

GOING AGAINST THE TIDE

A Journal Charting a Path for Communist Revolution in the US

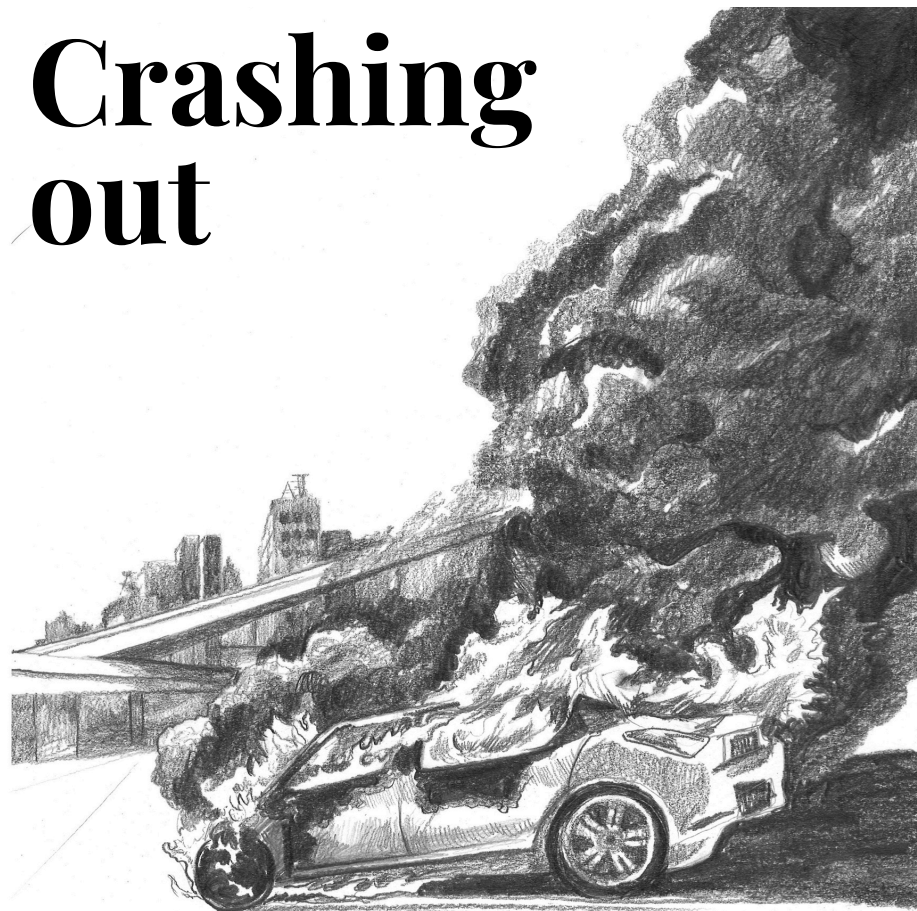


Going Against the Tide's Pamphlet Series

Going Against the Tide's pamphlet series is for all those asking questions about the nature of the system we live under, looking for answers about how we can radically transform this society, but having to fight off all the bourgeois bullshit shoved down our throats by the politicians, the bourgeois media, most preachers, and “experts” with TikTok accounts. Pamphlets by Going Against the Tide show how the workings of capitalism-imperialism are behind all the social problems in our world, address the debates raging among the masses from a communist perspective, and point to revolutionary solutions. Their aim is to develop and deepen the class-consciousness of the proletarian masses who can rise above me-first ideology, the social war for survival they are thrown into with each other, and the brainwash of bourgeois ideology to become a revolutionary people.

Every title in Going Against the Tide's pamphlet series, including the one in your hands, is available for free at goingagainthetide.org, with PDFs you can print and distribute.

Crashing out



Where does crime come from?

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by Going Against the Tide*

Nobody wants to bring a child into a world where they might make it to their teens only to be gunned down in the streets over a petty beef at school, a social media post, or for being in the wrong neighborhood. Nobody wants to see drugs rip families and neighborhoods apart, with friends and loved ones destroying themselves as they slip further into addiction, and nobody wants to live somewhere where drugs are being sold down the block to hustle for a buck. Nobody wants to live in fear of getting carjacked or robbed at gunpoint. Yet this is the reality of millions of people across the US. When we are subjected to the worst conditions this society has to offer, crime becomes a daily occurrence, most frequently taking the form of oppressed people harming one another. The police, positioned as the only social force to deal with crime, rarely stop or solve crime, too preoccupied with harassing and brutalizing Black and Latino youth. Many times, the cops won't even respond to 911 calls in the hood, and often they exacerbate crime. So why is crime such a social problem among the masses? And why are the police, prisons, and the "tough on crime" politicians no solution?

Under the system we live under, crime is a fundamental and inescapable reality due to capitalism's dog-eat-dog competition, exploitation and dispossession, and anti-social ideology. Crime is a symptom of economic disparity and alienation, from which individualist and self-destructive behavior develop. The dog-eat-dog world of capitalist competition promotes and perpetuates the mentalities behind criminal behavior, from a "me first" attitude which justifies screwing over others to a "crashing out" attitude that results in harming others. Crime is encouraged by the system and is often the only rational response to the conditions imposed on the oppressed by the system. Yet the bourgeoisie, the capitalist class that runs this system, likes to pretend that crime flows purely from human nature, personal greed, individual moral failings, or bad choices.

Chinese workers by the imperialist powers who dominated the country's port cities. However, within a decade, opium addiction in Shanghai was almost entirely eradicated by the revolution. Those who presided over the opium trade were dealt with harshly, and the socialist state prevented opium from continuing to enter China's ports in mass quantities. Addicts, by contrast, were put through treatment programs, with new techniques for overcoming addiction quickly developed and supported by the socialist state, and former addicts were given opportunities for a fulfilling life in socialist society. The approach to eliminating opium addiction in revolutionary China stands as the greatest success story in human history for treating addiction, and remains a model to learn from, but one that can only be implemented after overthrowing capitalism.

Along the path to overthrowing capitalism, we'll need to struggle with the youth to stop destroying themselves and those around them and start destroying the system that oppresses them instead. We'll need to have a lot of empathy for the youth who have no future under this system, while working relentlessly to convince them to cast off bourgeois aspirations to get rich by exploiting others. There's a strong tradition in the US of revolutionaries, especially from Black proletarian backgrounds, making these kinds of arguments to the youth and setting examples of getting out of crime and into the revolution. From Malcolm X and George Jackson to Shaka Sankofa and Kevin "Rashid" Johnson, the path of revolutionary perseverance in the face of crime, drugs, prison, and police beckons to the youth who right now "crash out" because they cannot see any alternative. It's time to make the system crash.



desirable. And for drug addicts, a mass addiction treatment program, a healthcare system serving the people, and a new, fulfilling life in a society that cherishes people rather than exploiting them or casting them off when they can no longer be exploited will go a long way towards ending dependencies on drugs.

There will undoubtedly be some people who cling to the old, me-first mentality after the revolution, and they can be struggled with to transform and, if they refuse, put under coercive but humane control in labor camps, where they cannot harm society by persisting with crime and instead must contribute productive labor to society. But overwhelmingly, when the masses live in and run a society that is not ruled by exploitation and an exploiting class, crime will become a fringe phenomenon, a remnant of the past that can be swept away as the masses further revolutionize society in the direction of communism. If that seems unimaginable, that's only because the people who rule this society today have got you convinced that a world of dog-eat-dog competition, where the masses have to fight each other for scraps while the ruling class lords over us, is human nature and the only society possible.

In reality, before the division of humanity into classes, there was no such thing as crime as a social phenomenon, and in countries where the masses won a communist-led revolution in the last century, they have made great headway in eliminating crime. Since those revolutions were turned back, their achievements have been reversed and purged from the history books. But when China was socialist from 1949–76, the masses of people, led by the Communist Party, succeeded in ending opium addiction and the opium trade. At the time of the victory of the Chinese Revolution in 1949, the city of Shanghai was home to the largest population of opium addicts in the world, because opium had been pushed on

Whether it's Fox News, true crime podcasters, or dedicated Instagram pages that showcase the most wild and egregious criminal acts, the bourgeois narrative about crime is propagated far and wide, from the racist stereotype that Black youth are born criminals to the notion that crime is the act of a few bad apples rather than something that grows from a poisonous tree (capitalism).

Contrary to this bourgeois bullshit, crime is baked into the capitalist-imperialist system itself—a system that couldn't last a day without the illegal economy, the profits it makes, and the jobs it provides to those cast out of formal employment. The oppressed, especially the youth, are confronted with a bleak future with no way out, only to be offered crime as a solution, and often ending up dead or in jail as a result, while the people at the top of the system, whether drug kingpins or "legit" capitalists, continue to profit from crime. While crime seems impossible to stop, crime is not eternal nor has it always existed in human history. But only through a revolutionary overthrow of the system and the wielding of state power by the proletariat, the class that is dispossessed and exploited under capitalism, can we end the social problem of crime.

Who are the criminals?

In the US, what gets considered to be crime depends on two related pillars of bourgeois rule: white supremacy and national oppression (the oppression of whole peoples, such as Black people, Chicanos, and the Indigenous). The territorial expansion of the US stole vast amounts of land from Indigenous people, killing millions in the process and subjecting those left over to work in the mines and live on the reservations, but this genocide was not considered a crime. Black people were kidnapped and sold to be slaves in the US and across the Americas, forced to work for the profit

of plantation owners. When slaves escaped from the plantations, they were considered criminals.

In the 1860s, when northern capitalists decided that the slave system was getting in the way of their potential profit-making because it prevented access to exploit Black people as wage-workers and sell products to them as consumers, they joined the Civil War against the slaveowners. But the abolition of slavery did not end the oppression of Black people; it just replaced the old form of oppression with new ones. In the South, Black people were exploited as sharecroppers and subjected to Jim Crow segregation and the terrorism of the KKK. Defying segregation was a criminal act, enforced by the law and harshly punished, while the racist lynching of Black people was never punished.

To escape this terror, Black people left the South in droves, in what historians call the Great Migration, relocating to cities to get jobs as wage-workers. This is where many oppressed people were relegated for decades, working in auto factories, steel mills, meat packing, and other industries. But beginning in the 1970s, a lot of industrial production was moved across the ocean or over the border, where capitalists could maximize profit by exploiting labor in places under the boot of imperialism, where people could be forced to work for much less pay. This process is sometimes called deindustrialization, and it resulted in skyrocketing unemployment in US cities. Consequently, many Black proletarians and other oppressed people were left without formal or steady employment, becoming a *permanent reserve army of labor* that the capitalist class had little use for.

When the industries left, the drugs poured in, to be sold at the street level to make ends meet and to numb people in an increasingly hopeless situation. In the 1970s, many veterans,

who grow coca, turn it into cocaine, and sell it on the streets. The drug cartel bourgeoisie defends their business operations with brutal violence, and they also invest their profits in "legit" businesses. In this way, drug profits fuel global capitalism. Many other capitalists profit off of the drug trade in indirect ways: gun manufacturers supply cartels and gangs with the hardware they need to defend their turf, and tech CEOs profit from clicks and shares on sites like Instagram and Twitter (X) while their algorithms push content that glorifies the "crashing out" behavior of the youth. When those youth get locked up, the prison industry profits from their incarceration, whether by way of privately-run prisons, the exploitative commissary system, or the many private contractors who get in on the "corrections" game. Rehabilitation of criminals and drug addicts never proves profitable in a system based selling commodities rather than serving human needs and expanding human potential. The simple fact is that the drug trade, crime, and law enforcement are all lucrative industries, so there is every reason to perpetuate them under capitalism.

What is to be done?

There is no getting beyond crime as long as we live under a system that profits from it and offers no future for proletarian youth, forcing them into a rat race for survival. But if the masses of exploited and oppressed people overthrow that system and seize state power, we can take immediate measures to greatly curb the drug trade and the social problem of crime. We can start by removing the biggest criminals from the picture: the heads of drug cartels, the "legit" capitalists pushing addictive pharmaceutical drugs, and the law enforcement agencies complicit in crime. For low-level criminals, a socialist society where everyone is guaranteed a decent job and no one has to hustle to survive will convince most that crime is no longer necessary or

many Black and oppressed people were locked up for low-level drug offenses.

Besides the CIA, police departments around the US have been exposed countless times to be benefiting from and contributing to crime in proletarian neighborhoods—the police are often called the "biggest gang" for a reason. During the height of the War on Drugs, federal money sent to police departments was determined by the amount of drug arrests the department made per year, incentivizing entire police departments around the country to contribute to crime itself. In 1990, the LAPD Rampart Division's CRASH unit was exposed for planting and selling seized cocaine, as well as falsifying arrest records. For decades, the Philadelphia Police Narcotics Squad was planting drugs on suspects to justify arrests and seizures, and only got in trouble after they were caught red-handed. More recently, in 2017 the Baltimore PD's Gun Trace Task Force was exposed for reselling guns and drugs they seized off the street. One of the officers on the task force, Sean Suiter, was found dead, shot in the head the day before he was set to testify against his fellow officers in front of a grand jury. And in 2024, the chief of the three-person police department of Adair, Iowa was caught buying ninety high-powered machine guns to be sold on the street. He stated in court that "If I'm guilty of this, every cop in the nation is going to jail." The very people the system puts forward as the solution to crime are some of the biggest criminals of all, but aside from rare cases where their involvement in the drug trade and gun sales are exposed and become scandals, they are shielded by their badges and the system they serve.

Beyond law enforcement and counterrevolution, the biggest beneficiaries of the drug trade remain the capitalist class. That class includes the leaders of drug cartels, who amass great wealth through their ruthless exploitation of the people

returning from the murderous US war of aggression against Vietnam, were hooked on heroin due the crippling trauma and psychological effects of the war. Then in the 1980s, the CIA helped introduce crack-cocaine into Black and Latino neighborhoods in virtually every major city. The next decade, the Sackler family, the billionaires who introduced the world to OxyContin in 1996, made a fortune pushing opioids, destroying the lives of millions through addiction and overdose deaths.

From the 1970s on, in cities across the US, drug use, as well as other forms of crime, hit epidemic proportions. Territorial disputes between gangs running the drug markets on the street became more violent, and were increasingly resolved with gunfire. Addicts looked for any opportunity to get a fix, often paying for their drug habit by robbing, stealing, or selling their bodies on the street. It's no coincidence that drugs hit the neighborhoods of the oppressed right after the revolutionary movements of the 1960s, when ghettos across the country erupted in rebellion and revolutionary organizations like the Black Panthers gained a mass following. Getting people high and getting youth fighting over drug turf were part of a regime of preventive counterrevolution aimed at diminishing revolutionary consciousness and destroying revolutionary organizations.

After allowing and even facilitating the mass distribution of heroin, cocaine, and crack, the bourgeois class that rules the US had the audacity to launch a so-called "War on Drugs" in the 1980s under the Reagan administration. This "War on Drugs" rarely took down kingpins and never stopped the flow of drugs into proletarian neighborhoods. Instead, it imprisoned generations of Black and Latino youth, with the prison population of the US reaching beyond two million in the 1990s down to today. Those arrested for drug crimes, even low-level offenses, often found themselves permanently

locked out of employment in the formal economy, giving them no choice but to get back into the drug economy to survive. Moreover, mass incarceration not only broke up entire families and neighborhoods, but also the hierarchy of the gangs themselves, leading to smaller sets being formed with less accountability to OGs and little established codes of conduct that could curb the worst excesses of gang violence.

Why did the bourgeoisie allow gang violence to spiral out of control? Many Black and other oppressed people became disposable to the capitalist system when they could no longer be profitably exploited on plantations or in factory work. To the bourgeoisie, oppressed people killing each other is a useful solution to the problem of what they consider to be *surplus populations*—those the bourgeoisie has no use for in productive labor. Otherwise, the bourgeoisie might have to use some of their profits to take care of surplus populations, and that is something they were adamantly against. In fact, they have insisted on eliminating any semblance of a social safety net for those left without work over the last several decades, with welfare slashed and public housing destroyed, especially in the 1990s under the Clinton administration.

In places like Chicago, tearing down public housing coupled with the destruction of the gang hierarchy resulted in a catastrophic situation: gangs spread across the city in new areas and turfs, competing with the existing gangs, with little to no hierarchy constituting some kind of order. The combination of the destruction of public housing, locking up the OGs, and the easy flow of guns and drugs create tinier sets fighting over increasingly smaller turf. This trend is replicated in almost every major city in the US and has set the stage for chaos: smaller gangs without OGs, with more powerful guns, beefing over smaller turf, in competition to sell (arguably) stronger drugs.

McCoy's book *The Politics of Heroin*. As previously mentioned, heroin was pumped into Black proletarian neighborhoods in the 1970s as part of establishing a regime of preventive counterrevolution in the wake of the revolutionary movements of the 1960s. The FBI and the police murdered revolutionaries like Black Panther Fred Hampton, who had compellingly challenged youth to get off drugs and into the revolution. They also messed up the minds of the masses by allowing and facilitating the flow of drugs into their neighborhoods in order to hold back the development of revolutionary consciousness.

The drug trade played an important role in counterrevolution internationally. In Nicaragua in the 1980s, the newly established left-wing Sandinista government came under attack by the Contras, a right-wing paramilitary organization backed by US imperialism. The Sandinista government wanted to nationalize some industries and do some land reform, a bridge too far for the US imperialists, who viewed Central America as theirs to exploit. In an effort to finance the war against the Sandinista government, the CIA allowed for and facilitated millions of pounds of cocaine to be flown into the US, where it was sold on the streets. The method of making cocaine easily smokable (i.e., turning it into crack rocks) was introduced at this time, increasing the profits and volume of the already lucrative cocaine industry.

Crack flooded Black proletarian neighborhoods, which was then used as a justification for intensifying the War on Drugs. The CIA's involvement in the cocaine trade and the crack epidemic was uncovered by investigative journalist Gary Webb, whose career was promptly ruined and who later committed suicide in suspicious circumstances. In 1996, the acting director of the CIA, John Deutch, admitted that the agency was complicit in the trafficking of cocaine. No one in the CIA was put in prison for drug trafficking, while all too

distracted and attacking one another.

Who benefits from the drug trade?

In the face of drugs and gang violence among the youth, "progressive" politicians, nonprofit organizations, and "abolitionist" activists offer wishful thinking and paltry reforms, as if crime could be solved with a few more afterschool programs and employment opportunities. Ask anyone in the hood if crime will be solved by more minimum wage jobs and you'll probably get laughed at. The reality is that harmful drug use and crime are baked into the system of capitalism, which has thrived by way of an illegal economy existing alongside "legit" business, and can only be overcome by getting rid of that system.

For centuries, mind-altering substances have served multiple purposes for the exploiting classes: they create new markets for profit, keep the oppressed content with their conditions of life, and help quell dissent. In the 1800s, British imperialism made great profits from shipping opium grown in India, under its colonial rule, to China, where opium was an effective way to keep Chinese workers docile and subordinate. Britain even waged war against China to keep the opium trade legal—they literally prevented the Chinese government from stopping the flow of opium into their country, despite its harmful effects.

Around the same time, in the US, capitalists used whiskey as payment to alcohol-addicted Indigenous people and Irish immigrants working in the coal mines and building canals. In the 1950s, through its connections in the CIA and with international drug smuggling operations, the FBI introduced heroin to the Italian mafia to be sold in proletarian neighborhoods, to turn a profit as well as to subdue Black proletarians with drug addiction, as documented in Alfred

And what about the buyers? In the past two decades, deadly drug use in the US has seen a significant increase, manifest in overdose deaths. Alienation, disparity, and socioeconomic hardship have always been driving forces behind high rates of drug use in the US, and the combination of worsening economic straits for many after the 2008 financial and housing market collapse and the manufactured crisis of the opioid addiction has made matters worse. Opioids, such as OxyContin, were very easy to get a prescription for in the 2000s, peddled to people by pain management clinics. OxyContin was falsely marketed as non-addictive, and everyone from construction workers managing pain from work injuries to soldiers dealing with battlefield injuries was given a script for Oxy. Over time, the pills stop working and higher doses are needed to mitigate pain.

During the Obama administration, the government cracked down on opioid prescriptions, leaving those addicted to it unable to re-up and creating a new wave of people resorting to getting their fix outside legal paths. There was an explosion of synthetic opioid use, particularly fentanyl, an extremely addictive and dangerous synthetic opioid, which has ravaged cities and towns across the US. The bourgeois family largely responsible for the opioid addiction epidemic, the Sacklers, who make street dealers look like saints in comparison to their own atrocious actions, made massive profits and have never really been held accountable for their massive drug crimes. They literally concealed the addictive properties of OxyContin before its release on the market, because what better for a capitalist than to sell something that keeps the consumer coming back for more?

This drug trade remains the basis for why so much crime occurs among the proletariat today. The drug economy is massively profitable for the bourgeoisie. For people locked out of employment, selling drugs becomes the most rational

option and a quick way to make some money, but never gets them Sackler rich. Selling drugs on the street usually means you'll need a gun to either protect yourself or move someone out of the way, opening up another market for selling guns on the street. There is a demand for drugs due to mass addiction, and drug users can be driven to desperate means to get their fix, such as robbing people and stealing anything they can. More demand and less structure means smaller groups of people in competition with one another—competition which can turn deadly. This is the situation millions of proletarians face, with no way out under this system. However, there is also an ideological component to crime in the capitalist-imperialist system, which strengthens and perpetuates the economic reasons youth get caught up in criminal activity. Faced with a nearly optionless future, young people are overwhelmed with a capitalist culture promoting self-destructive behavior, where crime is the only way to advance one's position in society.

Where does the criminal mentality come from?

One question on many proletarians' minds is: What's going on with the kids? Sometimes you will hear old heads making statements like "We did some wild shit when we were kids, but not like these kids today." While this might be a cliché, there is some truth behind it. On the heels of the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2020 uprisings, young people were thrown into turmoil and frustration, as well as intense social isolation, social media consumption, and drug use.

Youth are more easily convinced to take risks than adults, and under capitalism that often gets channeled into impulsive, destructive behavior, which has been on the rise in recent years. Between 2016 and 2022, homicides committed by juveniles increased by 65% in major cities (according to the Council on Criminal Justice). In 2016, the average age of the

uprisings, many will tell you that the police began to back off almost completely from doing anything about crime in the neighborhood, suggesting a kind of collective punishment of the masses for rising up against police brutality. Just as it's played out before, in the wake of mass rebellion that shakes the system to its core, the hood gets flooded with guns and drugs to keep people high and fighting each other rather than sober and fighting the system.

On the cultural front after the summer of rebellion in 2020, we saw the rise of even more explicitly violent rap lyrics, with Pooh Shiesty, Lil Durk, and King Von rapping about getting your "get back," making sure your ops suffered, and who had the bigger guns or "switch" attachments (an attachment that turns a semi-automatic glock into a fully-automatic gun). Unfortunately, many rappers pushed proletarian youth to gang bang on each other rather than gang up against the system. Sophisticated algorithms promoted videos of kids with guns, selling and using drugs, and driving stolen cars to the top of social media feeds. The "crash out" mentality, the willingness to engage in more self-destructive acts than others, has become a trend, something people can claim for clout and use to one-up each other.

More chaotic, more dangerous, and more exciting, the "crash out" phenomenon is a true product of the system. With no path for a dignified life, the alternative is to gain respect through self-destruction, promoted by the capitalists who profit off the violence. The reality of many young proletarians today looking for a way out inexorably leads to crime, the only option to break out of poverty and boredom, but one that harms the masses of people. Competition at the center of this dynamic encourages each individual to be the biggest, baddest criminal. All the while, the "legit" capitalists remain on top, continuing to profit from the situation they have created and promoting the mentalities that keep the masses

intensely, killing your rivals. With the proliferation of social media around this same time, this new breed of rap music had a pervasive impact on the ideology and culture of the youth who listened to it. With more access to technology and the platforms of social media, kids could start to make their own drill music and videos with ease—videos where they poised pointing guns, repped their gang, and dissed their enemies profusely.

Right-wing pundits became obsessed with the rise of drill music and pretended it was the sole reason for the high murder rates in Chicago, concealing the material realities of unemployment and the growth of the illegal economy that gave many youth little option but crime. Those who place sole blame for crime on rap music and the youth are wrong and racist, but there's no point denying that internet culture made it easier to expose kids far removed from street life to gang banging, and gave everyone a platform to intimidate and diss one another. All the while, social media companies kept using sophisticated algorithms to make sure that the most edgy content guaranteed to catch the eyes of youth popped up on their feeds, making lots of advertising revenue for Silicon Valley CEOs in the process.

Another major shift for youth came in 2020, with the intense isolation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and then the proletarian uprisings in the wake of George Floyd's killing by police caught on camera. With the onset of COVID-19, millions of people were thrown out of employment and confined to their homes, and this social isolation built up massive amounts of frustration, contributing to people rising up when faced with another police murder of a Black man. But righteous rebellion was not the only thing to come out of this situation. The summer of 2020 also saw a rise in shootings and carjackings. If you ask Black proletarians about how the police responded to crime during and after the 2020

shooter in a murder or attempted murder was between 15 and 16 years old. In cities like Philadelphia, Chicago, Baltimore, and Washington, DC, there's been significant increases in armed robberies, assaults, burglaries, and especially carjackings since 2019. Teens organized into small crews, armed with pistols and rifles, can be seen on social media driving around in stolen vehicles seemingly for the thrill of it (just look up Kia Boyz on any social media platform to see for yourself).

Drug dealing has become difficult to track among youth today, with more drug sales happening through social media like Snapchat and Instagram. And while some illicit drug use among youth remains similar to pre-pandemic levels, the misuse of drugs like Xanax, a mind-numbing pharmaceutical drug prescribed for anxiety, has increased over the last decade. In addition, the use of legally bought nitrous oxide, or whippets, has become a trend in recent years, with teens buying "galaxy gas" to get high.

These realities coincide with a growing aspiration among youth to be considered a "crash out" by their friends and peers: a person who should not be tested, someone who absolutely doesn't give a fuck, willing to do any kind of self-destructive behavior regardless of the consequences. The "crash out" mentality has been associated with proletarian youth for decades, a survival mechanism to defend oneself and garner respect. However, today, given the new conditions youth face and the firestorm of social media clout chasing, "crashing out" has gone to greater lengths among the kids. How did we get here?

The economic reality for proletarian youth growing up in cities across the US is bleak to say the least. Over the last decade, cuts to food stamps and welfare programs, coupled with dwindling employment opportunities, skyrocketing rent

and gentrification, as well as the destruction of public housing has made day-to-day life among the masses more precarious. With the expansion of the gig economy, little opportunities for stable employment, and no real path for a fulfilling future, proletarian youth grow up surrounded by the daily hustle for survival, including criminal activity. Often times, gangs don't give these youth a choice to begin with: either join up or become a victim. Cities like Chicago, Philadelphia, and Detroit have shuttered dozens of schools serving oppressed neighborhoods, and the schools that do remain are generally understaffed and underfunded, with little chance of going on to college and getting a decent-paying job. When kids start to step into criminal life and get caught up by the police with drugs or a gun, it's extremely difficult to get away from the street life if you have a record, as no one will hire you for "legit" employment.

The culture pushed on proletarian youth plays a role too. At the risk of sounding old and out of touch, there is something to be said about how music, as well as rapidly changing social media, have shaped mass consciousness in increasingly negative ways in recent decades. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, rap music was positively affected by the Black nationalist renaissance of the time. There's no shortage of rap anthems of that era by conscious MCs taking righteous lyrical aim at the system that subjects Black youth to a life of poverty, police brutality, prison, gangs, and drugs. In a 2009 roundtable discussion on "The Influence of Islam on Hip Hop," Wise Intelligent (member of the group Poor Righteous Teachers) pointed out the tremendous popularity of Public Enemy's anthemic song "Fight the Power" during the 1992 Los Angeles Rebellion.

That rebellion, sparked by the acquittal of the cops who were caught on video beating Rodney King, brought youth together, across racial lines and gang loyalties, to fight the

police. At the time, gangs across Los Angeles formed previously unheard of truces and alliances. One of the gang treaties, brokered in the proletarian Watts area of LA, included a code of ethics for all members to live by: "I accept the duty to honor, uphold, and defend the spirit of the red, blue, and purple [the colors of the Watts gangs] to teach the Black family its legacy and protracted struggle for freedom and justice." After the LA Rebellion was put down by the police and the National Guard, the city was once again flooded with guns and drugs, gang truces were eventually broken, and the crime rate climbed, as documented in Darnell Hunt's book *Black Los Angeles: American Dreams and Radical Realities*.

Wise Intelligent points out that years later, in response to the 2008 acquittal of the cops in New York who killed Sean Bell, an unarmed Black men whom the police shot fifty times, there was no mass uprising. There were protests, to be sure, but not the kind of radical consciousness and rebellious spirit among the masses during the early 1990s. Wise Intelligent places part of the blame for that lack of consciousness on the shift in the kind of rap music that was being marketed to the youth, with Lil Wayne's song "Lollipop" a radio hit at the time. Instead of revolutionary consciousness breaking through in popular rap songs, much popular rap of the last three decades has been decidedly pro-capitalist, consumerist, and individualist.

More recently, rap subgenres like drill and trap have dominated the airwaves and the earbuds of youth from the cities to the suburbs. Chief Keef, Fredo Santana, and Lil Reese exposed the world to the hard realities of Chicago street youth growing up and fighting to survive on Chicago's Southside, creatively developing hip-hop music and pushing its lyrical content in more grim directions. The music usually promoted using drugs, exploiting women, and, most