

RE-INTRODUCING RIOC

NEW FACES & NEW PLACES

Ten Questions with: Acting PSD Chief Kevin Brown

Interviewed by:

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Re-Introducing RIOC is a new way for RIOC to inform residents and stakeholders about the many new people who have come to work on the island in the past several years.

In a recent interview, Kevin Brown, the Acting Director of the Public Safety Department (PSD), took some time to answer a few questions about his life and his career.



Erica Spencer-EL: You were working with Jack for almost three years and most people in the community know you as “Deputy Brown”. I understand that you’ve had a very interesting career before arriving to the island. Tell us a little bit more about your background. Where were you born?

Kevin Brown: I was born and raised on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. I attended New York City public schools and in my senior year of high school, NYPD recruiters came with the opportunity and I signed up. At 20 years old I became a police officer and served for 32 years, from 1984-2016. It was a dream job that gave me the opportunity to become a detective, sergeant, and a lieutenant.

Jessica Murray: That means you were with the NYPD during the 9/11 attacks. Could you tell us more about that tragic time?

KB: I was stationed at Ground Zero and had been inside the building only five minutes before they started to collapse. That day changed my life and career forever. I began looking at my job, at people, and at relationships differently.

Erica: In speaking with you, education has played an important role in your life. How so?

KB: A few years after I joined the NYPD, I decided to continue my studies and enrolled in LaGuardia Community College to obtain an Associate’s degree. Soon after, I took my Lieutenant’s test and passed. Years later, I went on to John Jay College to complete the remaining credits needed to obtain my Bachelor’s degree. After graduating from college, I thought about life after the NYPD and knew I wanted to give back to the community. I thought about becoming a high school teacher, but it wasn’t for me. In 2006 I was asked to teach at John Jay College and I loved it. I still teach part time now.

Jessica: What made you decide to work on Roosevelt Island?

In 2016, the Police Department was going through some changes and I decided to look for other opportunities. I got an interview at Roosevelt Island (but already had a good job lined up) and knew of Jack McManus, the Chief of Public Safety because I had served as Commanding Officer of The Operations Division during the 9/11 tragedy. Meeting with Jack was like catching up with an old friend and I started working for RIOC in September 2016.

Erica: What have you learned from working here so far?

KB: Jack and I view Roosevelt Island as a small town that could benefit from the community policing program. The dynamics of this island are unique. This is a passionate and tight-knit community. I admire the passion of Roosevelt Island residents.

Jessica: What do you think is the hardest part about working?

KB: The challenge is realizing that no two people are the same. Some can be more argumentative than others, but everyone deserves to be treated with courtesy, professionalism, and respect. Sometimes that means taking a few extra minutes to explain that PSD can't do certain things or that residents aren't allowed to do certain things. Either way, my golden rule is to treat people the way you want to be treated.

Erica: Can you give us an idea about crime on the island and where it stands right now?

KB: Reported crime is consistently low. Major crimes are very low. Quality of life drives perception; perception becomes reality. Low crime levels become a reality when you educate people on the facts. People are not going to travel here to commit a crime and residents on the island mostly know each other, so criminals are more likely to get caught.



Jessica: Do you see a difference in dealing with different people in the island and their perception of the capacities of Public Safety?

KB: The long-term residents come to PSD for service. They know us, they've lived here for a long time. New-comers wouldn't think the PSD provides full service. We are here to improve the quality of life of people on this island. We are often mediators and problem solvers.

Erica: Could you tell us more about partnerships and initiatives to assure the island's safety?

KB: Emergency preparedness is a hot topic. PSD has a number of resources we can reach out to at NYC Emergency Management ("NYCEM"), FDNY, NYPD, and other agencies outside of our department. We know who to call or reach out to in different situations. The office of Emergency Management is key during an evacuation or in other serious emergencies. All relevant agencies are aware of Roosevelt Island's Emergency Preparedness Plan.

Jessica: What would you like to accomplish while Acting Director?

KB: The officers here should continue to be highly trained, should be respected, and perform their duties with professionalism. They should be well-trained and earn respect, so they can render good service to the community.