

Reference Document

"Watchtower Spent 17 Years Running From New York. Here's What They Were Running From."

Every Claim, Source, and Verification Status

How to Use This Document

Each entry identifies a specific factual claim made in the video, the source it is based on, where to verify it, and any notes on confidence level. Claims are organized in the order they appear in the video.

Verification levels:

- **PRIMARY** — Sourced from court rulings, legislation, official Watchtower publications (including internal manuals like *Shepherd the Flock of God*), peer-reviewed research, SEC filings, IRS filings, Charity Commission filings, or other government/regulatory records. Primary sources can stand on their own.
- **SECONDARY** — Sourced from established advocacy or legal resource sites, academic researchers, or reputable investigative journalism (Reuters, AP, BBC, regional papers of record). Secondary sources support claims and are most defensible when paired with a primary or another independent secondary.

SECTION 1: The Founding (1909-1962)

Claim: In 1909, Charles Taze Russell moves the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society headquarters from Pittsburgh to Brooklyn, New York.

- **Source:** Watchtower official history; Watchtower Online Library
- **URL:** <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1101989205>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY
- **Note:** Confirmed by Watchtower's own published history.

Claim: Joseph Franklin Rutherford, Russell's legal counsel, determines the Pennsylvania corporation (incorporated 1884) cannot be re-registered in New York as the same entity.

- **Source:** Proclaimers of God's Kingdom (Watchtower, 1993); JW History documentation
- **URL:** <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1101993017>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY
- **Note:** Documented in Watchtower's own historical publication Jehovah's Witnesses — Proclaimers of God's Kingdom.

Claim: The People's Pulpit Association is incorporated in New York in 1909; later renamed the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York.

- **Source:** Proclaimers of God's Kingdom; New York Department of State corporate records
- **URL:** <https://wol.iw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1101993017>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY
- **Note:** Two-corporation structure (Pennsylvania parent + New York operational) established 1909.

Claim: Watson v. Jones (1872) established the doctrine of church autonomy in U.S. law.

- **Source:** Watson v. Jones, 80 U.S. (13 Wall.) 679 (1872), Supreme Court of the United States
- **URL:** <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/80/679/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY
- **Note:** The script references the 1871 date based on when the case was argued; the decision was handed down in 1872. Either year is found in citations.

Claim: Joseph Rutherford coins the name 'Jehovah's Witnesses' at a convention in Columbus, Ohio in 1931.

- **Source:** Proclaimers of God's Kingdom; Watchtower Online Library
- **URL:** <https://wol.iw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1101993017>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY

Claim: Charles Taze Russell dies in 1916; Joseph Rutherford succeeds him as president in 1917. Rutherford dies in 1942; Nathan Knorr succeeds him.

- **Source:** Proclaimers of God's Kingdom (1993); Watchtower historical records
- **URL:** <https://wol.iw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1101993017>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY

SECTION 2: The Quiet Migration (1963-1986)

Claim: On January 2, 1963, Watch Tower Society purchases a farm near Walkkill in Ulster County, New York, about ninety miles north of Brooklyn.

- **Source:** Bethel Trips — Walkkill Bethel history; David Walker testimony from Walkkill staff
- **URL:** <https://www.betheltrips.com/walkkill-bethel.html>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY
- **Note:** The Walkkill purchase was widely documented in Watchtower publications at the time it occurred.

Claim: Walkkill was purchased to provide food for the Brooklyn headquarters staff, which was outgrowing its existing food supply.

- **Source:** David Walker, longtime Walkkill resident; Watchtower historical accounts
- **URL:** <https://www.betheltrips.com/walkkill-bethel.html>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY
- **Key quote:**

"The world headquarters staff in Brooklyn was growing, and the organization needed to feed them cost-effectively."

Claim: In 1967, Watchtower acquires a second Walkkill farm. The combined property is approximately 3,000 acres.

- **Source:** Bethel Trips — Walkkill Bethel history
- **URL:** <https://www.betheltrips.com/walkkill-bethel.html>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY

Claim: Jehovah's Witnesses worldwide membership exceeded 1 million peak publishers in 1963 and continued growing through the late 1960s.

- **Source:** Watchtower annual service-year reports (Yearbooks)
- **URL:** <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1102015207>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY
- **Note:** Peak publishers: 1962 = 989,192; 1963 = 1,040,836; 1965 = 1,109,806; 1967 = 1,160,604. Documented in Watchtower's own annual service reports.

Claim: In 1970, construction begins on a printing facility at Walkkill. The presses come online in February 1973.

- **Source:** Bethel Trips — Walkkill Bethel history; Watchtower historical accounts
- **URL:** <https://www.betheltrips.com/walkkill-bethel.html>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY

Claim: By 1974, worldwide Jehovah's Witness publishers exceed 2 million.

- **Source:** Watchtower annual service-year reports (Yearbooks)
- **URL:** <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1102015207>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY
- **Note:** 1974 peak publishers: 2,021,432, with 297,872 baptisms — the surge prior to the 1975 expectation.

Claim: DUMBO industrial land sold for under six dollars per square foot through the 1970s.

- **Source:** Brooklyn Ink retrospective; City Journal retrospective on DUMBO redevelopment
- **URL:** <https://brooklynink.org/2012/05/14/35773-the-history-of-dumbo/>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY
- **Note:** The under-\$6/sq ft figure for DUMBO industrial land in the 1970s is documented in multiple retrospectives on Brooklyn waterfront redevelopment, particularly tied to David Walentas's 1981 acquisitions.

Claim: Manhattan residential real estate in the same period (1970s) ran upward of \$100 per square foot.

- **Source:** Elika Real Estate — 100-year Manhattan price history
- **URL:** <https://www.elikarealestate.com/blog/manhattans-100-year-history-of-real-estate-prices/>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY
- **Note:** Manhattan condos in the early 1970s averaged \$100-300K total for units of 1,500-2,500 sq ft, working out to roughly \$70-200/sq ft.

Claim: Brooklyn Heights brownstones were undergoing slow gentrification through the 1960s and 1970s, with Manhattan refugees acquiring properties at depressed prices.

- **Source:** New York magazine 'brownstone fever' coverage (1969); Brooklyn Heights Association historical records
- **URL:** <https://www.thebha.org/about-the-bha/>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY

Claim: In December 1984, Watchtower acquires a 670-acre property in Patterson, Putnam County, New York — approximately 45 miles east of Walkkill and 70 miles north of Brooklyn.

- **Source:** Bethel Trips — Patterson Bethel history
- **URL:** <https://www.betheltrips.com/patterson-bethel.html>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY
- **Key quote:**
"The 670-acre property at Patterson, New York, was acquired in December 1984. Its primary purpose would be to serve as an educational center."

SECTION 3: The Building of Infrastructure (1987-1999)

Claim: In 1988, the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead relocates out of Brooklyn for the first time in decades, moving to Walkkill.

- **Source:** Watchtower Bible School of Gilead historical records; Bethel Trips
- **URL:** <https://www.betheltrips.com/walkkill-bethel.html>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY

Claim: In 1988, construction begins on what becomes the Patterson Educational Center.

- **Source:** Bethel Trips — Patterson Bethel history
- **URL:** <https://www.betheltrips.com/patterson-bethel.html>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY

Claim: In 1995, the Gilead school relocates from Walkill to the new Patterson Educational Center.

- **Source:** Watchtower historical records; Bethel Trips
- **URL:** <https://www.betheltrips.com/patterson-bethel.html>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY

Claim: The Patterson Educational Center is formally dedicated May 17-22, 1999, with a week-long event called 'A Festival to Jehovah.'

- **Source:** The Watchtower, November 15, 1999; Watchtower Online Library
- **URL:** <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1999846>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY
- **Note:** The dedication ceremony ran from May 17 through May 22, 1999. The Watchtower magazine reported on the event in its November 15, 1999 issue.

Claim: On March 14, 1997, Watchtower issues a confidential letter to all U.S. elders directing them to report known child molesters in their congregations to the Brooklyn Service Department in a special blue envelope.

- **Source:** Watchtower body of elders letter, March 14, 1997 (entered as evidence in multiple court cases including Lopez and Padron)
- **URL:** <https://www.silentlambs.org/march141997letter.html>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY
- **Note:** The letter has been entered as evidence in multiple court cases and is reproduced in court records of Lopez v. Watchtower and Padron v. Watchtower.

Claim: The Gilbert Gauthé case in Louisiana in 1984-1985 becomes the first nationally publicized pedophile-priest case.

- **Source:** Louisiana State University Law Review historical accounts; multiple investigative journalism sources
- **URL:** https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gilbert_Gauthé
- **Verification:** SECONDARY
- **Note:** The Gauthé conviction in October 1985 is widely documented as the case that brought clergy abuse into public consciousness in the United States.

Claim: In the mid-1990s, Boston attorney Mitchell Garabedian began filing civil suits against Father John Geoghan and the Boston Archdiocese.

- **Source:** Boston Globe Spotlight team investigation; Mitchell Garabedian law office
- **URL:** <https://www.bostonglobe.com/news/special-reports/2002/01/06/church-allowed-abuse-priest-for-years/cSHfGkTirAT25qKGvBuDNM/story.html>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY
- **Note:** Documented extensively in the Boston Globe Spotlight team's 2002 investigation and subsequent reporting.

SECTION 4: The Pivot (2000-2004)

Claim: On May 15, 2000, the U.S. Supreme Court decides United States v. Morrison, striking down the civil remedy provision of the Violence Against Women Act.

- **Source:** United States v. Morrison, 529 U.S. 598 (2000), U.S. Supreme Court
- **URL:** <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/529/598/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY

Claim: In 2000, the New York City Council passes the Gender-Motivated Violence Protection Law (NYC Admin. Code § 10-1101 et seq.), creating a civil cause of action against perpetrators and aiding/abetting entities within the five boroughs.

- **Source:** New York City Administrative Code § 10-1101 through § 10-1107; NYC Council legislative record
- **URL:** <https://www.nyc.gov/site/cchr/law/the-law.page>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY

Claim: On August 21, 2000, the Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses, Inc. is incorporated in Putnam County, New York.

- **Source:** New York Department of State Division of Corporations filings
- **URL:** <https://apps.dos.ny.gov/publicinquiry/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY

Claim: On October 6, 2000, Watchtower announces a major corporate restructuring, creating three new corporations: Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses, Religious Order of Jehovah's Witnesses, and Kingdom Support Services Inc.

- **Source:** Associated Press wire story, October 12, 2000 (Richard N. Ostling); subsequent legal filings
- **URL:** <https://www.beliefnet.com/news/2000/10/dissenters-say-jehovahs-witnesses-are-bracing-for-lawsuits.aspx>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY
- **Note:** The AP wire story was syndicated to dozens of outlets simultaneously. Original NYTimes.com URL is no longer accessible; the article text is preserved at Beliefnet under an alternate headline.

Claim: On October 7, 2000, the seven members of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania's board of directors — all of them Governing Body members — resign as directors.

- **Source:** AvoidJW historical roster of the Watchtower Pennsylvania corporation board
- **URL:** <https://avoidjw.org/fag/governing-body/>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY
- **Note:** The Governing Body in October 2000 had 13 members; seven of them held the Pennsylvania corporation board positions and resigned simultaneously. AvoidJW maintains the authoritative historical roster.

Claim: Randall Watters, former Brooklyn Bethel elder and FreeMinds founder, told the AP the new corporate structure 'clearly is meant to provide isolation of guilt' in light of 'the litigious days ahead for the Watchtower organization.'

- **Source:** Richard N. Ostling, Associated Press wire story, October 12, 2000
- **URL:** <https://www.beliefnet.com/news/2000/10/dissenters-say-jehovahs-witnesses-are-bracing-for-lawsuits.aspx>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY
- **Key quote:**
"The new corporate structure 'clearly is meant to provide isolation of guilt' in light of 'the litigious days ahead for the Watchtower organization.'"

Claim: Raymond Franz, the only Governing Body member ever to resign and write about his time inside, told the AP: 'They are trying to find means to protect themselves legally.'

- **Source:** Richard N. Ostling, Associated Press wire story, October 12, 2000
- **URL:** <https://www.beliefnet.com/news/2000/10/dissenters-say-jehovahs-witnesses-are-bracing-for-lawsuits.aspx>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY
- **Key quote:**
"They are trying to find means to protect themselves legally."

Claim: Watchtower spokesman James Pellechia denied that potential legal problems had anything to do with the reorganization, telling the AP the Governing Body was being relieved of administrative tasks to focus on ministry.

- **Source:** Richard N. Ostling, Associated Press wire story, October 12, 2000
- **URL:** <https://www.beliefnet.com/news/2000/10/dissenters-say-jehovahs-witnesses-are-bracing-for-lawsuits.aspx>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY

Claim: Five months later, in March 2001, Pellechia is quoted in Christianity Today acknowledging 'any group needs legal protection' while framing the changes as primarily about growth.

- **Source:** Mark A. Kellner, 'Sects: Watch Tower Undergoes Corporate Shakeup,' Christianity Today, March 5, 2001
- **URL:** <https://www.christianitytoday.com/2001/03/sects-watch-tower-undergoes-corporate-shakeup/>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY
- **Key quote:**
"Jehovah's Witnesses spokesman James N. Pellechia told CT that while 'any group needs legal protection,' the changes will help the Witnesses plan for and manage growth."

Claim: In 2001, Newsday listed Watchtower among New York City's 40 richest corporations, with annual revenues of \$951 million.

- **Source:** GetReligion, citing Newsday Top 40 New York Corporations list, September 17, 2001
- **URL:** <https://www.getreligion.org/getreligion/2010/05/the-watchtowers-market-saturation>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY
- **Note:** The original Newsday article URL is no longer accessible. GetReligion, a religion-journalism site staffed by working journalists, references the 2001 Newsday listing of Watchtower at \$951 million.

Claim: In late 2001, a Massachusetts Superior Court judge orders the Boston Archdiocese to make decades of internal abuse files public. On January 6, 2002, the Boston Globe Spotlight team publishes the first installment of its investigation.

- **Source:** Boston Globe Spotlight team archive
- **URL:** <https://www.bostonglobe.com/news/special-reports/2002/01/06/church-allowed-abuse-priest-for-years/cSHfGkTlrAT25qKGvBuDNM/story.html>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY

Claim: On May 28, 2002, Dateline NBC airs 'Witness for the Prosecution,' the first national prime-time television exposure of Watchtower abuse policies.

- **Source:** NBC News Dateline archives; Season 11, Episode 41
- **URL:** <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0593891/>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY

Claim: In 2003, California enacts a one-year revival window for child sex abuse civil claims (Senate Bill 1779, codified at Code of Civil Procedure § 340.1).

- **Source:** California SB 1779 (2002), effective January 1, 2003
- **URL:** https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=200120020SB1779
- **Verification:** PRIMARY

Claim: In 2004, Watchtower closes the Brooklyn printery, with printing operations fully transferred to Wallkill.

- **Source:** Watchtower 2005 Yearbook; multiple historical accounts
- **URL:** <https://wol.iw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/302005002>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY

SECTION 5: The Cracks (2005-2017)

Claim: In 2006, New York State Assemblywoman Margaret Markey introduces the Child Victims Act. The bill passes the Assembly but is blocked in the Senate. She reintroduces it every year for 13 years.

- **Source:** New York State Assembly legislative records
- **URL:** https://nyassembly.gov/leg/?default_fld=&leg_video=&bn=A05984&term=2009&Summary=Y&Memo=Y
- **Verification:** PRIMARY

Claim: Between 2007 and 2015, the New York State Catholic Conference spent approximately \$2 million on lobbyists to defeat the Child Victims Act.

- **Source:** New York State Joint Commission on Public Ethics lobbying records
- **URL:** <https://www.timesunion.com/news/article/Catholic-Conference-spent-millions-to-fight-Child-13629830.php>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY

Claim: Brooklyn Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio publicly warned that parish closures would follow if the Child Victims Act became law.

- **Source:** Catholic News Agency; Catholic Conference public statements
- **URL:** <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/41048/new-york-bishops-condemn-passage-of-child-victims-act>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY

Claim: In February 2007, Watchtower secretly settles 9 consolidated California abuse lawsuits filed by the Texas law firm Love & Norris under California's 2003 lookback window. The cases involve 16 plaintiffs.

- **Source:** Barbara Anderson (former Watchtower headquarters staffer) reporting; NBC News investigative coverage
- **URL:** <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/secret-files-jehovah-s-witnesses-paid-money-keep-pedophiles-list-rcna15389>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY
- **Note:** The cases all closed with confidentiality agreements; the total settlement was not officially disclosed.

Claim: Barbara Anderson, working from inside knowledge and publicly available figures, estimates the total 2007 California settlement at approximately \$12.5 million.

- **Source:** Barbara Anderson research; cited in NBC News and other investigative coverage
- **URL:** <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/secret-files-jehovah-s-witnesses-paid-money-keep-pedophiles-list-rcna15389>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY

Claim: NBC News obtained settlement documents from one of the 2007 cases — the Frederick McLean case — showing \$781,250 paid to a single plaintiff.

- **Source:** NBC News investigative reporting on Watchtower abuse cases
- **URL:** <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/secret-files-jehovah-s-witnesses-paid-money-keep-pedophiles-list-rcna15389>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY

Claim: In July 2009, Watchtower purchases a 253-acre property in Warwick, Orange County, New York from Touro College. The site was a former International Nickel Company R&D facility closed in 1983.

- **Source:** Warwick, NY property records; Watchtower published announcements
- **URL:** <https://www.recordonline.com/story/news/2009/07/24/jehovah-s-witnesses-buy-253/52040327007/>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY

Claim: In 2011, Watchtower purchases an additional 50-acre property in Tuxedo Park, near Warwick, for \$3.2 million.

- **Source:** Orange County, NY property records; Watchtower published announcements
- **URL:** <https://www.recordonline.com/story/news/2011/08/24/jehovah-s-witnesses-buying-50/53183826007/>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY

Claim: In June 2012, a California jury returns a \$28 million verdict against Watchtower in Conti v. Watchtower for negligent supervision and failure to warn. The amount is later reduced on appeal to approximately \$2.8 million.

- **Source:** Conti v. Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., 235 Cal.App.4th 1214 (2015)
- **URL:** <https://caselaw.findlaw.com/court/ca-court-of-appeal/1690708.html>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY

Claim: In the Conti case, Watchtower posts a \$17 million bond from Travelers Casualty and Surety.

- **Source:** Conti v. Watchtower court records; California Court of Appeal docket
- **URL:** <https://caselaw.findlaw.com/court/ca-court-of-appeal/1690708.html>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY

Claim: In 2013, Watchtower formally announces the move to Warwick.

- **Source:** Watchtower press releases and Watchtower magazine reporting
- **URL:** <https://wol.iw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/2013440>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY

Claim: In 2013, Watchtower sold the DUMBO buildings for \$375 million.

- **Source:** Brooklyn Eagle reporting by Lore Croghan; NYC Finance Department records
- **URL:** <https://brooklyneagle.com/articles/2020/02/26/matt-damons-brooklyn-heights-condo-is-in-an-old-jehovahs-witnesses-building-what-became-of-all-these-properties/>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY

Claim: In February 2013, José Lopez files a civil lawsuit in San Diego against Watchtower involving abuse by Gonzalo Campos, an elder in the Linda Vista congregation. Attorney Irwin Zalkin represents Lopez.

- **Source:** Lopez v. Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., Case No. 37-2012-00099849-CU-PO-CTL (San Diego Superior Court)
- **URL:** <https://caselaw.findlaw.com/court/ca-court-of-appeal/1731903.html>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY

Claim: In 2014, San Diego Superior Court Judge Joan Lewis enters a default judgment of \$13.5 million in favor of Lopez after Watchtower refuses to comply with discovery orders to produce the 1997 database documents.

- **Source:** Lopez v. Watchtower, San Diego Superior Court, 2014 ruling; California Court of Appeal opinion
- **URL:** <https://caselaw.findlaw.com/court/ca-court-of-appeal/1731903.html>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY
- **Key quote:**
"Judge Joan Lewis: 'Watchtower's actions or omissions were reprehensible. I think disgraceful may be synonymous with reprehensible, but I think disgraceful doesn't say enough about it.'"

Claim: Judge Joan Lewis's full ruling characterized Watchtower's conduct as 'reprehensible' and called the punitive damages a message to 'the governing body of the Jehovah's Witnesses.'

- **Source:** Post Guam reprint of investigative reporting on the Lopez ruling; Reveal/Center for Investigative Reporting (Trey Bundy)
- **URL:** https://www.postguam.com/sunday_post/how-jehovah-s-witnesses-leaders-hide-child-abuse-secrets-at/article_9afefd94-c2c4-11e6-a078-3fcae784af9f.html
- **Verification:** SECONDARY
- **Key quote:**
"The award of punitive damages against them will hopefully send a message to Watchtower and its managing agents, the governing body of the Jehovah's Witnesses, that their handling of sex abuse cases within their congregation was absolutely reckless."

Claim: Plaintiff Osbaldo Padron files a parallel lawsuit involving abuse by the same perpetrator, Gonzalo Campos.

- **Source:** Padron v. Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., 16 Cal.App.5th 1246 (2017)
- **URL:** <https://caselaw.findlaw.com/court/ca-court-of-appeal/1879521.html>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY

Claim: In 2016, San Diego Superior Court Judge Richard Strauss imposes a \$4,000 per day monetary sanction on Watchtower for refusing to produce the 1997 database documents in the Padron case.

- **Source:** Padron v. Watchtower court records
- **URL:** <https://caselaw.findlaw.com/court/ca-court-of-appeal/1879521.html>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY

Claim: In 2016, the 25 Columbia Heights tower — the Watchtower headquarters building — is sold for \$340 million.

- **Source:** Brooklyn Eagle reporting by Lore Croghan; NYC Finance Department records
- **URL:** <https://brooklyneagle.com/articles/2020/02/26/matt-damons-brooklyn-heights-condo-is-in-an-old-jehovahs-witnesses-building-what-became-of-all-these-properties/>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY

Claim: Total Brooklyn property sales by Watchtower during the move period add up to at least \$2.19 billion.

- **Source:** Lore Croghan, Brooklyn Eagle, February 26, 2020 — based on direct review of NYC Finance Department records
- **URL:** <https://brooklyneagle.com/articles/2020/02/26/matt-damons-brooklyn-heights-condo-is-in-an-old-jehovahs-witnesses-building-what-became-of-all-these-properties/>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY
- **Note:** Lore Croghan, the reporter who compiled the figure, characterized it as a floor rather than a ceiling — the actual total may be higher.
- **Key quote:**

"The Watchtower's Brooklyn Heights and DUMBO property sales added up to at least \$2.19 billion. I say 'at least' because possibly I didn't find all the transactions when I was checking city Finance Department records."

Claim: In November 2017, the California Fourth District Court of Appeal affirms the daily sanctions in the Padron case.

- **Source:** Padron v. Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., 16 Cal.App.5th 1246 (Nov. 9, 2017)
- **URL:** <https://caselaw.findlaw.com/court/ca-court-of-appeal/1879521.html>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY

Claim: The court-appointed discovery referee in the Padron case characterized Watchtower and the Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses (CCJW) as 'alter egos.'

- **Source:** Padron v. Watchtower appellate ruling, November 9, 2017
- **URL:** <https://caselaw.findlaw.com/court/ca-court-of-appeal/1879521.html>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY
- **Note:** The court adopted the referee's characterization in rejecting Watchtower's argument that CCJW, not Watchtower, held the post-March 2001 documents.

Claim: By the end of 2017, the Warwick headquarters move is complete.

- **Source:** Watchtower published announcements; multiple historical accounts
- **URL:** <https://wol.iw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/2017446>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY

SECTION 6: Where It Is Now (2018–Present)

Claim: In February 2019, the New York Child Victims Act is signed into law by Governor Andrew Cuomo, extending the civil statute of limitations for child sex abuse claims from age 23 to age 55 and opening a one-year revival window.

- **Source:** New York Child Victims Act, CPLR § 208(b) and § 214-g; signed February 14, 2019
- **URL:** <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2019/s2440>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY

Claim: The Child Victims Act revival window was eventually extended to two years because of COVID-related court delays.

- **Source:** New York State legislative records; CPLR § 214-g amendment
- **URL:** <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2019/s7082>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY

Claim: Within weeks of the CVA revival window opening, the first lawsuits against Watchtower were filed, with the Governing Body named directly.

- **Source:** Court filings in multiple New York jurisdictions
- **URL:** <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-court-jehovahs-witnesses-idUSKCN1VK1XN>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY

Claim: In November 2022, Governor Kathy Hochul signs the Adult Survivors Act, opening a one-year revival window for adult sexual assault civil claims.

- **Source:** New York Adult Survivors Act; CPLR § 214-j
- **URL:** <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-hochul-signs-adult-survivors-act>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY

Claim: In 2022, New York City amended the Gender-Motivated Violence Protection Law to extend the statute of limitations to 9 years and open a 2-year lookback window.

- **Source:** New York City Administrative Code § 10-1105 (amended 2022)
- **URL:** <https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=5572805>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY

Claim: In November 2024, a New York State appellate court rules that the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses is a 'jural entity' that can be sued.

- **Source:** New York Appellate Division, Second Department ruling on Governing Body 'jural entity' status
- **URL:** <https://nycourts.gov/courts/ad2/calendar/webcal/decisions/2024/index.shtml>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY

Claim: In January 2026, the New York City Council overrides Mayor Adams's veto of Intro 1297-A, expanding the Gender-Motivated Violence Protection Law to include institutional liability and opening an 18-month revival window.

- **Source:** New York City Council Intro 1297-A; legislative record
- **URL:** <https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=7218135>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY

Claim: On November 24, 2025, Stella De Souza serves the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses through the New York Secretary of State.

- **Source:** De Souza v. Watchtower et al., federal court filings
- **URL:** <https://www.courtlistener.com/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY
- **Note:** Service through the New York Secretary of State is a procedural mechanism that allows a plaintiff to effect service on an organization without the organization's cooperation.

Claim: U.S. Jehovah's Witnesses baptism rates have dropped roughly 40% from the 1989 peak of over 50,000 per year.

- **Source:** Watchtower annual service-year reports (Yearbooks); JW statistics analysis
- **URL:** <https://jwfacts.com/watchtower/statistics-historical-data.php>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY
- **Note:** U.S. baptism figures are reported in Watchtower's annual service reports. Long-term trend analyses based on these primary numbers show roughly a 40% decline from 1989 peak.

Claim: In 2023, Norway deregistered Jehovah's Witnesses as a recognized religion. Watchtower won in Norway's Supreme Court only after modifying doctrine to accommodate state requirements.

- **Source:** Norwegian Supreme Court ruling; Norway Department for Children and Families filings
- **URL:** <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/norway-strips-jehovahs-witnesses-recognition-as-religious-community-2024-03-04/>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY

Claim: Belgium convicted Watchtower of incitement to discrimination over shunning practices, requiring structural changes to Belgian operations.

- **Source:** Belgian Court of First Instance, Ghent Division ruling; Belgian Federal Public Prosecutor reports
- **URL:** <https://www.brusselstimes.com/267862/court-finds-jehovahs-witnesses-guilty-of-incitement-to-hatred>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY

SECTION 7: Additional Supporting Sources

Claim: Comprehensive overview: California Appellate Court Slams Watchtower (covers Lopez, Padron, and the broader sanctions saga)

- **Source:** JW Child Abuse
- **URL:** <https://www.jwchildabuse.org/courts/california-appellate-court-slams-watchtower-jehovahs-witnesses-fined-ordered-to-produce-child-abuse-docs/>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY
- **Note:** Contains comprehensive timeline of Lopez and Padron, including discovery referee 'alter ego' finding and quotes from the November 2017 appellate ruling.

Claim: Reveal/Center for Investigative Reporting investigation into Watchtower's secret abuse database

- **Source:** Trey Bundy, Reveal / Center for Investigative Reporting
- **URL:** <https://revealnews.org/article/inside-the-secret-database-jehovahs-witnesses-use-to-track-child-molesters/>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY
- **Note:** Reveal's investigative series on the 1997 letter and the resulting database provides comprehensive context for the Lopez and Padron rulings.

Claim: JW Survey reporting on Lopez ruling and Gerrit Lösch deposition refusal

- **Source:** JW Survey (Cedars Blog)
- **URL:** <https://jwatch.org/cedars-blog/watchtower-ordered-to-pay-13-5-million-in-sex-abuse-case-as-gerrit-losch-fails-to-testify>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY

Claim: Zalkin Law Firm — Counsel for plaintiffs in Lopez and Padron cases

- **Source:** The Zalkin Law Firm
- **URL:** <https://www.zalkin.com/>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY
- **Note:** Irwin Zalkin's firm represents Lopez, Padron, and many other plaintiffs in Watchtower abuse litigation.

Claim: AvoidJW — Historical roster of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses with appointment and end dates

- **Source:** AvoidJW
- **URL:** <https://avoidjw.org/faq/governing-body/>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY
- **Note:** Maintains the authoritative public-facing roster of Governing Body membership across the organization's history.

Claim: Stella De Souza federal complaint and amended complaint

- **Source:** De Souza v. Watchtower et al., Southern District of New York federal court filings
- **URL:** <https://www.courtlistener.com/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY
- **Note:** The complaint that triggered the research for this video — see also my prior video on the De Souza case for the full background.

Claim: Christianity Today reporting on the Watchtower corporate restructuring

- **Source:** Mark A. Kellner, Christianity Today, March 5, 2001
- **URL:** <https://www.christianitytoday.com/2001/03/sects-watch-tower-undergoes-corporate-shakeup/>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY
- **Note:** Contains Pellechia and Watters quotes complementing the AP wire story from October 2000.