

# GRUNGE

## The Tragic Death of Edwin Jackson

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In the early morning hours of February 4, 2018, Indianapolis Colts linebacker Edwin Jackson asked his Uber driver to pull over. He wasn't feeling well and needed to get some air. In a tragic turn of events, Jackson and driver Jeffery Monroe were struck by a drunk driver who had swerved onto the shoulder. Both died at the scene of the accident. As the Indy Star reported, his death occurred "on what should have been the happiest day of the year for the NFL." It was the morning of Super Bowl Sunday.

Police arrived on the scene, striking one of the victims who had been thrown into the center lane of the highway in the process, and then apprehended the intoxicated driver, who had attempted to flee the scene. The man initially gave police a false name, but they quickly learned that he was Manuel Orrego-Savala, an undocumented Guatemalan immigrant who had been deported twice before and convicted of driving under the influence in California in 2005.

The Indianapolis Colts mourned the loss on Twitter later that day, while the rest of the country watched the big game. "Edwin Jackson always brought a smile to our locker room and the community," said the organization of the perennially smiling player known by friends and teammates as "Pound Cake." "Our thoughts are with his family and friends during this difficult time. We will miss him greatly."

### HOW EDWIN JACKSON EARNED HIMSELF THE NAME 'POUND CAKE'

Jackson signed on with the Colts in December 2015, but he started his NFL career with the Arizona Cardinals earlier that year. The Indy Star introduced him to his new city at the beginning of the 2016 season, telling the story of how he gravitated toward defense after coaches tried to play him on offense. "They tried to put me at tight end once, but I would end up just blocking people when they were actually trying to throw the ball to me," said the linebacker who led his Georgia Southern defense in tackles in his junior year.

Jackson's nickname stemmed from his short time with the Cardinals. He committed a near-disastrous error before the draft when he missed his flight to Phoenix to meet with the team, but was saved when his mother recommended he take some of her famous homemade pound cakes to smooth over the coaching staff, who weren't too pleased at having to rearrange their schedules for him. "So, I reach in my bag and pull out the cakes," he said. "It's like the [aroma] went right into their noses. I said, 'These are homemade, South Georgia pound cakes.' And I gave one each to the whole defensive staff. They loved them." He eventually signed on as an undrafted free agent and found that he already had a reputation from day one. "I got out of practice, and everybody's calling me 'Pound Cake,'" he said.

In the contentious 2018 political climate, charged with anti-immigrant rhetoric, President Trump and other politicians unsurprisingly jumped on the chance to use Jackson's death as a pawn in their game of stereotypes and fear. CNN reported how the president used the loss as ammunition against his Democratic rivals, tweeting a couple days later that it was "[s]o disgraceful that a person illegally in our country killed" Jackson. Vice President Mike Pence tweeted that it was "a senseless [and] avoidable tragedy." But, exactly how "avoidable" is a death by an intoxicated driver in the United States? Would a border wall have prevented the killing of Edwin Jackson and Jeffrey Monroe?

Statistically, no. According to the Cato Institute – a Libertarian think tank that Media Bias/Fact Check evaluates as having a right-center bias, as evidenced by its usage of the term "illegal immigrant" — rates of drunk driving deaths are not higher among undocumented immigrant communities. "We find no statistical evidence to suggest that places with more [undocumented] immigrants are more at risk for drunk driving deaths," the authors of the study concluded. Of course, Orrego-Savala's conduct in the country was neither safe nor law-abiding — and justice should obviously be served in the tragic death of Edwin Jackson — but neither is his behavior representative of all those who enter unlawfully in search of what has been sold to the world as the American Dream.