

though there was not a trace of drugs and even though the men had no criminal record. Police threw both men in jail, charging them with illegal use of US currency, and they put Evaristo's 10-year-old son, Jesse, into foster care.

(Highway, road sign along Interstate 10; Evaristo, Nohu and Jesse walking through field; Sulfur Police Department paperwork, showing charges against hispanic men; Jesse)

Ms. MEADS: He's just a little boy and he was--I knew he was bound to be terrified at being ta--you know, being stopped, having his father carted off to jail.

LARSON: (Voiceover) During our four trips to Louisiana, we saw dozens of cars stopped. Most of the drivers were minorities. Civil rights lawyers in Louisiana have a name for this type of traffic violation. They call it DWH--driving while Hispanic. Evaristo and Nohu hired Tom Lorenzi's firm to help try to get their truck and their life savings back. And that's when they discovered another astonishing aspect of Louisiana's forfeiture law.

(Police cars and stopped cars along roadways; Hispanic man standing with his hands behind his head while his car is searched; Lorenzi sitting at desk, talking on telephone)

Mr. LORENZI: You have to put up a \$ 2500 bond in order to get to go to court, to have the opportunity to prove that you're not guilty of anything.

LARSON: (Voiceover) It took nearly three days for their employer, Lavonne Meads, to drive over 1,000 miles to Louisiana to help get the men out of jail and get Jesse out of foster care.

(Vehicles being driven on interstate)

Ms. MEADS: It's been very difficult on all of us. It really has. Everybody has been affected tremendously by this experience.

LARSON: (Voiceover) It took three months, but they got their truck and most of their money back. But they say their legal battle cost them more than \$ 4,000--a third of their life savings.

(Truck being driven down dirt road; Evaristo, Nohu and Jesse in truck)

Ms. MEADS: The system is preying on people who are not truly capable of defending themselves.

Ms. SANDERS: I wasn't going to let them get away with it. It was wrong and I had to do something about it.

LARSON: (Voiceover) Cheryl Sanders, the woman from California whose car was taken, also decided to fight back. She had to post a bond equal to the value of her car--\$ 7,500, just to begin the process of trying to get her own car back. She took a bus back to Louisiana and hired an attorney. Her legal battle took seven months.

(Sanders sitting on porch, reading documents from state of Louisiana; Cheryl getting off or bus; Cheryl walking with attorney)

Ms. SANDERS: I'm scared to death of this town.

LARSON: (Voiceover) But Cheryl won, sort of.

(Lincoln Towncar parked beside house)

Unidentified Attorney #2: Well, here it is.

Ms. SANDERS: Oh, I'm just--I'm so happy to see my vehicle that you wouldn't believe it.

LARSON: (Voiceover) She got her car back and went home to California.

(Cheryl driving car)

Ms. SANDERS: See you, Tim. Thank you!

LARSON: (Voiceover) But her fight had been so expensive, she had to sell the car to pay off her legal bills. The only transportation she has left is a bicycle.

(Sanders driving car; Sanders opening garage and walking to bicycle)

Ms. SANDERS: I can't imagine that this still happens in America. I just can't imagine it.

Ms. BRYANT: This is America, and I do realize they have to do their job. But when they are acting worse than the people they are trying to arrest, there's something wrong.

LARSON: Ricky Edwards is the sheriff of **Jefferson Davis Parish**.

Sheriff RICKY EDWARDS: The deputies are out there doing their jobs. The state police and most law enforcement are out there doing their job.

LARSON: (Voiceover) It was his deputies who stopped Karen Bryant. And they also stopped us.

(Fontenot and other police officer in picture boxes on the screen)

LARSON: Would it surprise you to know that your deputies pulled us over?

Sheriff EDWARDS: No, it wouldn't surprise me. I--I don't know, I wasn't there. If he said you were speeding, I would have to assume that you were speeding.

LARSON: (Voiceover) But we had five hidden cameras rolling, that show we did not commit any traffic violation. We were just another out-of-state car passing through.

(Footage from hidden cameras rolling in boxes on screen)

Sheriff EDWARDS: Are you insinuating that we are targeting out-of-state people? I can only tell you that we are not.

LARSON: These 17 people find that hard to believe.

Woman #2: I drive around it. I now live in Georgia.

(Voiceover) I come to Austin, Texas, to visit my daughters and grandchildren. I go north and then south.

(Photo of woman and grandchildren)

LARSON: You drive around the whole state?

Woman #2: That is right! And I shall never drive in the state of Louisiana.

Sheriff EDWARDS: We're not here to violate anybody's constitutional rights. We're--we are waging a war on drugs.

LARSON: If this is a war on drugs, it sounds like there are a lot of civilian casualties.

Sheriff EDWARDS: I--i--if that is happening, then I would definitely want to have that feedback and I would definitely try to correct that.

LARSON: Your deputies not only owe them an apology, they probably owe them their badges.

Sheriff EDWARDS: We'd have to look into that and see, yes.

LARSON: (Voiceover) If you're thinking all this might convince Louisiana to change the law, think again. Critics say police have too much money at stake.

(Police cars and stopped vehicle on side of roadway)

LARSON: How much money are we talking about?

Mr. LORENZI: Each year in this one jurisdiction where we are right now, it's about \$ 3 million.

LARSON: (Voiceover) So how are police spending the millions of dollars to fight the war on drugs? They used some of the money to find white powder, all right. But it wasn't cocaine.

(Print out of drug forfeiture fund being printed; skiers at ski resort)

PAULEY: Cheryl Sanders has filed a federal rights suit against the police and the town in which she she arrested. Those named in the suit deny all charges. The trial date is set for May of 1998.

When we come back our story takes another outrageous twist as we learn how many people stand to win, and win big, in Louisiana's war on drugs.