

CONTEMPT

CIVIC NOIR

A Civic Noir Legal Thriller

LeRenyae Lawrence Watkins | Book One of the Civic Noir Universe

PUBLICATION

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Legal thriller / civic noir

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Standard wholesale terms

PUBLISHER

Reigning Words Publishing

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Baltimore, 2006. A defense attorney inherits the murder trial his father was supposed to finish, and the conspiracy his father helped build.

A deputy mayor is dead. An eighteen-year-old sits in county lockup with the wrong prints on the wrong gun. And the only lawyer willing to take the case just inherited it from the father who died on the courthouse steps. As a detective works a case no one wants closed and a reporter chases a story that could cost him his life, the trial becomes the surface of something deeper: a city that runs on what stays hidden.

PRAISE

"An impressively crafted and thoroughly gripping thriller. Clever, tense, and genuinely hard to put down."

Lee Cooper · Goodreads

"The story unfolds in such a vivid, cinematic way that it felt like watching a movie play out in my mind."

Lakeasha Gresham · Goodreads

"Smart, compelling thriller with strong momentum and themes that feel painfully relevant."

Linda Ayala · Goodreads

For readers of S.A. Cosby, Attica Locke, and the world of The Wire.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

LeRenyae Lawrence Watkins is a Texas author and the founder of Reigning Words Publishing. CONTEMPT is his debut and the first novel in the seven-book Civic Noir Universe. Based in the DFW area, he is available for library readings, panels, book clubs, and interviews.

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LeRenyae Lawrence Watkins | Press & Media Kit

CIVIC NOIR

AUTHOR BIO — 50 WORDS

LeRenyae Lawrence Watkins writes literary crime fiction and legal thrillers grounded in institutional realism. Based in Plano, Texas, and a father of three, he spent over fifteen years in cybersecurity before turning to fiction. CONTEMPT is his debut and the first novel in the seven-book Civic Noir Universe.

AUTHOR BIO — 100 WORDS

LeRenyae Lawrence Watkins writes literary crime fiction and legal thrillers grounded in institutional realism, procedural credibility, and psychological consequence. A father of three based in Plano, Texas, he spent more than fifteen years in cybersecurity before turning to fiction full-time. He is the founder of Reigning Words Publishing and the creator of the seven-book Civic Noir Universe, a genre he defines as fiction where the system itself is the protagonist. His debut novel, CONTEMPT, is a Baltimore-set legal thriller released alongside an original eighteen-track soundtrack he composed for the book.

AUTHOR BIO — 250 WORDS

LeRenyae Lawrence Watkins is a novelist working in the civic noir tradition — fiction where the system itself is the protagonist, where tension rises from the machinery of institutions rather than the heroism of any one person. A father of three based in Plano, Texas, he spent more than fifteen years in cybersecurity and enterprise technology before turning to fiction full-time, and he brings that investigator's rigor to the page: courtroom procedure, zoning law, chain of custody, and the geography of a city are all researched until a reader feels they are standing in the room.

His debut, CONTEMPT, is set in Baltimore in 2006. A deputy mayor is dead, an eighteen-year-old sits in county lockup with the wrong prints on the wrong gun, and the only lawyer willing to take the case inherits it from the father who died on the courthouse steps. It is the first novel in the Civic Noir Universe, a planned seven-book saga of inheritance, justice, and institutional power. Watkins composed an original eighteen-track soundtrack to accompany the novel and founded Reigning Words Publishing to release it. Writing in the lineage of S.A. Cosby, Attica Locke, and the world of The Wire, he is local to the DFW area and available for library readings, panels, book clubs, festivals, and interviews.

NAME PRONUNCIATION

LeRenyae — luh-REN-yay (please confirm/adjust)

TITLE DETAILS

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RIGHTS & ADAPTATION

Publishing & subsidiary rights: Reigning Words Publishing — reigningwordspublishing@gmail.com. Film / TV & adaptation inquiries welcome at the same address; represented in-house.

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LeRenyae Lawrence Watkins | Suggested Interview Questions

CIVIC NOIR

1. You coined the term “civic noir.” How is it different from a legal thriller, and why did Baltimore need it?
2. CONTEMPT never lets the reader fully confirm whether Antonio was framed. Why refuse the clean answer?
3. You wrote an entire Baltimore novel without setting foot in the city. How did you build the world, and what did research get you that instinct couldn’t?
4. In your books the system is the real antagonist. What made you center institutions over a single villain?
5. You composed an eighteen-track original soundtrack for the novel. What can music do for a story that prose can’t?
6. CONTEMPT is book one of a seven-book universe. Without spoilers, what is the shape of the whole thing?