

# NYPD Tapes 4: The WhistleBlower, Adrian Schoolcraft

## He wanted his bosses to know about NYPD misconduct. So they put him in a mental ward

By Graham Rayman

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Schoolcraft waits for word about his status with the NYPD.

Last Halloween, three weeks after he made allegations of misconduct in Brooklyn's 81st Precinct, Adrian Schoolcraft's career in the New York City Police Department ended in rather spectacular fashion.

On October 7, Schoolcraft had sat for three hours with an inspector, a lieutenant, and three sergeants with the Quality Assistance Division—the NYPD unit that monitors the accuracy of police reports—as they questioned him about his allegations that precinct bosses had refused to take criminal complaints and had downgraded crimes. They told him they would launch a substantial investigation.

After the meeting, Schoolcraft went about his normal work as a member of the 81st Precinct. Then, on the afternoon of October 31, he felt sick and went home about an hour early. Precinct supervisors appeared at his door hours later, claiming he had violated policy and demanding that he return to work.

One of his visitors was a deputy chief, who upbraided him while sitting on the edge of his bed. On orders from that deputy chief, Schoolcraft was then thrown to the floor, handcuffed, dragged from his Queens apartment, and taken against his will to a psychiatric ward at Jamaica Hospital. His forced hospitalization lasted six days. Police officers also removed papers from his home that documented his concerns about NYPD operations. Jamaica Hospital officials charged him \$7,000 for his stay—and another \$86 to obtain his own medical records.

Schoolcraft [has been introduced to \*Voice\* readers](#) as the Bed-Stuy cop who secretly taped 117 roll calls at the precinct, as well as many other conversations with his fellow cops. In our series, "[The NYPD Tapes](#)," the *Voice* has been making these recordings public, and they show a pattern of police downgrading crimes, intimidating crime victims, and enforcing quotas for writing tickets and performing "stop-and-frisks."

Schoolcraft also had his digital recorder rolling as his



Schoolcraft's fateful digital recorder.

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Outside Schoolcraft's upstate apartment, a cop keeps watch.

Details:

*The Voice presents excerpts from "The NYPD Tapes: Inside Bed-Stuy's 81st Precinct."*

superior officers threw him to the ground and hauled him off to the mental ward. Those recordings reveal that he was rational throughout the encounter, and refused medical assistance that was then forced on him.

In addition, hospital records show that the medical staff was misled by an NYPD sergeant about the events of that day, causing doctors to treat him as a psychiatric patient.

Like the previous recordings the *Voice* has made public, these tapes suggest that Adrian Schoolcraft is an ordinary cop who got caught on the wrong side of department politics, tried to report corruption, and paid for it with his career.

Despite repeatedly reporting what he saw as misconduct to a duty captain, a district surgeon, an NYPD psychologist, three Internal Affairs officers, and five department crime statistics auditors, nothing has come of these efforts.

The NYPD won't tell the *Voice* what Schoolcraft's current employment status is, but they do have the resources to continue sending officers to Schoolcraft's upstate home to bang on his door.

**Schoolcraft didn't just** materialize in the 81st Precinct with a digital tape recorder in his pocket. The 34-year-old registered Republican was born in Texas, the son of a Dallas cop and a bank official. After graduating from a suburban high school in 1993, he joined the U.S. Navy as a corpsman. He served his active duty in Japan on the *USS Blue Ridge*: "I was basically a paramedic on the ship," he says. "Guys would get their eyes poked out, get hit with stuff falling from the ceiling, fall down the stairs—broken legs, broken backs. It was dangerous work."

After four years in the Navy, Schoolcraft returned home in the summer of 1997 with an honorable discharge. He worked at a Wal-Mart for two months, and then landed a job with Motorola. After three years, he learned that his mother had cancer, and moved home to a small town in Upstate New York, where his parents had retired. He would drive his mom to her chemotherapy appointments an hour away in Albany. (She passed away in 2003.)

In 2002, he applied to be a police officer, motivated by his mother's wishes and the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

In 2003, the rookie cop was sent to the 75th Precinct in East New York, Brooklyn, for Operation Impact, a program that assigns young officers to high-crime areas to augment

**FEBRUARY 20, 2009**

**"If We Like You, You Get a Certain Thing. If We Don't Like You, You Get a Certain Thing."**

In this excerpt, Adrian Schoolcraft meets with Lieutenant Rafael Mascol, who makes a series of unguarded remarks about how the NYPD rates officers.

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**OCTOBER 31, 2009**

**"What is this, Russia?"**

In this recorded excerpt from Schoolcraft's apartment, deputy chief Michael Marino demands that Schoolcraft, who'd gone home early feeling sick, return to the precinct. Schoolcraft refuses.

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**OCTOBER 31, 2009**

**"Son, You Got a Choice. What Is It Gonna Be?"**

Deputy chief Marino demands that Schoolcraft go to the hospital. Schoolcraft refuses. He was then thrown to the floor, handcuffed, dragged from his Queens apartment, and taken against his will to a psychiatric ward at Jamaica Hospital.

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**NYPD Tapes: The Series**

[The NYPD Tapes Part 1](#)

Inside Bed-Stuy's 81st Precinct

the precinct force.

The precinct commander at the time was Michael Marino, who would become Deputy Chief in Brooklyn North and have a major impact on Schoolcraft's career seven years later.

Training was limited: "We had a field training sergeant, but all he would do is sign your memo book once a day and tell you your post," Schoolcraft says.

After eight months at the 75th Precinct, Schoolcraft was assigned to the 81st Precinct in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn. Famed NYPD whistleblower Frank Serpico, ironically, spent the first several years of his career in the 81st Precinct. He was aided by Detective Lieutenant David Durk, who became an important figure in the Schoolcraft story in the late summer of 2009.

Over the first six years of his career, Schoolcraft worked patrol and made more than 80 arrests. Though he has an occasional beer, he doesn't keep any alcohol in his home. And at the 81st Precinct, he was puzzled about why cops would end every shift with beery night at a Queens pub: "They go to a bar and start talking about the job," he says. "That's the last thing I wanted to do. I'd rather go to putt-putt golf than sit on a fucking bar stool."

Schoolcraft became known in the precinct for rescuing more than a dozen abandoned pets from the streets of Bed-Stuy. He saved dogs that were starving, dogs with bleeding paws, and dogs left tied to fences.

Over time, he began raising substantive concerns inside the precinct. He wrote, for example, a report to the precinct commander about the constant overtime. "You had officers working 20 hours straight, day after day," he says. "To me, that was a safety issue."

Meanwhile, he started to carry a digital tape recorder, initially to record street encounters that might result in civilian complaints.

In October 2006, an ambitious captain named Steven Mauriello arrived at the precinct. Mauriello, later the precinct commander, was focused on making cops hit their productivity numbers, a philosophy that clashed with Schoolcraft's views.

"Be a cop, do your job," Mauriello is heard saying on a tape from January 27, 2009. "You got a problem with how I roll?"

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My style? Too fucking bad."

Schoolcraft believed more in a "community" model of policing: "You pull someone over for a seat-belt violation, they have their ID, all their papers, you don't need to give them a ticket," he says. "Just 'warn and admonish.' You don't need to hammer the regular people."

He came to believe that the NYPD's obsession with statistics was driving a wedge between police officers and the community: "Why not look at the quality of the service

we're providing?" he asks.

Throughout 2008 and into early 2009, Schoolcraft was assigned to a solo footpost at 120 Chauncey Street, one of the more troubled buildings in the precinct. Residents of the complex recently told the *Voice* that Schoolcraft was the only cop they really knew, because he actually tried to engage them in real conversations.

Increasingly, however, Schoolcraft's superiors were starting to question his dedication to the by-the-numbers program that was becoming an obsession at the NYPD.

**On January 13, 2009**, Schoolcraft met with Lieutenant Rafael Mascol, who told him to pick up his activity, or his shift would be changed.

On January 29, he received a poor work evaluation, which he appealed.

The following day, a flier appeared on his locker, which read, "If you don't like your job, maybe you should get another job."

Schoolcraft decided not to complain: "I could have called Internal Affairs and made a big stink, but I didn't want to take it outside the precinct," he says.

On February 20, Schoolcraft met with Mascol again, and secretly taped the conversation. On the recording, Mascol makes a series of unguarded remarks about how the NYPD rates officers.

On a ranking system of 1 to 5, Mascol says that no one ever gets a 5, or even a 4.5: "Most police officers are just basically meeting standards," he says. "They are basically doing what they're told to do. Very few police officers are actually going above and beyond the recommended minimum of accomplishment, you know?"

Mascol describes the NYPD evaluation system as a popularity contest. "Unfortunately, if we like you, you get a certain thing," he says. "If we don't like you, you get a certain thing, as opposed to what the performance standards of the—uh, you know—what the department requires. I have no time to change the entire department mind, unfortunately."

Mascol told Schoolcraft to raise his numbers. But Schoolcraft was convinced that precinct supervisors wanted him out. He had already started documenting what he saw as retaliation in his activity book.

"I was appealing the evaluation," he says. "No one was talking to me. Cops were getting flack for 'unnecessary conversation.' They are writing me up. They were building a paper trail."

On March 16, 2009, Schoolcraft left his footpost and walked into a bodega at Bainbridge Street and Reid Avenue to find a bathroom. Lieutenant Timothy Caughey arrived and wrote up Schoolcraft for not marking in his memo book that he was leaving his post. He also confiscated the memo book itself.

Schoolcraft was taken to the precinct and met with the duty captain, Theodore Lauterborn, who told him he was under "performance monitoring" because his numbers weren't high enough. At one point in the discussion, which Schoolcraft taped, Lauterborn says that Mauriello is a "fanatic" about police officers' activity.

Lauterborn also says that Caughey is making a copy of the memo book, with all his sensitive notes inside it. He also implies that Schoolcraft will be transferred if he doesn't increase his activity.

Schoolcraft promises to work harder, but says he won't fake summonses and stop-and-frisk reports the way, he claimed, others were doing to keep up with the quota demand. Lauterborn denies that such fakery is going on. Later, another officer tells Schoolcraft that a precinct sergeant was looking for a way to force him out on psychiatric grounds.

On April 3, Schoolcraft called in sick with chest pains and an upset stomach. The following day, April 4, an NYPD doctor gave him the rest of the week off.

Two days later, he visited an NYPD district surgeon and, during the examination, repeated some of his allegations about the precinct. The surgeon sent him to speak with a department psychologist, Catherine Lamstein, on April 13, 2009.

Once again, Schoolcraft listed his allegations about what was happening in the precinct. "She was told about the robbery complaints, the training, the overtime, no days off," he says.

Lamstein left the room to speak with a supervisor. When she returned, she said she was ordering Schoolcraft to turn in his gun and his shield because he was having chest pains.

"She says, 'This is normal. We do this all the time because of chest pains,' " he says.

Two officers drove Schoolcraft to the precinct and then to his home to collect two firearms and his shield. He would now be assigned to desk duty in the precinct and ordered to man the telephone switchboard.

**In June, Schoolcraft** hit on the idea to write "A Patrolman's Report to the Commissioner," about what he had observed in the precinct—he got the idea from *Target Blue*, a book about corruption in the NYPD in the early 1970s. The document would contain the problems that he observed, transcriptions from his tapes to back them up, and a list of recommendations. He intended to send it to Commissioner Ray Kelly.

On July 27, 2009, Schoolcraft met again with NYPD psychologist Lamstein, who told him that he had "anger issues." He responded that he was disappointed with the department, but wasn't angry.

That summer, Schoolcraft's father contacted retired Detective Lieutenant David Durk, famed for helping Frank Serpico report corruption in the NYPD. He asked Durk for advice on how his son should deal with the disciplinary case and get his concerns aired within the department.

Durk spoke with Schoolcraft on August 18, and told him that he should record everything in order

to build his case. "He told me that without audio or video, my statement wouldn't mean crap," Schoolcraft says. Durk also pledged to call a captain at Internal Affairs named Brandon Del Pozo.

Two days later, on August 20, Schoolcraft reported to the Internal Affairs Bureau that two precinct supervisors had entered a locked file room and removed records of civilian complaints from the personnel file of one of the supervisors.

A month later, Lieutenant Caughey posted a memorandum in the precinct that said that all Internal Affairs inquiries should be brought to him first.

Durk, meanwhile, did call Del Pozo. It was only after that that the department reacted. Internal Affairs spoke with Schoolcraft in early September. His allegations were evidently referred to the Quality Assurance Division (QAD), which audits crime statistics. QAD summoned Schoolcraft to the October 7 meeting.

The result: On October 27, a Brooklyn North sergeant told Schoolcraft he was on "forced monitoring."

Then, at the start of a shift on October 31, Schoolcraft's memo book was confiscated again. This time, Caughey took it away for three hours and locked himself in an office with a copy machine. When he finally came out, he returned the memo book and called Schoolcraft's sergeant, Rasheena Huffman, into his office.

"She comes out cold as ice," Schoolcraft says. "A lot of the negative stuff, the stuff on the tapes, is in the memo book. And now they have copies of it."

At around 2:45 p.m., less than an hour until the end of his shift, Schoolcraft was feeling ill, and, at the same time, he felt that Caughey was menacing him, so he decided to go home sick. He filled out a slip and presented it to Huffman, who was on her personal cell phone. He says she approved his early departure.

After Schoolcraft got home, he called Internal Affairs about Caughey's behavior. At around 4:30 p.m., he took a swig of Nyquil, and settled down for a nap. At around 6 p.m., his father called him and told him to look out the window. Police lights were flashing in the street, but he hadn't heard any knocks or buzzes at his door.

He checked his phone. There was a message from Sergeant Huffman, saying she had denied his sick report and that he needed to return to the station immediately.

He kept his father on the phone. After 9 p.m., he heard someone coming up the stairs. His father advised him to pretend he was asleep.

A number of police supervisors entered the apartment with a key they obtained from the landlord. They had told the landlord that Schoolcraft was suicidal.

"Once they came in and saw I wasn't in danger, they should have left," he says. "I was fine, and we could deal with the sick report later. But they start going through my shit. I'm thinking, 'What the fuck is going on?' "

About a dozen NYPD supervisors piled into his small apartment. He was lying on his bed, wearing shorts and a T-shirt. He noticed someone with a video camera.

On the audio recording that Schoolcraft made, Deputy Chief Michael Marino and precinct commander Mauriello accuse him of "just walking out of the precinct" and demand that he return.

Lauterborn says, "Get your stuff on. We're going back to the precinct."

Schoolcraft argues that his early departure was approved. Initially, he agrees to return, but then, after speaking to his father, changes his mind and tells the police he feels ill.

A paramedic arrives and asks him what's wrong. "I was just having stomach pains," Schoolcraft says. "They're embellishing this."

As the paramedics start to check his blood pressure, Marino is heard haranguing Schoolcraft: "Listen to me, I'm a chief in the New York City Police Department. So this is what's going to happen, my friend. You've disobeyed an order. And the way you're acting is not right."

"Chief, if you were woken up in your house . . ." Schoolcraft replies.

"Stop right there!" Marino says.

". . . how would you behave?" Schoolcraft asks.

"Stop right there, son. I'm doin' the talkin' right now. Not you," Marino thunders.

"In my apartment," Schoolcraft says. "What is this, Russia?"

"You are going to be suspended," Marino says.

The paramedic says that Schoolcraft's blood pressure is very high. He agrees to go to a hospital, thinking they would take him to his hospital in Forest Hills, Queens. He walks downstairs with the paramedics, but then he's told he's being taken to Jamaica Hospital.

"I was willing to go to Forest Hills, but not Jamaica," he says. "I turned around and said 'I'm RMA,' and I went back and lay on the bed."

In police parlance, "RMA" means "refusing medical attention," the right of any citizen. When Lauterborn tells Schoolcraft he's in trouble, he replies, "If I did something wrong, write me up."

It was then that Chief Marino lost his temper, according to the tape. "Listen to me, they are going to treat you like an EDP [emotionally disturbed person]," he says. "Now, you have a choice. You get up like a man and put your shoes on and walk into that bus, or they're going to treat you as an EDP and that means handcuffs."

Schoolcraft tells the chief that he is the one pushing the confrontation.

Marino then orders Schoolcraft placed in handcuffs. "All right, just take him," he says. "I can't fucking stand him anymore."

At that point, various officers grab him.

"So they pulled me off the bed, stomping on me," Schoolcraft says. "They had me all twisted up, hands all over me. Someone grabbed my hair. . . . Marino stepped on my face with his boot. That's when he said it didn't have to be like this. They basically beat the shit out of me."

Once Schoolcraft was cuffed, Marino sat on his bed. A sergeant found the tape recorder. Marino grabbed it and put in his pocket. Schoolcraft didn't see that tape recorder again—but he had another one rolling that Marino did not find.

**Jamaica Hospital records** obtained by the *Voice* indicate that police gave intentionally misleading information to the medical staff about Schoolcraft's behavior that night, which caused them to treat him as a psychiatric patient.

The records show that a sergeant from the 81st Precinct told Dr. Khin Marlwin that Schoolcraft had "left his work early after getting agitated and cursing his supervisor." She also told Marlwin that police had "followed him home and he had barricaded himself, and the door had to be broken to get to him."

None of these statements are true.

James also told doctors that Schoolcraft "initially agreed to go with them for evaluation, but once outside, he ran and had to be chased. . . ."

This is also untrue, based on the tape recording, and the paramedics' report, which says, "He turned around and stated he did not need help and *walked* away."

Jamaica Hospital spokesman Ole Peterson declined to comment on the Schoolcraft case, but he said, "We have to take the word of whoever is coming in with him, and make a decision based on what they tell us. If there is an issue, the issue is with the Police Department."

In the emergency room, Schoolcraft was cuffed to a gurney. When he asked for his cuffs to be loosened, a lieutenant told him, "I bet you wish now you had come back to the 81 like you were told."

Later, Schoolcraft asked for Internal Affairs. He was ignored.

A sign above the nurses' station read: "We are here to help you."

After 7 a.m. on Sunday morning, two new sergeants came in. They, too, ignored him when he asked for his cuffs to be loosened. The doctors and nurses ignored him as well. (Schoolcraft, meanwhile, had not been charged with a crime.)

"They arrested me unlawfully. They detained me without a warrant," he says. "I asked what my charges were. They said I was being 'uncooperative.' "

On Monday morning, 18 hours after he had been brought to the hospital, an Internal Affairs officer arrived and told Schoolcraft to contact him after he got out of the hospital.

**After six days** of being held against his will, Schoolcraft was allowed to go home.

He was provided with a discharge sheet that included the relatively benign and vague diagnosis of "anxiety."

After the hospital stay, he was suspended. He met with civil rights attorney Norman Siegel, and then left the city for his father's upstate home. A few weeks later, he received the bill from the hospital for \$7,000.

"The standard for involuntary commitment is imminent danger to himself or others," Siegel says. "It's suspect that those grounds existed here under mental health law. At a minimum, they violated his civil rights."

In December, the NYPD began sending supervisors to Schoolcraft's home on a repeated basis.

On December 2, a cop from the Johnstown Police Department knocked on his door, claiming he was there to check on him. The visits continued: On December 3, three sergeants sat outside his home for hours; on December 7, the local police came by; on December 11, there was repeated banging on the door while three Johnstown patrol cars were parked out front.

"We didn't answer because we wanted to avoid a confrontation," Schoolcraft says. "There was a convention outside my door."

The NYPD also sent people on December 13, January 12, January 13, January 14, January 15, January 21, January 31, February 3, February 12, and June 8—a campaign the Schoolcrafts describe as harassment.

Without a paycheck, money was becoming a problem. Ironically, Schoolcraft called the crime victims' hotline to obtain some sort of financial relief, but he was rejected because he had no complaint number for the Halloween incident.

After trying to report misconduct within the NYPD, Schoolcraft finally decided to go public. In early March, he handed over some of his tape recordings to the *Voice*, which has led to this series.

The NYPD did not respond to *Voice* queries about his claims or his employment status. A phone call to Deputy Commissioner Julie Schwartz, head of the department advocate's office, was not returned.

For now, Schoolcraft plans to pursue a lawsuit against the city. He says he has also been interviewed by the Center for Constitutional Rights, which is suing the department over its stop-and-frisk policies.

"Basically, I'm trying to recover my reputation here," he says. "They assassinated my character in an effort to cover up what I was trying to report. I have no choice but to fight this battle."

Follow [continuing coverage of the NYPD Tapes here](#) at our *Runnin' Scared* blog.

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