stuff.”³⁶ At age nine, he “carried cash” for his mother when she sold pills on the street and became a runner for his father by picking up money from clients. He then started selling pills himself, finally peddling drugs on open-market street corners. Federal investigators say that his father gave him his first kilogram of cocaine and, as Perry put it, “and then he...it just got too big, he just up and went out on his own.”^{37 38} Edmond pushed drugs alone and used his newfound cash to take his family out to dinner, contribute

³¹ "Rayful Edmond III," *The Biography Channel Website*, <http://www.biography.com/people/rayful-edmond-iii-547286>.

³² Williams, “The Mind,” p. W16.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Mike Folks, “Edmond Attorney Decries ‘Leaks,’” *The Washington Post*, Nov. 21, 1989, p. B1, LexisNexis Academic.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Elsa Walsh, “Rayful Edmond: A Mystery Worth Solving,” *The Washington Post*, Dec 17, 1989, p. B7. LexisNexis Academic.

³⁸ Claude Lewis, “Judge Socks it to Drug Dealers Papa and Mama and Son and Daughter Dealt in Drugs,” *The Pennsylvania Inquirer*, Sept 17, 1990, http://articles.philly.com/1990-09-17/news/25878829_1_drug-dealers-cocaine-conspiracy-charge-drug-purchases.

to paying bills, and support a new lifestyle. Eventually, Rayful brought in enough money to fund the family entirely.

Though the circumstances were not ideal, Edmond excelled in many ways. He was a talented student and his teachers applauded his hard work ethic. In a documentary, his elementary school teacher, referred to as Ms. Wise, recalled, “He was good at reading, math, thinking, logic,” remembering that he “was born with the gift to be smart. And because of it, he had the edge on everyone else.”³⁹ At Dunbar High School, he won awards like “most popular,” and “best dressed,” and one teacher, Mr. Grays, described him: “He listened very well. I think he knew all the components, all the indicators, that would lead a person to success.”⁴⁰ ⁴¹ He was known to be an excellent basketball player in high school, as well. When he graduated, Edmond enrolled in University of the District of Columbia, an unexpected move for someone from his walk of life.⁴² However, after a few months, Edmond dropped out to pursue the drug business because he was attracted to the potential profits.

What begins to be clear from the analysis of his early life is that he valued his familial community above any other and this theme stays constant as the communities around him change. Throughout high school and his infamous career Edmond always put his family first by supporting and protecting them at any cost. He played the ultimate role of son, but in some ways he transcended traditional schemes of dependence in that he became the major breadwinner. His family ties created a moral spectrum through which he ran a family-oriented business, evidenced by his recollection that “at one point in time, it was like a family thing...I thought everybody was going to stick together.”⁴³ His early life provided a strong support system that collided with his business later in his life.

In 1986, at age twenty-two, Edmond was one of the largest drug dealers in the city and he controlled between twenty and thirty percent of the cocaine market.⁴⁴ Seeing the growing transition from cocaine to crack, he made essential drug connections with established kingpins like Cornell Jones and Tony Lewis. He worked “The Strip” between Morton

³⁹ *The Rayful Edmond Story, Part II*, Online, Directed by Troy Reed, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0yYQkd5qJaw>. Note that this source may be unreliable, though images and quotes seem to be accurate based on crosschecking facts with information I have found.

⁴⁰ Williams, “The Mind,” p. W16.

⁴¹ *The Rayful Edmond Story, Part II*.

⁴² “Rayful Edmond III.”

⁴³ Williams, “The Mind,” p. W16.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

and Orleans Places Northeast, as well as 4th Street and M Street Northeast.⁴⁵ Only a few blocks north of the Capitol, his territory was supplied with escape alleys through which his men could outrun the police if they were ever caught in sticky situations. Edmond's enterprise operated out of his grandmother's house on M Street, Northeast, in which he would process "shake-powder cocaine" and "crack-rock cocaine".⁴⁶ ⁴⁷As his business grew, Edmond hired more employees, including gun-toting enforcers and about one hundred and fifty sellers to hawk for him.⁴⁸ Edmond handpicked local kids to be lookouts and his own family was deeply involved in his business.⁴⁹

As the number of addicts rose, Edmond's customer base gradually grew as well. On busy nights, his employees carried out as many as thirty transactions per minute bringing in about \$5,000 per week each, totaling about \$750,000 for the organization.⁵⁰ Impressively, at the height of his success, he made \$2 million in a week.⁵¹ ⁵² Edmond's company sold about seventeen hundred kilos of Colombian cocaine each month, which he trafficked from Los Angeles on a regular basis.⁵³ He also supported others to start their own trades. For instance, Alta Rae Zanville, one of Edmond's closest female callers, worked with him extensively through the late 1980s. He paid her in cocaine, which allowed her to start her own illicit business. Edmond exploited his economic community and his neighborhood this way, proving that he could be successful and achieve the rags-to-riches American Dream. Despite his success, tragedies arose: under his command his men committed as many as thirty murders and went on violent sprees in order to protect the company's territory and assert power.⁵⁴ As he later told reporter Juan Williams, "Things like that can happen, but don't misinterpret. I'm not saying drugs is good neither. And I'm not saying that it's bad. But it's a way of life and it's a part of our life. So it's something we have to deal with."⁵⁵ Edmond moved through these stations as an uncompromising

⁴⁵ Williams, "The Mind," p. W16.

⁴⁶ "Rayful Edmond Cops a Plea," *The Washington Post*, Aug 10, 1996, p. A18. LexisNexis Academic; Annys Shin, "Running Low on Rayful," *Washington City Paper*, Sept 8, 2000.

<http://www.washingtoncitypaper.com/articles/20314/running-low-on-rayful>.

⁴⁷ Williams, "The Mind," p. W16.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ "Rayful Edmond III."

⁵⁰ Annys Shin, "Running Low on Rayful."

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Williams, "The Mind," p. W16.

⁵³ "Rayful Edmond III."

⁵⁴ Williams, "The Mind," p. W16.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

and savvy businessman. John P. Dominguez, an assistant US attorney, noted, “He could remember deals, transactions, you know, to the penny... Just think of what he coulda’ done, legitimately.”⁵⁶ He had a knack for marketing and he boasted his power in order to create a stable and constant financial flow—dominating the competition.

Though eyewitness reports and personal testimony conflict with each other, Edmond used his wealth lavishly. For example, he not only rented a “rather unremarkable house,” and flew with “discount airline tickets,” but he also spent ridiculous sums of money that garnered attention.⁵⁷ Diane Sawyer began her *60 Minutes* interview with Edmond with the haunting words, “Walk down any street in Northeast Washington, and people will tell you here, he was the reigning king... he was a man to be admired and imitated.”⁵⁸ In the time span of about one month in 1988, Edmond traveled to Los Angeles twice and “ran up \$5,358 in hotel bills, which he paid in cash.”⁵⁹ He had a custom-made Rolex watch, which he had diamond encrusted and is now worth over \$45,000. He had multiple luxury cars, including a Mercedes-Benz, a Porsche, and a Jaguar. His house was apparently littered with garbage bags filled with small bills.⁶⁰ He let money fly from the windows of his vehicles and showered his multiple female admirers with gold-hooped earrings. When he was finally arrested, federal officials stated that they found “\$12,000 in small bills lying ‘like trash’ on the floor” in one of his bases.⁶¹

Though Edmond became extremely wealthy, he stayed in the neighborhood. It was safe and known, but it also was the center of his business. There, he had a powerful impact and a lasting impression. The local children adored him and when he pegged them to stand lookout, many were honored to do so. Kids “looked up to him. They respected him. If they ever had any problems, they could come and talk to him. They saw him as a big brother,” said the director of a local recreational

⁵⁶ *The Rayful Edmond Story, Part II*.

⁵⁷ Walsh, “Rayful Edmond,” p. B7.

⁵⁸ *The Life of Rayful Edmond: The Rise and Fall Vol. 1*, Directed by Kirk Fraser, 2005, May 3rd Films,

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L2AjN8k_rOs&feature=fvwp. Note that this is a partially reenacted documentary.

⁵⁹ Williams, “The Mind,” p. W16.

⁶⁰ Jim McElhatton, “Crack King’s Testimony for Feds in Doubt; 6 Appeal verdicts in Murder Trial,” *The Washington Times*, Mar 29, 2011, p. A1, LexisNexis Academic.

⁶¹ Williams, “The Mind,” p. W16.

center about Edmond.⁶² He often was found playing basketball at the community courts, engaging children in conversation. He was kind and thoughtful and many people saw him as blessing to the community. Although his actions were illicit, he was always willing to do a favor, like give “\$200 worth of flowers...for the family of neighbor Stacie Lanier when Lanier’s brother died,” and cover people’s bus fares or help with monthly bills.⁶³ When he had the money, he made sure to give back, promoting himself as a child of the community. At the height of his success, Edmond gave his friends and family members many gifts and even ran a community Boys and Girls Club basketball team, which he called the *Men at Work*.⁶⁴ He would roam the streets of the Northeast corridor of D.C. giving away one hundred dollar bills to children in the area.⁶⁵ This financial power shift was vital to Edmond—he justified his illicit lifestyle by claiming that his family and his neighborhood needed his contributions, even while using them as his customer base.

The Fall of an Empire: U.S. Court of Law

This age of luxury all came crashing down on April 15, 1989, when Edmond was arrested at his girlfriend’s house in D.C.⁶⁶ Four men had been arrested in Los Angeles after trying to buy \$1 million worth of coke from an undercover agent—when they began to talk, they incriminated Edmond’s association, his power, and his success. Later, the Drug Enforcement Administration stated that the arrest “resulted from a two-year joint investigation conducted by...the FBI and district police.”⁶⁷ It is unclear about the specifics of what happened next, except that Edmond was moved from the District jail to an outside location before proceedings began. Thus began his fifty-six day trial, during which Edmond only testified to plead indigence. He was charged with multiple counts of continuing criminal enterprises: conspiracy to maneuver around narcotics laws, racketeering, and other charges. He shared the dock with twenty-seven other people, including his mother, his sister, and his father, among eight other family members, as well as close friends

⁶² Don Wycliff, “The Editorial Notebook; The Many Faces of Rayful Edmond,” *The New York Times*, Dec 11, 1989, p. A22, <http://www.nytimes.com/1989/12/11/opinion/the-editorial-notebook-the-many-faces-of-rayful-edmond.html>.

⁶³ Annys Shin, “Running Low on Rayful.”

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Lewis, “Judge Socks it.”

⁶⁶ Williams, “The Mind,” p. W16.

⁶⁷ “The Nation: Alleged Drug Kingpins Seized in Capital,” *The Los Angeles Times*, April 17, 1989. http://articles.latimes.com/1989-04-17/news/mn-1939_1_cocaine-market-alleged-arrested

Brooks, Jr., Columbus “Little Nut” Daniels(an enforcer) and Tony Lewis.⁶⁸ Over one hundred witnesses took the stand throughout the trial and the media eagerly tracked its progress. Because of Edmond’s support on the outside, those connected with the trial were in great danger. The court hosted the first anonymous jury in Washington history because they were threatened with violence and they were shielded with bulletproof glass in the courtroom.⁶⁹ This was not done in vain: during the trial, a seventeen-year-old witness was killed in an apparent drive-by. His name was Donnell P. Winley, a “part-time gopher” for Edmond who was set to take the stand only days after he was killed.⁷⁰ Another witness’s house was firebombed during the proceedings. For his own protection Edmond was held at Quantico Marine Base in Virginia through the duration of the trial and he was flown in by helicopter each day to participate.

Edmond’s main arguments for his innocence were two-fold. First, he maintained that since he did not sell to children he was not doing anything illegal. Those who were old enough, he said, could make their own decisions and buying drugs was their own choice. Second, he declared that he was never caught directly selling drugs, so officials could not pin anything on him.⁷¹ Though he tried, these arguments simply did not materialize into case-changing evidence. He was represented by Baltimore lawyer William H. Murphy Jr. and eventually Attorney James Robertson. Both respected their client and Murphy even felt that “Edmond was one of the brightest people he had ever represented, but that his life of crime was almost inevitable because it was inculcated from an early age.”⁷² Though the two lawyers were found arguing in the courtroom, they worked together. Robertson yielded that ten of the other defendants were involved in a drug conspiracy and even praised the prosecuting attorneys, but he continued to deny that Edmond was directly involved. Robertson attacked the witness’ and informants’ credibility, maintaining that Edmond’s perceived wealth came from lucky gambling ventures.⁷³ Yet Edmond kept his head on his shoulders, constantly changed his story, and flirted with news reporters and

⁶⁸ Lewis, “Judge Socks it.”

⁶⁹ “Rayful Edmond III.”

⁷⁰ Sari Horwitz, “Officials Deny Slain D.C. Youth Was to Testify in Edmond Trial,” *The Washington Post*, May 26, 1989, p. B1, LexisNexis Academic.

⁷¹ Williams, “The Mind,” p. W16.

⁷² Nancy Lewis, “Edmond Sent to Prison for Life, Without Parole,” *The Washington Post*, Feb. 14, 1990, p. F1, LexisNexis Academic.

⁷³ Elsa Walsh, “Edmond Lawyer Links Others to Trafficking,” *The Washington Post*, Dec. 1, 1989, p. D3. LexisNexis Academic.

witnesses alike. Edmond kept an unarguable confidence about himself through the trial, as reporter Elsa Walsh commented: “What I discovered, instead, was the same confident Edmond that I had seen day after day in the courtroom. He showed no remorse. He was affable, courteous and intelligent, talking as if his future was bright.”⁷⁴ He never expected to go to prison, but he was not afraid to so do either and in his words, “What’s there to be scared of?”⁷⁵

Nevertheless, Edmond watched his life and his business go down in flames, betrayed by his closest friends. A number of his friends testified against him. For instance, Zanville helped federal prosecutors by carrying a secret microphone that recorded Perry talking about her son’s enterprise. It is from these tapes that Perry inadvertently produced the most incriminating evidence against her son. Zanville cut a deal for herself before her own operation was officially busted and worked with federal authorities to avoid jail time. In return for her cooperation, she was left her riches and her mansion (all financed by her own cocaine enterprise) without threat of a criminal charge.⁷⁶ However, she betrayed her community and in the words of her ex-husband, Myron Zanville, “She’ll tell anybody anything to cover herself.”⁷⁷ Then, Brooks, Jr. informed on Edmond as well, testifying that he “stored as much as 90 grams of cocaine for Edmond and carried as much as \$3 million of Edmond’s money to arrange drug buys in Los Angeles.”⁷⁸ Edmond remembered, “Me and him was like brothers. . . me and him was real tight,” and later lamented “if they really care, and loved me like they was supposed to, they wouldn’t have did certain things.”⁷⁹ Edmond remained quiet throughout the presentation of this incriminating evidence. The trial became very dramatic when Edmond’s sister Rachelle became the first family member to describe him as a drug dealer, while denying her own involvement.⁸⁰ His father refused to testify, claiming his Fifth Amendment rights, and his mother also denied that she was ever involved with drugs. The courtroom was muddled with conflicted testimony, but the evidence was all too strong for Edmond’s defense. After five days of deliberation, Edmond was sentenced to life in prison (serving two terms simultaneously) without the possibility of parole.⁸¹

⁷⁴ Walsh, “Rayful Edmond,” p. B7.

⁷⁵ Walsh, “Rayful Edmond,” p. B7.

⁷⁶ Lewis, “Judge Socks it.”

⁷⁷ Folks, “Edmond Attorney Decries ‘Leaks,’” p. B1.

⁷⁸ Williams, “The Mind,” p. W16.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Nancy Lewis, “Edmond Sister Testifies He was a Drug Dealer; She Denies Conspiring to Sell Cocaine,” *The Washington Post*, March 27, 1990, p. B5. LexisNexis Academic.

⁸¹ Lewis, “Judge Socks it.”

Twenty-eight other people were convicted as well: his mother got twenty-four years in prison. His sister, Rachelle, who did indeed handle the finances of his operation and stored cocaine, was sentenced to twenty-one years. His brother, Melvin Stewart, was sentenced to twenty-four years and his coconspirators also were similarly sentenced.

Through his widely publicized court case, Edmond had the front page of every local newspaper; people followed his story closely. He was so loved at the beginning, in fact, that people came to his defense when he was arrested, making statements like: “he may have been guilty of knowing the wrong people, but Rayful wasn’t no dope pusher.”⁸² He became the face of the underground drug world and street kids praised him. “I looked up to him,” said a man only called Bam Bam who was interviewed about Edmond, “Hell yeah. I like the fact that he made money. He started small. Even if it wasn’t an honest job, he worked hard...He’s like Tupac or Biggie.”⁸³ But, his trial exposed a dirty underworld of crime and violence. He became the symbol of all the young black men gone criminal, those who just started off on the wrong foot and those who were never going to recover. Indeed, his reputation was mixed. It is plausible that he was the reason that many young people all over the city engaged in a life of violence and crime, but he bore no personal responsibility. He was not emotionally involved, because for him business was business. People chose their own paths, he maintained, and he could not be accountable for those who chose to destroy their lives. Further, Edmond gave this attitude to save his family’s dignity. After all, Edmond had always been a family man and was not about to stop now. Shortly after his arrest, people filled the void he left very quickly. His territory was parceled off, runners became dealers, dealers became lords, and the system went on. Though they got a big name off the street, it did not stop the drug crisis: others simply took Edmond’s place.

Criminal Activities: Locked Up

“Through history...all the bad things happened to the good guys...so I’m a good guy, and just something bad happened to me, you know, and I’ll overcome it sooner or later,” recalled Edmond from prison.⁸⁴ Even when he got to prison, Edmond did not see his faults and was always hopeful that the next appeal or more evidence might exonerate him. He entered Bureau of Prisons (BOP) custody on February

⁸² Wycliff, “The Editorial Notebook,” p. A22.

⁸³ Shin, “Running Low on Rayful.”

⁸⁴ Williams, “The Mind,” p. W16.

16, 1990, where he was processed at United States Penitentiary (USP) in Marion, Illinois. On September 27th, he was transferred to USP Lewisburg in Pennsylvania, a high security institution with about a thousand inmates.⁸⁵ For some time, Edmond was held in solitary confinement because of overwhelming safety concerns surrounding his notoriety, but eventually he was moved to general population and given a job in the prison as an orderly.

This “good inmate” strategy did not last for long. A few months after he was sent to prison, he met perhaps the most important people of his career. Dixon Dario Trujillo-Blanco was an inmate at USP Lewisburg who shared a cellblock with Edmond; Trujillo-Blanco’s brother Osvaldo was only one cellblock away.⁸⁶

The Trujillo-Blanco brothers landed in prison for dealing drugs. In fact, they were among the biggest drug suppliers from Colombia to the United States. Their mother was the infamous Griselda “The Godmother” Blanco who led the Medellin drug cartel and wreaked havoc on Miami’s streets.⁸⁷ Blanco was ruthless; she allegedly killed two of her husbands, created the infamous motorcycle drive-by shootings, and was known as a ruthless sexual deviant.⁸⁸ Like Edmond, the brothers were exposed to and taught the ways of the drug trade from an early age; Blanco had helped them organize and run a tremendous cocaine-export empire out of Colombia, based in Medellin. The brothers lived in the shade of their mother, which paralleled in an odd way Edmond’s complete devotion to his own family. Thus, all three had a family business commonality through which they interacted.⁸⁹

When Edmond went to prison, his suppliers in Los Angeles did so as well. When he met the Trujillo-Blanco brothers, however, Edmond was suddenly connected to a new supply of relatively inexpensive wholesale cocaine: first by their acquaintances and finally by the brothers

⁸⁵ U.S. Justice Department, Office of the Inspector General, *OIG Case Studies of Inmate Telephone Abuse (Part 1)*. Accessed 31 March 2013, <http://www.justice.gov/oig/special/9908/callsp5.htm>.

⁸⁶ Toni Locy, “For Jailed Kingpins, A Cocaine Kinship,” *The Washington Post*, Aug 19, 1996, p. A1, LexisNexis Academic.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ “Griselda Blanco—The Miami Godmother,” *Gangs and the Organized*, Altered Dimensions, Dec. 26, 2012, <http://altereddimensions.net/2012/griselda-blanco-miami-godmother>.

⁸⁹ Interestingly, recent histories focus on Griselda Blanco’s life and times, but her sons get very little attention. A striking family dynamic emerges because of her immense fame and dangerous intensions. Although Edmond’s mother, Perry, is not known in the drug world, she still dominates her son as an influential force. See Toni Locy, “For Jailed Kingpins, A Cocaine Kinship,” *The Washington Post*, Aug 19, 1996, p. A1, LexisNexis Academic.

themselves. Through prison, he was introduced to a peer community, with which he had to partner because he could not exploit it. Criminals just as savvy and dangerous as himself surrounded him and he decided to use his connections in this population to continue his dominance in his economic community. Using his drug connections on the outside, Edmond began setting up deals and introduced Washington drug traffickers to his new Colombian friends. The brothers had only two years left to serve when they met Edmond and when they were paroled in early 1992, they returned to Colombia with an eager new customer.⁹⁰ Through a system of codes, Edmond and the Trujillo brothers worked out a way through which he could use the telephones in the prison (which were theoretically tapped at all times) to broker arrangements.⁹¹ For instance, Edmond would make a collect call to a domestic number—to a girlfriend, drug dealer, or employee—and said person would conference a Colombian telephone line. Thus, he was easily able to make arrangements with the Trujillos.⁹²

That is not to say that the Lewisburg correctional officers and phone monitors did not recognize his suspicious activity. In fact, they actively let it slide because the justice system had achieved—he was locked up. Prison officials were not concerned with Edmond continuing to break the law, because the system won—Edmond was off the streets. According to Office of the Inspector General reports, on October 21, 1990, the phone monitor noted that Edmond “was talking to Squirrel about what seemed to be drug deals,” and a later report clarified that Edmond felt that “just because he’s locked up doesn’t mean he can’t get what he needs.”⁹³ Edmond was put on the “hot list” for his suspicious calls and was mentioned to not only the prison warden but also the FBI for his “continuing drug activity.”⁹⁴ The intelligence gathered by correctional officers and FBI officials was “noted” but not acted upon. They knew he frequently made international three-way calls (both strictly forbidden within the prison) and yet, his case was seemingly lost in the bureaucracy of the prison’s intelligence system. FBI Special Agent Richard Rodgers, who was assigned to USP Lewisburg, said “At the time, Rayful Edmond was not perceived by me to be any significant criminal individual in which the FBI may have had an interest...he was simply one of many drug dealers.”⁹⁵ It seems likely by these accounts that the BOP

⁹⁰ “Griselda Blanco—The Miami Godmother,”

⁹¹ “Rayful Edmond Cops a Plea,” p. A18.

⁹² Locy, “For Jailed Kingpins,” p. A1.

⁹³ U.S. Justice Department, “OIG Case Studies,” p. 1.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

did not react to the growing evidence of Edmond's continued criminal activities, at least until they had a compelling reason to stop it.

His phone calls were specifically monitored on December 17, 1991 and January 19, 1991, but the BOP only stated that the "investigation continues."⁹⁶ Reports emerged stating that Edmond was not a major criminal threat even if he was making drug deals within the federal walls. The BOP could not stop it—after all, at USP Lewisburg alone more than 80,000 calls were placed each month, many of which were used to tap into drug networks.⁹⁷

However, in August of the following year, an unidentified FBI tipster informed on Edmond. For a six-month period the federal agency was court-required (based on the tipster's testimony) to listen in on Edmond's calls. It was through these formal investigations that they realized Osvaldo Trujillo was the voice on the other end.⁹⁸ But the meanings were lost as the brothers and Edmond used obscure codes for all of their business. For instance, they used phrases like, "you should meet my new girlfriend. She's 6 feet tall," followed by, "She lives down where we used to live on 22nd street."⁹⁹ ¹⁰⁰ Thus, Edmond brokered six kilos of cocaine for \$22,000 under prison guards' active scrutiny. Edmond was known to have made sixty calls like this in less than five hours, running his empire from jail.

In October 1992, Osvaldo died and with him, Edmond's main connection to Colombian cocaine. The FBI almost immediately suspended its investigation on him and moved on to "remaining coconspirators" on the outside.¹⁰¹ Both the District of Columbia and the Middle District of Pennsylvania's U.S. Attorneys' Offices filed a statement declaring that Edmond was unlikely to be indicted for continuing criminal activities within federal prison. Perhaps not surprisingly, the BOP did not respond to the taped evidence. Edmond was not even punished within the prison. His phone privileges were never suspended and in an interview in 1998, Edmond had stated that he could make collect calls from "6:30 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. each day—plenty of time to do business."¹⁰² If he were restricted to phone use only once a week, his operations would have failed completely: it took ten to fifteen calls over one or two days to broker a complete deal. Further, his status as an orderly gave him a distinct advantage, allowing him to use untapped

⁹⁶ U.S. Justice Department, "OIG Case Studies," p. 1-2

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ Shin, "Running Low."

¹⁰⁰ U.S. Justice Department, "OIG Case Studies," p. 4.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

phones in the office and knowing when easygoing security guards would be on duty. In the end, Edmond actually had drugs brought into USP Lewisburg fifty to sixty times in order to sell on the premises and he was never worried about interception because the prison guards had no “street knowledge.”¹⁰³

Edmond seemingly ruled USP Lewisburg. He knew which security cameras to dodge, he used the guards like playthings, and he brokered over thirty five hundred pounds of cocaine during his stay.¹⁰⁴ “At the time,” he reminisced, “my mind-set was, I had to still have people look up to me and prove that I was still capable of making things happen.”¹⁰⁵ Edmond used the thousands of dollars of commission that he earned to help his family and friends. He sent money to his siblings and parents, as well as to female callers and former associates. Clearly, neither the FBI nor the BOP, or even the USP Lewisburg warden were concerned with Edmond’s continuing drug trade, at least for the time being. As such, Edmond was able to use his peer community to once again make it to the top.

The FBI had to do something to assert their authority, however. In the summer of 1994, agents confronted Edmond, explaining what they knew and what the repercussions could be for dealing crack cocaine in prison. “And they asked me to cooperate,” Edmond said.¹⁰⁶ He was released back into general population after a period of administrative segregation as an undercover informant, but this time as an aid to the law enforcement community. Edmond still held the power, however: he knew the code, quite literally, to thousands of drug deals, holding leverage. Through the drug deals he made in prison with unsuspecting fellow inmates and by naming dealers he knew on the street, Edmond’s cooperation brought in “six persons in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, and the arrests of ten others in Washington, D.C.”¹⁰⁷ In reward for his services, Edmond was able to broker a much shorter prison term for his mother. In fact, in 1998, she was released years sooner than expected all due to her son’s efforts. He was single-handedly responsible for this, which showed his genuine devotion to his family community. However, Edmond was quickly deemed a snitch on the inside and made quite a few enemies, losing status in both his peer community and his neighborhood community. People who had killed for him suddenly wanted him killed. Edmond rapidly became a liability for prison guards as he attracted

¹⁰³ U.S. Justice Department, “OIG Case Studies,” p. 3.

¹⁰⁴ McElhatton, “Crack King,” p. A1.

¹⁰⁵ Shin, “Running Low.”

¹⁰⁶ McElhatton, “Crack King,” p. A1.

¹⁰⁷ U. S. Justice Department, “OIG Case Studies,” p. 2.

unwanted attention and violence.

Edmond was whisked away by Witness Protection and though he is still serving his prison term, he is in an undisclosed location under a strong alias. On the outside, Edmond, who was once considered “Robin Hood, Al Capone, and Horatio Alger” combined, had become a common street informer.¹⁰⁸ He worked with the authorities to put former employees and colleagues away. While this was admirable—a son sacrificing his ‘street cred’ for the sake of his mother—his old neighborhood began to despise him. For instance, one youth said, “I never looked up to him,” in an interview in the late 1990s.¹⁰⁹ Edmond had not been the first major drug dealer to walk the streets of Washington and he certainly will not be the last.

Then and Now

“Too much attention was paid to him by everybody. People think he ran an airtight operation, but he didn't. It was a loose-knit, poorly run organization that our department was able to infiltrate. To us, Ray's a criminal. All he did was hurt people,” noted Sergeant John Brennan, a narcotics officer who participated in Edmond's arrest.¹¹⁰ It seems on the outside that all traces of Edmond have vanished. But on a closer look, echoes of his memory sporadically appear. His name is heard along with rumors of drive-by shootings, petty dealers' arrests, and the like. But for the greater Washington, D.C. area, Edmond's legacy is a thing of the past. Only in his old neighborhood, between Orleans and Morton Places, do people reminisce about the most successful man to walk their streets. There is a strange dichotomy, however, because Edmond lost his reputation when he became a member of the law enforcement community. Though the drug trade crippled the neighborhood, there was a certain mystique and pride in it being Edmond's place: they were his people. His tarnished name still holds a kind of pride, not quite killing his legend.

Most of Edmond's friends have since been released from prison and many are living honest, drug-free lives. For instance, one of Edmond's accomplices, Curtis “Curtbone” Chambers, now owns the reputable *All Day Urban Apparel*.¹¹¹ Others still communicate with each

¹⁰⁸ Shin, “Running Low.”

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Henri E. Cauvin, “A Drug Kingpin's Hot-Selling Story,” July 22, 2005, p. 3, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2005/07/21/AR2005072102517_pf.html.

other and a few reminisce about their time working for Edmond. For all the damage Edmond caused, he is a relatively unknown figure in Washington's past. Perhaps in time, after more scholarly research has been established, he may become truly infamous.

Conclusion

Rayful Edmond was not a hero, nor was he a blessing for his community, but he was nonetheless an important character in the history of Washington, D.C. Through a set of prioritized morals, Edmond ruined parts of his city by distributing one of the most addicting substances in existence. Thus, Edmond's clientele base continually expanded. People spent thousands to feed their addictions and Edmond reaped the rewards of their unfortunate cycle of desperation. He felt no remorse or guilt in illicitly selling drugs, because he felt morally compelled to help his own family. In his own way, Edmond lived with very high standards—and put his family members before himself. He even sacrificed his reputation, arguably the most important thing to maintain in the drug business, to shorten his mother's prison sentence. What confounds this thinking is that while he helped his own family, he ruined thousands more, including those in his own neighborhood. People sold their livelihoods to crack as soon as they started using. He used each of his communities to help him provide for his familial community without thought of the consequences. Thus, as he moved through these communities, his priorities changed, his behaviors changed, and his conceptions of the world changed.

In an age during which it was difficult for an inner city black youth to escape a cycle of poverty, Edmond looked for any outlet he could to break the mold. Even while in prison, he kept this mentality of a constant need for approval. Edmond was a family man, he was a breadwinner, and he was the dominant economic presence for his own people. By coming from a rough neighborhood, he had grown up with little. His goal was to change his walk in life by any means he could, thus using his communities to do so.

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