**Episode 255: Jayson prevented a murder**

One of the things that makes this life so interesting is that something can happen that's life-changing, when you least expect it.

I mean, you're just going about your day – stopping at the grocery store, or putting gas in your car, just a routine day. Then something totally unexpected happens, right in front of you.

I remember one time when I was just on my way to work in the morning. Just driving on this rural road in Maine, and there was a pickup truck in front of me. And there was a man riding in the back – in the open bed of the truck. He was standing, facing forward, just hanging out. All of a sudden that truck went to the right, off the road, right into a power pole. I don't know what caused the driver to lose control, but fortunately there were no serious injuries. Even the guy in the truck bed was mostly okay. But it just happened so fast.

My guest today is Jayson. He was having a pretty normal day, just running some errands.

Then he found himself unexpectedly witnessing an attempted murder.

**Scott**
How old were you when this happened?

**Jayson**
This was 2018. At that time I was 40. No, it was right before my 40th birthday, actually. I was 39, so I was still young. I was on the cusp of being young and middle aged.

**Scott**
Okay.

**Jayson**
I was a week away from being middle aged.

**Scott**
When you sent this to me, you said you were heavily involved in boxing at the time. Did you box every day?

**Jayson**

I won't say every day, but I got into the boxing gym 3-4 days a week. No, maybe 4 or 5 days a week at that time. And I was doing a lot of road work. Road work is when you run around, you run 2-3 miles a day, so you don't get tired when you're in a boxing ring. So I was fairly fit at the time.

**Scott**
And you also said you did something called boxing interviews. What is that?

**Jayson**
Boxing interviews– so I would go to boxing press conferences and interview the boxers before the fight and after the fight. Sometimes, I would go to the gym and interview other boxers on what they thought about upcoming fights. I would interview certain boxers about boxing techniques.

**Scott**
And was this for a local TV station or just for your own benefit? What was the purpose?

**Jayson**
For two places– I had a YouTube channel called Laugh At First Site. I know it's offbrand - Laugh at First Site - but I called that segment punchlines to tie it in with the comedy I was doing at the time. And I worked for EsNews, Elie Seckbach News. He has a YouTube tube channel as well, and he's heavily involved in boxing.

**Scott**
So were you boxing just pretty much to stay in shape or were you thinking like self-defense situations?

**Jayson**
Both actually. I mean, you never know what can happen out here in this crazy world we live in. Mind you, this was pre COVID, so it wasn't as crazy and this was pre all the brick attack madness, so it wasn't as crazy. But to stay in shape - I'm a vain person, not going to lie - and self-defense for sure.

**Scott**
I know you are in Chicago now, but this happened in New York City.

**Jayson**
Happened in New York City at the time. I lived in New York for approximately 20 years after college.

**Scott**
Okay, so let's just talk about that day. You met a friend in Bryant Park and you were walking towards Hell's Kitchen– just kind of set this up for us.

**Jayson**
My friend and I had a plan. We were going to go to the boxing gym, but first we made our way over to the dry cleaner. The dry cleaner was on 38th Street between 8th and 9th, between Hell's Kitchen and Times Square. Had dry cleaning there and had to go pick it up. I even remember the dry cleaner– it was my yellow shirt. I had this yellow shirt I used to love. Don't know what happened to it. Maybe I outgrew it, who knows. But I was going to pick up my dry cleaning. We walked up the street. The first thing I noticed distinctly walking up the street, there was a mounted cop and there were people playing with the horse, like trying to hand food in the horse's mouth. I thought these people were crazy because I said, “What if the horse just bites them?” And who knows?

Go in, get the dry cleaning, no problem whatsoever. Come out with the dry cleaning. I did the old 70s thing where you hang it on your two fingers like this and drape it over your shoulder. As I was coming out the door, I always looked both ways, almost like crossing the street to make sure there's no trouble. I guess this is one of the things or one of the habits you keep when you grow up on the south side of Chicago. You become very defensive and very aware of your surroundings. So I look left and right. When I look left, I see a guy walking towards me with a brick in his hand. A huge brick.

**Scott**
The kind of brick that would fit in your hand - not a cement block?

**Jayson**
No, not a cement block. You would have to have really big mitts to hold this brick. He was holding it with two hands. So, I would say it’s maybe 7 inches long, 4-5 inches wide, and maybe 3 inches thick. Pretty big brick. I instinctively get defensive. I handed my dry cleaning to my friend, moved him out of the way - he’s a smaller gentleman - and I was ready to box at the time, ready to use the skills even though I think it would've been impossible to fight a brick.

**Scott**
I'm curious about this. You must have sensed something about this guy because somebody could be carrying a brick and maybe they work in construction or something, so they're just carrying a brick. But something you saw indicated that there was something malicious happening.

**Jayson**
Well, I've seen people get hit with bricks in fights in Chicago, for sure, as a kid. The fact that he had a brick put me on guard, on edge, for sure. He looked like a guy that was either on the streets from the streets. I profiled him and I wasn't going to trust him getting too close to me with the brick. He definitely didn't look like a stone mason.

**Scott**
He wasn't wearing a construction hat and a reflective vest or something, right?

**Jayson**

No, he wasn't there to build. He was there to destroy.

**Scott**
And is this a, white guy or black guy?

**Jayson**
Black guy. People are going to put so many comments on this. I totally profiled the guy, not going to lie, well, because growing up in Chicago, I've seen people that look like him hit people with bricks. I've seen it happen. I mean, it was a mutual combat situation where they were fighting but, nevertheless, I wasn't going to take that chance.

**Scott**
And we should say– I mean, this is an audio only podcast, so people can't see you as we're listening to this, but you're black as well?

**Jayson**
Yes, I'm Black. Ligety Bigly Black.

**Scott**
Okay. So you saw this guy and felt that there was some kind of a threat coming from him.

**Jayson**
It could have been a threat. That was the thing. I didn't think it was a potential threat. Anytime someone has a brick and they're within striking distance, or if they have a knife or they're in striking distance, I'm going to be on guard. Any kind of weapon that can cause severe bodily harm, yeah. I was on guard

**Scott**
And he was walking toward you from your left, is that right?

**Jayson**
Yes. He was walking towards me from the left. From my left would've been 9th Avenue. So he was coming from 9th Avenue walking towards 8th Avenue, for any of those who understand and know the street grid in New York.

**Scott**
When you say you got ready, do you have a fighting stance or something that would indicate to him, “Hey, don't bother me.” Something like that?

**Jayson**

Absolutely. A fighting stance is a bladed stance where if you're righty or right-handed, you ship your right hand to the back and your left hand to the front. It's called a bladed stance. So instead of standing square where he could see both shoulders, you turn to the side, so he can only see one. So there's less of a surface area to hit, and it's easier to move that way and be more elusive. He picked it up instantly because– I mean, I'm sure the look on my face when I tucked my chin– I was in total fight stance, the chin tuck. I even put my hands up. Now that I remember, I even put my hands up and he instantly picked that up and he looked at me and said, “Nah, I'm going to hit a white motherfucker with this brick.”

**Scott**
Did you feel confident that you could take him even though he had a brick and you were unarmed at that time?

**Jayson**
It would all depend if he was able to strike me with the brick and where he would've struck me with the brick because, if he would've made a move, I would've definitely got two punches off. But if the brick cracked me in the face, I mean, I'm going out. Well, I don't know because I had another incident where I'm shocked I survived it. That's for the next interview. That way, you'll have me back. But depending on where he would've struck me with the brick – I definitely could have got to him – and depending on his punch tolerance.

**Scott**
So he said he was looking to hit someone white.

**Jayson**
Not just someone. He said a white motherfucker with a brick. It was very racially charged. I don't want to downplay that and say, “Oh, hit a white person.” He said, “A white motherfucker.” He said it in such a way it's racist, hateful, prejudice, bigoted. At first, I initially thought he was just a crazy guy rambling with a brick. I didn't think he would actually do it. I didn't think he would actually do it. He said, “Nah, hit a white motherfucker with a brick.” I'm like, okay. He saw that I got in a boxing stance. I've noticed with some aggressive crazy people that they're only as crazy as the threat they have to go against. So if it's a little old lady, they're crazy. If it's a guy or a man they think may hurt them, they're not as crazy. So I figured he was just talking and he wasn't going to do anything.

**Scott**
And he's still walking toward you?

**Jayson**
Yeah. He kept his distance. He kept a good 6 feet away and he continued walking east down 43rd street. And as he was walking, I saw a guy with a red hoodie on his hands in his pocket and his head down.

**Scott**
Where was this guy?

**Jayson**
This guy was walking towards 9th Avenue. They were walking towards each other. Guy with the hood on who later became the victim, he was walking on the outside closer to the street, and the guy with the brick was walking on the inside closer to the buildings.

**Scott**
The guy with the brick had already walked past you. So they are both to your right.

**Jayson**
Yeah. He walked past me but, like I said, I didn't really trust him afterwards because I didn't want to turn my back and he comes crack me from behind and I didn't see it, so I followed him, kept the stance all the way until he was maybe 10 feet out of range and about 15 feet. That's where they crossed paths.

**Scott**
And the guy in the hoodie, could you see his face at all?

**Jayson**
Couldn't really see his face. I initially thought it was orange but, in court, I found out it was red. No, I initially thought it was red. In court, I found out it was orange. I noticed he had glasses on and I noticed that he was of the Caucasian persuasion.

**Scott**
So did it trigger then that this guy might be in trouble?

**Jayson**
Not then, even, because I just thought the guy was a crazy coward just walking with a brick. Not then. The perp with the brick– he picked the brick up over his head the same way you would try to strike a nail with a hammer if you wanted to hit it with intense force. So he picked it up over his right shoulder, over his head and he struck the gentleman in the red burnt orange hood on the left side of his chin, and he went down like a ton of bricks. When he struck him with the brick, he let it go. It was almost like a downward row slash strike, if that makes sense. It hit him in the face. He fell on garbage bags because, in New York, all the trash is thrown out in the front. They don't have alleys in New York City. At that time, I remember screaming, what the fuck are you doing? " And that's when it struck me, “Oh, this guy's no joke.”

I started towards him, but he picked the brick up again and he struck the guy again. Then, I started towards him again. Then, he got to the brick again and struck him again. At this time, I see blood just

gushing and – I remember clear as day – I thought distinctly to myself, if someone (i.e. me) doesn't stop this, this guy is going to die right in front of my eyes. Mind you, after the first strike, there were people behind the guy with the brick on the side, closer, in a better situation to stop him in some way, shape or form, but all they screamed was, “Somebody stop or make him stop!”

The last strike– he hit him with the brick, he threw it down on him and the brick cracked in half and that's when I jetted and ran towards him at top speed. He was going down to get the brick, and I guess he heard footsteps coming his way or he saw me out as peripheral, but he looked up at me, made eye contact, and he jetted towards 8th Avenue. So if I was turned to my left and then turned around to the right, he went further to the right.

**Scott**
He wanted to just get out of there.

**Jayson**
Oh, he started running, I remember. He had a sheet or a towel on and he threw it up in the air when he ran. The way the towel/sheet was floating in the air really stuck in my mind because it just slowed down. He took off. He was very bow-legged, running low, so he appeared shorter than I thought he was. I actually ran. The brick’s broken too – it was like 80% of the brick and then 20% of the brick. I scooped up to 20% of the brick, like a shortstop used to play little league baseball. I guess those skills came in handy because my initial thought was to throw it. Hopefully, it cracks him and he falls down and then we wait till the police get there. But then I thought while I was running, “Okay, what if I throw it, hit a car, break a window, hit someone else?” So I let that thought go and just kept a brick in my han, chased him, tried not to get too close to him because I thought he would stop, turn around and kick, and probably knock my win into the middle of next week. So we were chasing. I have to admit, I was in great shape, probably the best shape I've been in my life at the time, but that guy was fast. I mean fast, fast. I chased him for maybe half a block and then we passed the mounted cop that I told you about.

**Scott**
Oh, the same one?

**Jayson**
The same mounted cop. He was there and people were still feeding the horse nuts or whatever. I said, “We got to get that guy.” I'm out of breath because I'm going hard. Like, he's only maybe 15 feet in front of me. I kept a visual contact, kept him in my eye line. “Get him, he hit somebody with a brick. We have to get him.” I'm chasing the guy running and the guy cuts through traffic this way and the mounted cop is just on a horse, did not get off the horse, and I'm thinking, why is this guy not getting off the horse so we could get this guy? So the guy runs through traffic, he goes to the other side of the street through traffic, and I run like on the same side of the street, but in traffic, if that makes sense, the same side he crossed from and kept a visual.

Through this time, the weird thing is – I don't know, maybe I'm a natural born comic – I heard blaxploitation music in my head while I was running, the guitar, that music started playing in my head. I started hearing this music and then, all of a sudden, the guy just lays down – the guy who hit the gentleman with the brick. He lays down and spreads eagle on the ground. Full eagle – looks like a starfish. He spreads eagle.

I go in front of him, and then the cop comes from behind him, and I said, “All right, officer, that's him. He hit the guy with the brick in the head. He almost killed that man down there.” And the officer gets off and the guy tries to sit up and he says, “Get back down, get down.” And the guy just sits there and puts his hands up and I said, “That's him. He hit the guy with the brick.”

He looked me in the eye. I'll never forget this moment. It was the most compelling moment from the situation. He looked me in the eye and said, “You witnessing, bro?” The brick guy looked me in the eye and said, “You witnessing, bro?” For people, let me translate because I don't speak broken English. He meant to say, “Are you witnessing, bro?” or “Or you are witnessing, bro?” But he said, “You witnessing, bro?”

**Scott**
What did that mean?

**Jayson**
Well, you tend to think about these things because in our initial interaction, he said, “I'm going to hit a white motherfucker with a brick.” He thought I had the same racial animosity and hate that he had and that he was justified in his actions and that snitches get stitches. You know the worst thing in the world is you tell the police, you testify. I think they call it being a rat. Interesting portion of it all – about the rat and the testifying – I spoke to some gentlemen I knew, other African American guys, one was a stockbroker, one may have sold insurance, “Oh, Jayson, you can't testify. This is going to come back. People are going to say you're a rat, you're a snitch.”

Then I spoke to a gentleman I knew who was– let's say he ran the Harlem Underground Economy in the 70s and early 80s. He was on the other side of the law. And I said, “Oh man, I didn't know.” He looked and he said, “Jayson, what the fuck are you talking about? You're not a street guy. You went to college. You want to be a part of this society. It is your duty to tell. It is your civil duty to not tell, but to testify, to tell on this guy. Do you want to live in a society where crazy people are going around hitting 60-year-old men in the face with bricks? Is that where you really want to live, Jayson?” Mind you, this is a guy who did 15 years behind bars, came out for six months, went back for another 15 years. It really impresses something upon me, the dichotomy of people who are really into ‘street life’ versus people who are civilians and the perception of things. Yeah. But he definitely encouraged me. He said, “Are you crazy? What fools told you about this rad stuff? You guys didn't have an agreement. You don't know this guy.”

But the attacker was surprised. Oh, he was very surprised. He was shocked. He was appalled. I can't speak to his state of mind, but we're not in court, so that's not important. But yeah, I could tell he was shocked and appalled and somewhat hurt. Like, how could another black man tell on me for hitting and– excuse my language, I don't use this. How could another black man tell on me for hitting a cracker in the face with a brick? That's what I kind of saw going through his head.

**Scott**
He felt kind of betrayed.

**Jayson**
He felt not kind of betrayed, but totally betrayed. I don't think he thought in a hundred years that I would've testified. Even when I went to court to testify, he still felt betrayed at that time.

**Scott**
But you were chasing him. I mean, it's not like you were going to say, okay–

**Jayson**
Not like I'm going to take a selfie for my Instagram story.

**Scott**
Right. Nice hit. Go on.

**Jayson**
Yeah, exactly. Yeah, bro, you did it. One down. It wasn't like I was going to do that. No.

**Scott**
It was interesting that there were other people there, they saw it happen and they didn't– I know there's a thing called the bystander effect where an individual is less likely to step in and offer help to a victim when there's a group of people because nobody wants to stand out.

**Jayson**
Well, they feel that someone else would do it, one. Two, they feel like if someone else isn't doing it, it's not a big problem. But most people don't want to get involved because there is a truckload of bad things, not bad things, but issues that come along with getting involved. You have to testify, you have to go through the anxiety of this. You have to worry about retribution, you have to worry about the label. I told you about snitch rat, whatever, even though no one's ever said that. And you might get hit with a brick because you're jumping in to prevent it from happening. You might get hit. So there's a plethora of issues that come along, so it's challenging, but seeing someone potentially about to get murdered made something in me click.

So the attacker gave up. He gave up, he's down, he's looking at me and "You witnessing, bro?" I paused for a second and said, "Fuck yeah, you almost kill that guy for none." And then he said, "Well, I can't breathe. I can't breathe. I didn't have my medicine today. I can't breathe." Mind you, this is maybe several months, maybe a couple years removed from the Eric Garner case, New York City. I don't know if your listeners are familiar with that, but it was a black gentleman who was selling Loosie cigarettes in Staten Island, New York, I believe. He got choked out by the cops and he kept saying he can't breathe, and he ended up dying as a result of that altercation.

**Scott**
So this guy was trying to play that same card.

**Jayson**
I think he was making a mockery of it. I think he was making a mockery of it. Yes.

**Scott**
The policeman actually did eventually get off the horse and arrest this guy.

**Jayson**
He got off the horse but he held it. So I spoke to him. I saw him when we were at the grand jury - first person I approached. I go up and say, "Man, why didn't you get off the horse?" He said, "Well, think of it this way, Jayson. He gets away. You saw him. We have video. We could get him another day. If I let this horse go and it runs in the middle of Times Square and begins to trample people, we have a much bigger issue because he said he called for backup and other people are coming." So he said it's a much bigger issue. I understood it when he put it in that perspective. But prior to that, because I was out of breath man, I was going hard. I'm like, "We can't let this guy get away because I started picturing, "What if this was a little kid? What if it's a little white kid walking home from school, latchkey kid, no different than I was growing up. 10, 12-year-old latchkey kid walking home, and he gets hit in the face with a brick? He's going to expire. His brain's going to rattle around. Well, what if it was a grandmother or a little babushka walking into her rent control apartment she had in Hell's Kitchen since the seventies, or nonna walking in a rent control apartment and this guy just hit her with a brick for nothing?" The hatred he has in his heart, that's nonsensical. Couldn't let that go.

So after he said he couldn't get his medicine, they handcuffed him, they hooked him and they put him on one of those rolling chairs and they took him off to Bellevue. That's the psych ward - is that politically correct? I don't know.

**Scott**
I don't know.

**Jayson**
I'll say it. They took him off to the psychiatric hospital, which is Bellevue in New York.

**Scott**
He needed some mental evaluation following his arrest. How about that?

**Jayson**
Yes. Then I ran back. The victim is sitting on the back of the ambulance because I actually guided the ambulance to where he was, because I thought he was in worse shape. I mean, he got struck with a brick, 3 or 4 , maybe even 5 times. He was leaking pretty bad. He was in the ambulance and he was holding something against his face to stop the bleeding. I was almost cheerful at the time and I said, “I'm sorry.” He looked at me. He had no idea what I was talking about, and he said, “For what?” I said, “That I couldn't get there sooner.” Yeah. I was tearful because, gosh, just to see him in that kind of pain and hurt and shock.

**Scott**
Yeah. He never saw it coming.

**Jayson**
Never saw it come and never know what hit him. He tried to get up one time but he slipped on the garbage bags.

**Scott**
What do you do after that? You got to have a lot of adrenaline going on.

**Jayson**
Adrenaline was pumping. They take him off. I give a statement to the policeman, to the officer at the time, name, address, what do you see, what you didn't see. My friend and I, we get the dry cleaning and we walk to my place. We talked about the incident the whole walk there and how crazy it was. Then, I take the dry cleaning in and I go get the boxing gloves and it's off to the boxing gym and I don't think I've ever trained that hard in my life because of my adrenaline. I don't even think it dissipated after I trained. I ran on the treadmill probably two miles at a six minute mile which is something I've never been able to replicate again, unfortunately. I was Kenyan for a day. Hit that happy bag, hard hit pads with one of the trainers. Probably did 500 situps. It was an intense training.

Afterwards, you start processing everything. Who is this guy? Is he connected to some sort of street gang or street crew? And where is this going to leave me? And what kind of retribution is going on or what kind of retribution could happen?

**Scott:**
You had mentioned that you also felt sadness. How did this affect you mentally?

**Jayson**

Initially, it was shocking. Went to the gym, had a lot of anxiety. Then, a sense of pride came over a little bit like, yeah, I saved this guy, because things like this, you can say you have all the principles in the world, you can say what you'll do in a situation, but you never know until you're faced with that situation. I heard people say, “I wouldn't do this, and if this happens, I would do–” That's not true. It's not true. It's really not because I'm pretty sure everyone who was standing around said, “I'll never let this take place.” But they stood frozen like they stared at Medusa. They didn't move. So I had a sense of pride about that, but I really was upset and sad that this is what our society was degenerating to because there was an incident that happened maybe two or three weeks later. A friend of mine who was an ex pro fighter who's been in the ring with some real animals. I mean, anyone who's a boxing fan would definitely know him from some of his fights. He's walking to the gym one day, 6 in the morning, a homeless guy comes from behind. Well, we don't even know. I can't even say homeless guy. Someone comes from behind - could have been a woman - punches him in the jaw, breaks it in three places.

Then, maybe a week after that, I heard an incident of men beating up women, beating up some women near Grand Central Station. So the violence started running rampant. Growing up in Chicago, there was always some sort of violence. Oh, he's in this gang, he's in this gang. Bang, bang, bang, bang and, sad to say, I kind of understood it, don't agree with it, but I kind of understood it. There was a reason. But the senseless violence– he just hit this guy for no reason because he was white. No rhyme, no reason, no past history in my eyes. It was for absolutely no reason whatsoever. Something like that really made me nervous. It made me super paranoid and sad and depressed for a little bit because you can't defend against it. It could happen to anyone anytime for no reason whatsoever. How are you going to put your head on a swivel for 24 hours a day? How are you going to play in the park with your children? How are you going to walk through Central Park? It's saddening that this is what our society's coming to.

**Scott**
And I've been to New York City multiple times and I walk around not really even thinking that violence could happen at any time because, for the most part, you're safe. These are the exceptions – these situations – but you're right, you never know. What was the outcome of this case?

**Jayson**
Roughly, let's say 6-8 months later, I get a call from the district attorney from Special Victims Unit, which was crazy to me because I watch a lot of Law and Order: SVU, so I'm like, “This is a big DA from Special Victims Unit.”

“Hi, Mr. Cross. How are you? Remember the brick attack?”

“How could I forget it?”

He said, “Okay, well we're going to charge the guy and we're going to charge him with assault. We want to ask you some questions about your testimony.”

And I said, “Assault? He said he's going to hit a white motherfucker with a brick.”

She's like, “He said that to you?”

I'm like, “Yeah. It’s in the police notes.”

She's like, “All right, let me call you back.” So they decided to take it to a grand jury. I testified at the grand jury. That's where I saw the cop and was like, “Why didn't you get off the damn horse?” I actually saw the victim again for the second time, didn't speak, just saw him. I went into the grand jury and testified, and they upped it to a hate crime with attempted murder. Initially, assault is just five years. They upped it to a hate crime with attempted murder because this guy wanted to go to trial for just assault because it's five years. They upped it to a hate crime with attempted murder, and that's punishable in New York state, 25 years to life. So he took the deal, they offered him 14– no, they offered him 12 and the judge dropped it down to 10. So he had a deal for 10 years. He got a deal for 10 years and I think that's the end of it. I think that's the end of it. Towards the end of 2019, I think that's the end of it.

2020, COVID hits. I start thinking about the case. I get off social media. I kind of hide my internet profile more because now I'm really into my paranoid mind like, “Oh gosh, this guy's going to join this and this is going to happen. And oh gosh, my paranoia.” So I deleted my internet profile. I don't know if people are watching it or not, but strangely enough he wants to appeal the case.

**Scott**
Wait a minute, he took a plea deal.

**Jayson**
Took a plea deal, got 10 years.

**Scott**
I didn't even realize you could appeal something like that because he agreed to it.

**Jayson**
Yeah, he agreed to it, but he chose to appeal the case. He had some special interest group that was going to help him. I'm not a legal eagle, so I can't speak to what it was.

**Scott**
Right. But the interesting thing too, though, is he acted as his own lawyer.

**Jayson**

He acted as his own lawyer, yes. So he was a lawyer. They gave him a public defender as his assistant counsel.

**Scott**
Okay.

**Jayson**
Yeah. As his assistant counsel. He was his own lawyer, took the 10 year plea deal. This guy– I don't think he's a dummy. I think he has somewhat of a pretty decent aptitude, and I think he did that purposely so he could appeal. “Well, I didn't know what I was doing. I need to appeal this case because maybe someone caught COVID and they're not here anymore.”

**Scott**
True. Right.

**Jayson**
Maybe that vain black guy that chased me up the street, maybe he changed his mind.

**Scott**
Well, the old saying, anyone who acts as his own attorney has a fool for a client.

**Jayson**
Absolutely.

**Scott**
I mean, I've heard public defenders aren't always really at the top of their game.

**Jayson**
Yeah. Well, the one he did was actually a pretty good lawyer, I must say. He appeals this case, so I have to go back to New York to testify.

**Scott**
Oh, so you didn't live in New York at that point?

**Jayson**
No, absolutely not. I said, man, people getting hit with bricks, punched in the jaw, thrown on subway tracks, let’s say you’re scared as hell when you move to Chicago to be safe. So he appealed it. I had to go back to testify and that was my first time in New York since I left. It was very interesting and I testified and pretty much told the same story I'm telling you. And when it came his time to cross examine me, he said, no questions. And then he and his lawyer had a sidebar. He's like, “Well, you got

to–” and I kind of hear him. They were supposed to be speaking, but they like, “You got to testify, you got to ask him something.” Then, his lawyer came up just firing off questions really fast, trying to trip me up. “So, Mr. Cross, tell me this. You've been boxing for 10 years. How come you didn't run up faster?”

**Scott**
Were they trying to discredit you as a witness?

**Jayson**
Well, just certain things. He said, “Mr. Cross, you've been boxing for 10 years. How come you didn't move up faster?” And I'm like, “Bro, I'm trying to fight people with gloves, not with bricks.” So he just asked certain questions, “(Unintelligible) Did you do this?” And then they said, that's it. I got off the stand and that took a weight off my shoulders. And then I saw the victim afterwards and we had a nice talk.

**Scott**
Is that the first time you'd actually chatted with the victim other than in the ambulance?

**Jayson**
Yeah. Besides saying “Sorry I didn't get there quicker”, I said, “Hi, I'm Jayson” and apologized again. When I saw him, I said, “Hey, I'm sorry. Couldn't get there quicker.” After I testified, then we got to talk, actually.

**Scott**
You got to know him fairly well.

**Jayson**
Fairly well, yes. We became friends, I would say, afterwards.

**Scott**
How did that happen?

**Jayson**
I went to a language academy in Chicago for elementary school, so *Sprechen Sie Deutsch*?

**Scott**
I don't, no.

**Jayson**

I love German. I say it's my second language. When I first spoke to him, he said “(German)” and I heard the German accent. So when I got to speak to him afterwards, I spoke a little German with him. I'm somewhat of a Germanophile, so we speak about German history and Charlemagne and things like this and the Prussian Empire and the Holy Roman Empire and we became friends from there. Every time on the anniversary of this incident, we always say, “Hey, glad to have met you” and send each other messages.

**Scott**
So he's still in New York?

**Jayson**
Yes, for now. I can't say much on his behalf but, for now, yeah. Oh, I forgot to mention that the guy ended up– he had a 10 year deal, and when he went to appeal the case, he got 14 years. So he actually ended up getting more time.

**Scott**
I'm just confused about that. I mean, it's a good thing, right? He got more time.

**Jayson**
More time. Mm-hmm.

**Scott**
And is he still incarcerated now or when does he come up for release?

**Jayson**
So he's due to be released in March of 2030 but, when you get arrested, they take your DNA and they run it through CODIS. I have friends in law enforcement and they told me to run it through CODIS. So they run his DNA through CODIS and he's a suspect in a murder in Minnesota. A white lady was stabbed to death in the 2010s - I mean 2013, 2014, something around there - and I'm guessing his DNA popped and he's wanted for that murder. So he may go straight from New York jail to Minnesota.

**Scott**
So they're not going to try him for that until he gets released?

**Jayson**
That, I don't know. I don't have too many details about it. I just read the news article, but I checked the law on that. That's punishable by 25 to life. I wonder, since she was Caucasian, well, they can't prove mens rea, so they can't say it’s a hate crime, so he probably won't get a hate crime enhancement, but it's kind of odd that you’re wanted for a murder of a white lady in Minnesota and then try to kill a white man in New York City.

**Scott**
You didn't even realize he was probably or possibly a murderer already walking toward you with that brick.

**Jayson**
I didn't know already, but when he hit the guy with the brick, I saw in his eyes, I could see he had blood lust. I've seen that look before, let's say. I could tell he definitely has killed people before, for sure. There's a certain blood lust you could see in a person's eyes if you know what you're looking for.

**Scott**
Yeah. You don't want to see that when you're in the ring with somebody, right?

**Jayson**
Well, it's a different kind of blood lust. That's just like aggression and anger or whatever. You would have to have been around certain situations or grew up in a certain part to really see these people or this person likes to kill for sport.

**Scott**
If you could do this all over again, would you do anything differently?

**Jayson**
I would've become a 2A advocate a lot earlier. That way, I wouldn't have to run as fast.

**Scott**
But that's difficult in New York, right? You can't just get a concealed weapons permit.

**Jayson**
Well, it's impossible. In New York, the issue or issue– I forget the exact law, but you can get it, but you can carry it in Manhattan County, I believe, which is hard. I mean, you can get a firearm, but it's very difficult.

**Scott**
Really, what you did that day, you would've gotten there sooner if you could, but that's about it.

**Jayson**
Absolutely. Well, with the 2A thing, I do believe that as well, but that was more for comedic effect, of course, being my profession. But if I could do it all over again, when he said he is going to hit a white motherfucker with a brick, I would've knocked the brick out his hand. But then, I'd think about that too or something, right? So what? Knock the brick out of his hand and he runs away? I'm not going to chase him because he didn't hurt anyone at the time. He just said something at the time that's stupid. So, okay, this guy doesn't get hit, but maybe he goes around the corner and he gets that kid or

grandmother that I spoke about earlier. I mean, I hate that the victim had to go through that, but I think it played out the best way it could have played out.

**Scott**
Could have been worse for everybody.

**Jayson**
Yes. Well, it could have been someone dead. I remember, before that, it was a reverse issue. It was a white guy that came down from Maryland. He was looking for a black person to kill and he stabbed some guy in the chest on 38th and 10th, which is where I go grocery shopping. So mind you, I hear this story on the news. This was a few months around there, and he said, “Yeah, I saw this one guy, but he looked too nervous. He was always looking around. So I decided to leave him alone.” I say I walk down that street every day, not every day, but a lot to go to the grocery store, so maybe 2-3 times a week and I wonder if that was the guy, because I'm always looking over my shoulder, looking for this, looking for that. I have the in-square rule. So when you're walking on the sidewalk– you know how the sidewalk is divided into squares? I very rarely let someone get within square distance of me, not that I don't let him get within that distance, but without being defensive minded.

**Scott**
Right. You're at least aware somebody's there.

**Jayson**
Aware and ready to strike if they strike, definitely. But yeah, he stabbed him on the corner I passed a hundred times yearly and I just really wonder what was going on, and that was racially motivated as well. That actually led to my heartbreak and depression too as well – all these racially motivated things happening and a place that's supposed to be the most liberal place in the union, New York City, and you have hate crimes everywhere you go. I would think we'll be more civil by now. In our evolution by now, we would be a little more civil than to judge people on such superficial things, or not even judge but to kill people based on such superficial things.

**Scott**
How did this experience change how you look at life, if it did?

**Jayson**
It changed a lot. One, you have to realize things do happen and they can happen. I was not a 2A guy at that time. Then, the toilet paper debacle that added fuel to the fire. I said, people are acting crazy over toilet paper. We're losing our minds. Became a 2A advocate because I realized there may be a time where you have to defend yourself and there's no one to call. So you have to be prepared. I stay prepared, still paranoid, still looking. I say I probably profile certain people, I won't say certain people, but people in general more than I normally did when or normally would. It made me kinder in a way because you never know when things like that could happen, a little more kinder because you never know when the end is near. You just never know. So it helped me cherish the moment, I must say, and

kept boxing. Started taking a little Judo made me realize you have to be in a military mind state. This sounds bad now, listening to it, but we're in a perpetual state of war almost. It might not be an act of combat, but it's a perpetual state of war and you never know when something can happen or when you're under attack. I do it not to be offensive. Defensive.

**Scott**
Yeah. And there's always potential. Even if you're not seeing actual violence, the potential is there.

**Jayson**
It always can happen, yes.

**Scott**
Tell us about your comedy career. You have a YouTube channel. How long have you been doing that?

**Jayson**
Oh my gosh. I started comedy– after college, I went to New York. I started off doing print work. That's why I went to New York City and I stayed, and I did that for pretty much the entire 20 years. But in the middle of it, someone told me, “You want to get seen by more casting directors, you should do standup. They're always at the clubs.” So I started comedy and I've been doing that for roughly almost a quarter of a century. Good Lord.

**Scott**
Wow.

**Jayson**
How time flies. My first 15 years in New York though. That was the safe New York. Party and be inebriated and just walk home because you didn't think anything would happen. That's another thing. Alcohol is out the window because you have to always be cognizant of your surroundings. I have to always be cognizant of my surroundings so I don't drink. Maybe on New Year's Eve or something, I might have champagne or whatever. My comedy style is very, I don't say political, per se– social commentary. I have a lot of social commentary and a lot of it is shaped by this incident that we spoke of, for sure.

**Scott**
Do you tell this story as part of your act?

**Jayson**
Yes, I've been working on it probably for the last four or five years, but it's really hard to say– how do you start off a joke with “I'm going to hit a white motherfucker with this brick”? So it takes a lot of artistry and craft, but it works. It definitely works.

**Scott**
Is this your full-time job? I understand you were a teacher at some point also, right?

**Jayson**
Yeah. I have two full-time jobs. One is comedy and I work as an educator. My technical term is called an interventionist. There are a lot of kids that are two or three grade levels behind reading and math, so I do interventions and help bring them up to speed.

**Scott**
Wow, that's interesting - that term - because, in this situation, you were also an interventionist.

**Jayson**
Oh my goodness. I never thought about that. Wow.

**Scott**
You got to work that into your act now, right?

**Jayson**
Oh yeah. I'm totally stealing that. Are you kidding me? No, because I always thought of myself as a translator. Like I could take this and explain it to them. I do have an affinity for foreign languages. But now that you put it that way, yes, let's title this episode, “The interventionist.”

**Scott**
It might be something like that. I don't know.

**Jayson**
Oh my gosh. Thank you for sharing.

**Scott**
You better write that down.

**Jayson**
I'm writing this down.

**Scott**
Do you keep a notepad next to your bed so that when you get an idea for a joke, you don't forget it?

**Jayson**
Yes. Notepad or my cell phone.

**Scott**
Oh yeah. Just record it on your phone. Yeah.

**Jayson**
Yep. Look at this, see. You just never know where inspiration is going to come from.

**Scott**
Well, we'll have a link to your YouTube channel so people can go watch your comedy.

**Jayson**
They could go to my website if they want to find out where I'm performing, and they could join my mailing list. It's jaysoncross.com. And they can find me on social media at JasonCrossComedy.

**Scott**
That's Instagram and–

**Jayson**
Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, YouTube, X. I'm on X as well.

**Scott**
Well, I'll put links to all that so people can go find that. And you're going to be appearing here in my area.

**Jayson**
Yes. St. Pete Beach.

**Scott**
Yeah.

**Jayson**
Is it St. Pete Beach or St. Petes' Beach?

**Scott**
St. Pete. Singular.

**Jayson**
Singular. St. Pete Beach. Yes. I'll be in St. Pete Beach at Coconuts Comedy Club, at the Trade Wind Resorts on May 30th. It's going to be an amazing show. You could come here about this. You could come here at the Prelude, the aftermath. Yes, you could hear this whole story, but in a more comical way.

**Scott**
Right, yeah. That is going to be interesting. If I can make it, I'm going to try to attend that show, but it'll be interesting to see how you have crafted a story about an attempted murder into a comedy act.

**Jayson**
With great difficulty, I must say. The rate of difficulty, I put it on at least a 9 , but what inspires me is Richard Pryor. Richard Pryor attempted suicide by setting his himself on fire, and it's the funniest joke he ever wrote called Pryor on Fire. I don't know if you're familiar with his comedy.

**Scott**
Yeah, I remember that.

**Jayson**
He has an entire bit about setting himself on fire, so I said if he could make that funny, I could make this funny.

**Scott**
Jason, thanks for coming on, sharing your story.

**Jayson**
Thank you for having me on. It's been a pleasure. It's actually a catharsis to relive and speak about the situation and then actually see the positive outcomes of it.

**Scott**
Even before we talked about Jayson's comedy career, you might have been able to pick up on his sense of humor just in the way he tells a story. And I can tell you he's a funny guy. Just go to YouTube and search Jayson Cross Comedy if you want to have some laughs. And of course I've got links to all his socials in the episode notes at WhatWasThatLike.com/255.

You know, when I started this podcast about 8 years ago, I had to spend a lot of time finding guests to talk to. But it's different now – most of the stories come from the audience; people who listen to the show. If you've been thinking "Hmm… I wonder if my story is crazy enough to be a What Was That Like episode" – well, let's find out. Just go to the website, WhatWasThatLike.com, and click where it says "Your Story". That's where you can send me all the details.

Graphics for this episode were created by Bob Bretz. Full episode transcription was created by James Lai.

And remember, you can sign up to support the podcast by going to WhatWasThatLike.com/PLUS, or on an iPhone just click on Try Free – you'll get every episode ad-free, plus there's more than 50 bonus episodes that are exclusive to supporters.

And once again, we're about to hear this week's Listener Story. Every main episode ends this way – just an audio story that was sent in by a listener, usually around 5-10 minutes long. You can record yours on your phone and email it to Scott@WhatWasThatLike.com.

This listener tells about a pretty amazing coincidence.

Stay safe, and we'll see you next time.

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(Listener Story)

It was a few months ago when I traveled to San Diego for an art workshop - because I'm an artist. The first morning, the teacher asked us to share something about ourselves and introduce ourselves to the group. Everybody had their turn and I went last. I introduced myself as I always do, and I said, "Hi, I am Aida. I'm originally from Venezuela, but I live in Seattle." And then I went into my little spiel about my work. Then, after I was done, the lady to my left turned around and said, "Oh my gosh, what a coincidence. There's two of us Venezuelans in this workshop." So we start laughing because yes, it is kind of crazy that happened. We started chatting and kind of explained our situations and our immigration stories and how we got here, when we got here, if we had any relatives left back there at home.

We spent a while chatting and then I started telling her about my art and I use collage materials as part of my mixed media art. I have been recently using Venezuelan bolivar, which was the currency back in the day that is now worth basically less than the money it's printed on. I have my uncle back in Caracas that has been collecting them for me for years, so he has a stack that he's trying to send, but I tell her like, I don't have anybody that comes back and forth because this is not something you can send in the mail. She said, "Oh, well I have a cousin that goes from Caracas to Miami a lot. Maybe I could ask him to get in touch with your relative and he could do the favor for you." So I said, "Okay, great."

Well, we exchanged our information and I gave her my name and my last name. My married name is very German sounding, so I said, "My maiden name is Rojas." She looked at me and she said, "Oh, Rojas?! My best friend from Venezuela growing up was Rojas." And I thought in my head that there's millions of Rojas in Venezuela. It's like Smith or Johnson or Thompson. So I just tell her, "Yeah, well, what's her name?" She said Marialba Rojas and I just almost fell off my chair. I'm like, "What? That is my dad's sister!" And she's like, "Oh my gosh. Oh my gosh. Let's make sure we have the same person."

Marialba is not a common name, but I start asking her like, does she have a twin? Yes. Does she have two brothers? Yes. Does she live in Valencia? Yes. And then we're like, it has to be the same person. We just start screaming and laughing and talking nonstop and exchanging information and stuff. Then, she asked me, are your parents Carlos and Andy? And I'm like, yes. She's like, “Oh my gosh, I love your parents. By the way, I met you when you were a baby and I met you again at age eight one time we visited New York.” So this is just all so crazy.

We start comparing stories and she starts telling me all about my aunts and uncles and my grandparents, growing up there with my parents– they were all one big group of friends because they were all the same age, and Vivian was not only an acquaintance, she was kind of part of my family. She knew my grandparents really well. They would spend weekends together. She would come over on vacation with my family and she was like another sister really.

So, we call my parents on FaceTime and they also cannot believe it. “Oh my gosh, we've been thinking about you for so many years. We didn't know where you were.” And all this stuff. And then, she says, “Yes, I've been looking for your family and for Marialba for 20 to 30 years, and I didn't know anything about her and I kind of gave up trying because I just kept hitting dead ends.” She got in touch with my parents. And then she starts asking me about everybody and who married whom and how's this person doing to catch up on 30 years of my family history.

Then, that night, I got a message from my aunt also crying, saying, “Oh my gosh, Vivian, my dear friend, I had lost hope that I was ever going to find you after 30 years looking for you.” And they finally got in touch. Sadly, they might not ever meet in person because getting to and from Venezuela is really hard. So the days went on and we kept finding coincidences like she was at my parents' wedding as a witness, and she was the maid of honor at my aunt's wedding and her little brother and my mom's little sister went out for a little bit while they were in boarding school in Florida, and the coincidences just kept going on and on.

So we got to know each other really well. We were in touch. We are texting each other, sending pictures back and forth. I recently visited San Diego and took my family to meet her, and we are now connected. So I just realized in that moment how important it is to open up and to get to know people even as they are strangers, because you just never know what you might find, what connections you might make, and I'm so happy and grateful that I was open that day and that I did share my story and I found basically almost like a new relative.