

Liberation or Gangsterism

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Each generation must, out of relative obscurity, discover its mission-fulfill it or betray it.

Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*

Introduction

Within two generations the youth of this country have come full circle. Starting in 1955, youth were driven by two major motivations: one, the acquiring of enough education or apprenticeships, the use of their unskilled labor or street smarts to land “good” jobs or establish hustles, and to make as much money and obtain as many material trappings as possible. The second was to use the education, apprenticeships, unskilled labor, street smart jobs, hustles and the material trappings provided by them to win a measure of respect and dignity from their peers and society in general. Simultaneously, they were learning to respect themselves as individuals, and not simply be eating, sleeping, laboring and sexual animals.

The First Wave: circa 1955–1980

The Civil Rights Movement in the South successfully motivated Black, Puerto Rican, Euro-American, Chicano-Mexicano, Indigenous and Asian youth to use their time, energy, creativity and imagination to discover their true self-worth and earn the respect of the entire world while struggling toward even broader goals that were not measured by one’s material possessions. And over time each segment cheered on, supported, worked in solidarity with and/or discovered its own common interests and closely linked missions connected to broader people’s goals.

Thus, Black youth elevated the Civil Rights Movement to the Black Power and Black Liberation Movements. Puerto Rican youth energized their elders’ ongoing struggle to win independence for their home island. Euro-American youth attacked the lies, hypocrisy and oppression that their parents were training them to uphold in the schools, society and overseas. Native American youth were returning to their suppressed ancestral ways and fighting to regain control over some of their land. Asian youth were struggling to overcome a system and culture that had always used and abused them.

Indeed all of them came to see clearly that neither education, jobs, money, hustles or material trappings could, by themselves, win them the victories they needed, or the new type of dignity and respect they deserved.

Moreover, from 1955 until circa 1975, these youth joined, formulated, led and supported struggles worldwide against racial oppression and bigotry, colonialism, oppression of women and youth. In the process they were winning themselves the respect, admiration and gratitude of the world’s oppressed as well as their peers. Further, in addition to becoming people that societies must take seriously, these youth were positive contributors who had much to give and were willing to sacrifice to achieve their goals. They were youth who were capable of imagining a better world and fighting to realize it while remaining youthful and having a good time doing it. All in all, they earned a much-deserved place in history.

From the Mountain to the Sewer

Yet here we are 30 years later and the youth nowadays have been stripped of that hard-earned freedom, self-respect and dignity. They are being told-over and over-that the only way to regain them is again to acquire education, skills, good jobs, or the right hustle(s). This means, once again, to acquire as much money and material things as one can in order again to win respect and dignity from one's peers and society-and thereby begin to start loving one's self, and seeing one's self as more than simply an eating, sleeping, working and sexual being.

How the hell did we get back to 1955?

First off, let me make clear that even with all of the glorious strides the youth made within the First Wave, they were not the only ones fighting for radical or revolutionary changes. In fact, more than anything, they were usually only the tip of the spear. They were the shock troops of a global struggle, motivated by youthful energy and impatience, with no time or temperament for elaborate theories, rushing forward into the fray, ill prepared for the tricks that would eventually overwhelm them.

So to understand what happened, we must examine some of the main "tricks" used to slow down, misdirect, control and defeat them. And without a point, a spear loses all of its advantages.

Strategic Tricks Used Against Them

Understanding these tricks, their various guises and refinements, is the key to everything. You will never really understand what happened to get us to this point, or be able really to move forward, until you recognize and devise ways to defeat them. They were and remain:

1. Co-option
2. Glamorization of Gangsterism
3. Separation from the most advanced elements
4. Indoctrination in reliance on passive approaches
5. Raw fear

Co-option was used extensively to trick just about all of the First Wave youth into believing that they had won the war. In particular, to every segment of youth, from university students to lower class communities, billions of dollars and resources were made available. This was supposedly for these youth to determine what should be done to carry out far-reaching changes, while in reality they were being expertly monitored and subtly coaxed further and further away from their most radical and advanced elements. This was done mainly through control of the largess, which ultimately was part of the ruling class' foundation, government and corporate strategy for defeating the youth with sugar-coated bullets.

In time, consequently, substantial segments of these previously rebellious youth found themselves fully absorbed and neutralized either by directly joining or accepting the foundations',

sub-groups', corporations', universities' or "approved" community groups' assistance-or by becoming full-fledged junior partners in the system after winning control of thousands of previously out-of-reach political offices.

And, for all intents and purposes, that same trick is still being used today.

Glamorization of Gangsterism, however, was then and continues to be the most harmful trick played against the lower class segments. The males, in particular, were then and continue to be the most susceptible to this gambit, especially when used opposite to prolonged exposure to raw fear!

Let me illustrate by briefly describing the histories of two groups that presently enjoy nothing less than "icon" status amongst just about everyone aware of them. These two groups' "documented histories" clearly show how that trick is played, and continues to be played, throughout this country. The first of these two groups is the original Black Panther Party, which was bludgeoned and intimidated to the point where its key leader(s) "consciously" steered the group into accepting the Glamorization of Gangsterism. Because this glamorization was less of a threat to the ruling classes' interests, it won the Party a temporary respite from the raw fear the ruling circles were levelling against it. In the process the organization was totally destroyed. The second of the two groups was the Nation of Islam 'connected' Black Mafia, which had a different background, but against whom the same tricks were played. It also left in its wake a sordid tale of young Black men who were again-turned from seeking to be Liberators into being ruthless oppressors of their own communities. These men never once engaged their real enemies and oppressors: the ruling class.

Hands down the original Black Panther Party (BPP) won more attention, acclaim, respect, support and sympathy than any other youth group of its time. At the same time the BPP provoked more fear and worry in ruling class circles than any other domestic group since Presidents Roosevelt, Truman and Eisenhower presided over the neutralization of the working class and the U.S. wing of the Communist Party. The BPP was even more feared than the much larger Civil Rights Movement. According to the head of the FBI, the Panthers were the "greatest threat to the internal security of the country". That threat came from the Panthers' ability to inspire other youth-in the U.S. and globally-to act in similar grassroots political revolutionary ways.

Thus, there were separate BPP-style formations amongst Native Americans (the American Indian Movement); Puerto Ricans (the Young Lords); Chicano Mexicano Indigenous people (the Brown Berets); Asians (I Wor Kuen); Euro-American (the Young Patriot and White Panther Parties); and even the elderly (the Gray Panthers). Also, there were literally hundreds of other similar, lesser known groups! Internationally the BPP had an arm in Algeria that had the only official "Embassy" established amongst all of the other Afrikan, Asian and South American revolutionary groups seeking refuge in that then-revolutionary country. Astonishingly, the BPP even inspired separate Black Panther Parties in India, the Bahamas, Nova Scotia, Australia and Occupied Palestine/State of Israel!

On the other hand, the Nation of Islam (NOI) had been active since 1930. Yet it also experienced a huge upsurge in membership in the same period. This was mainly due to the charismatic personality of Malcolm X and his aggressive recruitment techniques. Malcolm's influence carried on after his assassination, fueled by the overall rebellious spirits of the youth looking for groups which would lead them to fight against the system.

Therefore, there's a mountain of documents which clearly show that the highest powers in this country classified both groups as Class A Threats to be neutralized or destroyed. These powers

mused that if that goal could be achieved, they could then use similar methods to defeat the rest of the youth.

So how did they do it? Against the BPP the powers used a combination of co-option, glamorization of gangsterism, separation from the most advanced elements, indoctrination in reliance on passive approaches and raw fear; that is, every trick in the book.

Thus, fully alarmed at the growth and boldness of the BPP and related groups as well as their ability to win a level of global support, the ruling classes' governmental, intelligence, legal and academic arms devised a strategy to split the BPP and co-opt its more compliant elements. At the same time they moved totally to annihilate its more radical and revolutionary remainders. They knew they had the upper hand due to the youth and inexperience of the BPP; and they had their own deep well of resources and experiences in using counter-insurgency techniques much earlier against:

- Marcus Garvey's UNIA (Universal Negro Improvement Association);
- the Palmer Raids against Euro-Americans of an Anarchist and/or left Socialist bent;
- the crushing of the IWW (Industrial Workers of the World) and neutralizing of the other Socialists;
- their subsequent destruction of any real Communist power in Western Europe;
- their total domination and subjugation of the Caribbean (except Cuba), Central and South America-except for the fledgling guerilla movements;
- and everything they had learned in their wars to replace the European colonial powers in Africa and Asia.

Still, the BPP had highly motivated cadre, imbued with a fearlessness little known among domestic groups. The ruling class and its henchmen were stretched thin, especially since the Vietnamese, Laotians and Kampuchians were kicking their ass in Southeast Asia. Moreover, the freedom fighters in Guinea-Bissau and Angola had the U.S.' European allies-whom the U.S. supplied with the latest military hardware-on the run.

So although the BPP was inexperienced, the prospect of neutralizing it was a mixed bag. The members of the BPP still had a fighting chance. The co-option depended on them neutralizing the BPP co-founder and by-then icon, Huey P. Newton. Afterward, they used him-along with other methods-to split the BPP and lead his wing along reformist lines. It was hoped that this process would force the still-revolutionary wing into an all-out armed fight before it was ready, either killing, jailing, exiling or breaking its members will to resist or sending them into ineffective hiding-out. At this time, even with the BPP's extraordinary global stature, no country seemed to want to risk the U.S. wrath by "openly " allowing the BPP to train guerilla units, something which, given more time, could nevertheless have come to pass.

So, surprisingly, Huey was allowed to leave jail with a still-to-be-tried-murder-of-a-policeman charge pending. Thus, the government and courts had him on a short leash, and with it they hoped to control his actions, although probably not through any direct agreements. Sadly, the still politically naive BPP cadre and the other youth who looked up to Newton could imagine

“nothing” but that “they”-the people-had forced his release. Veterans from those times still insist on clinging to such tripe!

Yet it seems Newton thought otherwise, and since he was not prepared to go underground and join his fledgling Black Liberation Army (BLA), he almost immediately began following a reformist script. This was completely at odds with his own earlier theories and writings, as well as at odds with basic principles that were being practiced to good effect by oppressed people throughout the world. Even further, he used his almost complete control of the BPP Central Committee to expel many, many veteran and combat-tested BPP cadre in an imitation of the Stalinist and Euro-gangster posture he would later become famous for. This included an all-out shooting war to repress any BPP members who would not accept his independently-derived-at-reformist policies.

At the same time, on a parallel track, U.S. and local police and intelligence agencies were using their now infamous COINTELPRO operations to provoke the split between the wing Huey dominated and other, less compliant BPP members. This finally reached a head in 1971, after Huey’s shooting war and purge forced scores of the most loyal, fearless and dedicated above-ground BPP to go underground and join those other BPP members who were already functioning there as the offensive armed wing. Panther Wolves, AfroAmerican Liberation Army and Black Liberation Army were all names by which these members were known, but the latter is the only one that would stick. At this time the BLA was a confederation of clandestine guerilla units composed of mostly Black Revolutionary Nationalists from a number of different formations. Nevertheless, they still accepted the BPP’s leadership and Huey Newton as their Minister of Defense. But obviously Newton didn’t see it that way.

Even more telling, it was later learned that Newton’s expensive penthouse apartment-where he and other Central Committee members handled any number of sensitive BPP issues, was under continuous surveillance by intelligence agents who had another apartment down the hall. Thus, Newton and his faction were encapsulated, leaving them unable to follow anything but government sanctioned scripts; unless he/they went underground. This only occurred when Newton fled to Cuba after his gangster antics threatened the revocation of his release on the pending legal matters which the government held over his head.

Add to that, the glamorization of gangsterism was something that various ruling class elements had begun to champion and direct toward the Black lower classes, in particular. This occurred especially after they saw how much attention the Black Arts Movement was able to generate. Indeed, these ruling class elements recognized it could be used to misdirect youthful militancy while still being hugely profitable. They had, in fact, already misdirected Euro-American and other youth with the James Bond-I Spy-Secret Agent Man and other replacements for the “Old West/Cowboys and Indians” racist crap, so why not a “Black” counterpart? Thus was born the enormously successful counter-insurgency genre collectively known as the Blacksploitation movies: Shaft, Superfly, Foxy Brown, Black Caesar and the like, accompanied by wannabe crossovers like Starsky and Hutch, and the notorious Black snitch Huggie Bear. Psychological warfare!

Follow the psychology: You can be “Black”, cool, rebellious, dangerous, rich, have respect, women, cars, fine clothes, jewelry, an expensive home and even stay high; as long as you don’t fight the system-or the cops! But, if you don’t go along with that script, then get ready to go back to the early days-with its shootouts with the cops, graveyard, prison, on the run and exile! Or you can be cool even as a Huggie Bear-style snitch, and interestingly, like his buddy, the post-

modern/futuristic rat Cipher of The Matrix, who tried to betray ZION in return for a fake life as a rich, steak-eating, movie star. And most important: no more fighting with the Agents! Get it?

In addition, the ruling classes bolstered the government's assault by flooding our neighborhoods with heroin, cocaine, marijuana and "meth". In the process they saddled the oppressed with a Trojan Horse which would strategically handicap them for decades to come. All of those drugs had earlier been introduced to these areas by organized criminals under local police and political protection. But now the intelligence agencies were using them with the same intentions that alcohol had long ago been introduced to the Native Americans and opium had been trafficked by the ruling classes of Europe and this country: to counter the propensities of oppressed people to rebel against outside control while profiting off their misery.

Against this background Newton began to indulge in drugs to try to relieve the stress of all that he was facing. He became a drug addict, plain and simple. That, however, didn't upset the newly-constructed gangster/cool that Hollywood, the ruling class and the government were pushing. Although many BPP cadre and other outsiders were very nervous about it, Newton's control was by then too firmly fixed for anyone to challenge-except for the BLA, whose members were by then in full blown urban guerilla war with the government.

At the same time, the reformist wing of the BPP did manage to make some noteworthy strides under its only female head, Elaine Brown. Newton's drug addiction/gangster-lifestyle-provoked exile caused him to "appoint"-on his own and without any consultation with the body-Elaine to head the Party in his absence. An exceptionally gifted woman, she relied on an inner circle of female BPP cadre, backed up by male enforcers, to introduce some clear and consistent projects that helped the BPP to become a real power locally. It was a reformist paradigm, though, that could not hope to achieve any of the radical/revolutionary changes called for earlier. On the contrary, Newton in his earlier writings had put the cadre on notice of a point when, in order to keep moving forward, the aboveground would have to be supported by an underground. Yet it was Newton who completely rejected that paradigm upon being released from jail, although he still organized and controlled a heavily armed extortion group called "The Squad", which consisted of BPP cadre who terrorized Oakland's underworld with a belt-operated machine gun mounted on a truck bed and accompanied by cadre who were ready for war! In classic Eurogangster fashion, Newton had turned to preying on segments of the community that he had earlier vowed to liberate. But, of course, the police and government were safe from his forces. With no connection to a true underground-the BLA-there was no rational way to ratchet up the pressure on the police, government and the still fully operational system of ruling class control and oppression. Newton and his followers had been reduced to completely sanctioned methods.

Consequently we can see all of the government's tricks bearing fruit. In a seemingly curious combination of Co-option, Indoctrination in Reliance on Passive Approaches (that is, passive toward the status quo), and Glamorization of Gangsterism, Newton's faction of the BPP had limited itself both to legal and underworld-sanctioned methods. They also fell for the trick of Separation from the Most Advanced Elements by severing all relations with their armed underground, the BLA, whose members would lead the BPP if the Party got to the next level of struggle-open armed resistance to the oppressors. Finally, Newton, his faction and activists from all of the other American radical and revolutionary groups succumbed to the terror and Raw Fear that was being levelled on them. The exception was those who waged armed struggle, who themselves were killed, jailed, exiled, forced into deep hiding or into continuing their activism under the radar.

Epilogue on Huey P. Newton and his BPP faction

Elaine Brown both guided Newton's and her faction to support Newton and his family in exile while orchestrating the building up of enough political muscle in Oakland to assure his return on favorable terms. Thus, Newton did return and eventually the charges were dropped. Nevertheless, Newton continued to use his iconic stature and renewed direct control of his faction again to play the cool-political-gangster role; and like any drug addict who refuses to reform, he kept sliding downhill, even turning on old comrades and his main champion, Elaine Brown, who had to flee in fear.

Sadly, for all practical purposes, that was the end of the original Black Panther Party.
Check-mate!

Later, as is well-known, Newton's continued drug addiction cost him his life, a sorry ending for a once great man.

“When you grow up in situations like me and Cliff...there is a lot of respect for brothers like [drug lord] Alpo and Nicky Barnes, those major hustler-player cats. Cause they made it. They made it against society's laws. They were the Kings of their own domain”. (Cliff Evans, “The Ivy League Counterfeiter”, Rolling Stone, 2000; in Toure, Never Drank the Kool-Aid, Picador, New York, 2006)

The “Original” Black Mafia (BM)

Albeit a touchy matter to many, it's an irrefutable fact that the original Black Mafia (BM) was first established in Philadelphia, Pa., in the late 1960's, and has seen its cancerous ideas duplicated, imitated and lionized by Black youth ever since.

Moreover, although it's unclear how much the national Nation of Islam (NOI) leadership knew or learned about the BM, there's no question of the local NOI's eventual absorption of the BM-under Minister Jeremiah X. Pugh. In fact, although the BM was originally just local “stick-up kids” culled from neighborhood gangs, their being swallowed by the NOI would eventually turn them into a truly powerful and terrifying criminal enterprise-completely divorced from everything that the NOI had stood for since its founding in 1930.

Sadly, most of the high level tricks which the government employed against the BPP were also used against the BM/NOI; namely, Co-option, Glamorization of Gangsterism, Separation from the Most Advanced Elements and Raw Fear.

Thus, it must be understood that although the NOI and BPP had different ideologies and styles, to most Black youth, both held out the promise of helping them to obtain what they most desired: self-respect, dignity and freedom.

Interestingly, the puritanical NOI's dealings with the founders of the BM were similar to that of the Catholic Church's historical relationship with the Italian Mafia. That is, the BM members who attended NOI religious services did so strictly on that basis while still coming to the attention of the local NOI leadership as unusually good financial contributors. And within the lower class Black community being served, everybody knew that meant that they were hustlers, stick-up kids, or both. So the same way that the Italian Mafia would contribute huge sums to the Catholic Church, the BM would do with Philly's Temple No. 12.

The national NOI, however, had been under close scrutiny and surveillance by intelligence agencies for decades. In fact, by the time of this death, the NOI's founder, the Honorable Elijah

Muhammad, had in excess of one million pages of files in the archives of the FBI alone! (Anyone who still believes that the assassination of Malcolm X did not have a hidden U.S. government hand behind it, has no clear idea of the threat that the NOI was perceived to be at that time). As a result of their surveillance, the intelligence agencies knew who were the BM's financial contributors to the NOI.

Overshadowing this, of course, were the bloody assaults that the FBI and local police were levelling against other Black radical and revolutionary groups, like the local and national BPP branches, the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM) and scores of smaller formations.

The FBI first tried to recruit Minister Pugh as a snitch against the local BPP by telling him that the BPP was out to get him and supplant the local NOI for Black youth's loyalties. Pugh, to his credit, didn't take the bait and also avoided getting his Temple No. 12 involved in a war with the BPP, although he had to suspect that his taking of blood money from the BM had also come to the attention of the FBI, thus making him vulnerable. Yet miraculously about the same time Pugh's name was removed from the FBI's Security Index, which contained all of what that agency considered to be the country's top-level threats. After Pugh's having been on the list for years, and right after its agents filed a report of his refusal to be a snitch, why would the Bureau nevertheless relax the pressure? How did J. Edgar Hoover & Co. think things would unfold? By giving Pugh and his Temple, and their BM followers, enough rope to hang themselves, or to become addicted to a game that was ultimately controlled by their professed enemies-the U.S. government and its underlings. Thus, this would turn the tables on Pugh and force him to become less radical, more compliant, and no longer a threat on the level of the BPP, RAM and other revolutionaries.

For the BM members, the glamorization of gangsterism fit right in. After all, why would a group of Black stick-up kids and gang members call themselves The Black Mafia? This was in the era of Black is beautiful, when millions of Blacks began wearing Afros/Bushes and African clothing and adopting African names-completely at odds with aping Italians! Why not name themselves the zulus, Watusis or the Mau Mau-like even younger street gangs were doing? No, Hollywood's projection of gangsterism was getting through.

Consequently, within a couple of years the BM would uniformly be recognized as expensively dressed, big hat-wearing, Cadillac-driving imitations of the Italian Mafia. And sadly, they turned countless numbers of street gang members, former RAM cadre and militants from dozens of other Philly groups, who were fighting oppression, into pawns who were used to further destroy their own communities.

The third trick, that is, of separating the youth from the more advanced elements, operated under cover of Pugh and other insiders continuing to preach Black Nationalist doctrines amongst the youth in the street gangs and within the prisons, never missing an opportunity to hold out the illusion that they could gain pride and respect. As a result, many youth believed they were joining a rebel group that was only awaiting the right time to throw their lot in with the masses of Blacks who were waging battles from coast to coast and on the African continent.

In reality Pugh & Co. were tricking the youth into diverting their energies into gangsterism, thereby separating them from the more advanced elements. Many, if not most, bought into the rationale that their extortion and drug dealing were a tax that would be used to build The Nation. A few years later that would be dubbed drinking the Kool-Aid, after Jim Jones and his CIA handlers tricked and forced hundreds of other Blacks to "drink" their death. And undoubtedly, Huey had also tricked his people with a similar game, which decades later was shown to be completely false! Yes, that ill-gotten money did build and/or buy some expensive homes, cars,

clothing, women and drugs as well as a few schools and businesses. But to fight oppression? Please!

Finally, the raw fear being levelled on the entire society had a devastating effect on the BM, also. Otherwise how can one account for the hundreds, if not thousands, of BM street soldiers, who were fearless enough to cow Philly's long-established Italian Mafia and most of its warring street gangs; or the BM headhunters, who terrorized the city with decapitations, nevertheless producing a distinctly lackluster showing when confronting anyone in uniform?

I'll tell you how: their leadership had completely disarmed their members' fighting spirits by always telling them not to resist the police until the leadership gave the order—which never came. Comically, after the police and FBI had succeeded in suppressing, jailing, exiling and co-opting most of the BPP, BLA, RAM and others, they then discovered the BM and attacked it with a vengeance. As might be expected, none of the BM put up anything resembling real resistance except to go on the lam. Minister Jeremiah himself made a 180-degree turn by becoming a snitch after getting caught in a drug sting.

Thus, the legacy of the BM is one of a ruthless group of Black thugs who have spawned similarly ruthless crews—notably Philly's Junior Black Mafia (JBM) and the latest clone, Atlanta's Black Mafia Family. But their most harmful effect comes from their deeds and mystiques that has returned a huge segment of Black youth to believing that the only way to gain any respect and dignity is through being the best and most heartless hustler around: that is, full circle back to 1955.

Finally, I used the BPP/BLA and NOI/BM as examples because they are the most well documented. Although both are surrounded by so much mythology, a true raw analysis is almost never attempted except by the government and intelligence agencies. The latter use their findings to refine and revise older tricks in order to continue checking and controlling this country's rebellious youth while simultaneously persisting in oppressing the communities they occupy in line with the ruling classes' agenda.

As to the middle and upper class idealistic youth from all segments of the First Wave, with few exceptions they allowed themselves willy-nilly to be co-opted fully as the new managers of the system they had vowed radically to change. Moreover, they became the champions of and made a doctrine out of the necessity of always using and relying on passive and legal methods, epitomized by their new saint, Martin Luther King, Junior.

The Second Wave: circa 1980–2005

Thus, by 1980, for all practical purposes, the youth from the First Wave had been defeated. Following this they collectively descended into a debilitating, agonizing, escapist long period characterized by partying. I am not discounting the fringe elements who had been so adversely affected that they had their hands full trying to rebuild their sanity or families, or to go back to school or simply survive in prison or exile while everybody else seemed to be dancing on the ceiling. This was similar to the shell shocked vets of WWI and WWII and the post-traumatic stress syndrome sufferers of the Vietnam war.

The most misunderstood victims, however, were the First Wave's children, who themselves became the Second Wave from 1980 to 2005. Those are the years when the latter either reached puberty or became young adults who, paradoxically, were left in the dark about most of what

had occurred before. Instead they were left to the tender mercies of the reformed but still rotten-to-the-core and ruling class-dominated schools, social institutions and propaganda machinery.

Thus, amongst all the lower and working class segments of the youth, Coolio's Gangster's Paradise fits the bill. These youth were raised by the state, either in uncaring schools, juvenile detention centers or homes; in front of TV sets, movies, video arcades, or in the streets. Within the greatly expanded middle classes-most notably amongst the people of color-the youth were back to the gospel of getting a good education and job as their highest calling. This was mixed with an originally more conscious element which tackled politics and academia as a continuation of the First Wave's struggle. The upper class youth, however, were doomed to follow in the footsteps of their ruling class parents, since the radical and revolutionary changes they sought failed to alter the country much.

Like a recurring nightmare, the Second Wave also fell victim to co-option, glamorization of gangsterism, separation from the most advanced elements, reliance on passive methods and raw fear of an upgraded police state. Left to their own devices, the lower class youth began a search for respect and dignity by devising their own institutions and culture, which came to be dominated by gangs and Hip Hop. These, on their own, could be either used for good or bad. But lacking any knowledge of the First Wave's experiences, they were tricked like their parents.

The Gang and Hip Hop Culture

Gangs are working and lower class phenomena which date from the early beginnings of this country, having also been in evidence overseas. In fact, many of those who joined the First Wave were themselves gang members, most notably Alprentice "Bunchy" Carter, head of the notorious Slausons (the forerunners of today's Crips), and the martyred founder of the Los Angeles Panthers. As little as it's understood, the gangs are in fact the lower class counterparts of the middle and upper classes' youth clubs, associations, Boy/Girl Scouts, and fraternities and sororities. The key difference is the level of positive adult input in the middle and upper class groups.

Hip Hop is just the latest manifestation of artistic genius bursting forth from these lower class youth-seeking respect and dignity.

Orthodox hip hoppers speak of a holy trinity of hip hop fathers: Herc, Afrika Bambaata, and Grandmaster Flash. But like moisture in the air before it rains, the conditions were ripe for hip hop before the holy trinity began spinning. Hip Hop's prefathers or grandfathers are James Brown, Huey Newton, Muhammad Ali, Richard Pryor, Malcolm X, Bob Marley, Bruce Lee, certain celebrity drug dealers and pimps whose names won't be mentioned here... (Toure, Never Drank the Kool-Aid, op. cit.)

Alas, Hip Hop culture is daily being co-opted in ways so obvious that it needs no explanation. But woe be to us if we don't come to grips with how the Second Wave's gangs have been coopted. It is a continuing tragedy, moreover, which if not turned around will ultimately make the shortcomings of the First Wave pale in comparison!

Ronald Reagan and crack were hip hop's '80's anti-fathers: both helped foster the intense poverty and the teenage drug-dealing millionaires as well as the urge to rebel against the system that appeared to be moving in for the kill, to finally crush Black America. (Toure, Never Drank the Kool-Aid, op. cit.)

Certainly the gangs have comprised a subculture that has historically been a thorn in the ruling class' side. It either had to be controlled and used, or eradicated. Usually that was accomplished

by co-option and attrition, with older elements moving on, or being jailed long enough to destroy the group. Our First Wave, as noted, was able-somewhat-to outflank the ruling class by absorbing some key gang members of that time. This added to the First Wave's prestige in the community and its acceptance of radical and revolutionary ideas. (Also, as noted, these ideas were pimped by BM-style groups).

It's fascinatingly simple to follow how the Second Wave has been tricked to destroy itself. Just about all the pillars upholding this giant con game are familiar to everyone in the form of movies, TV, street culture, cops, courts, jails, prisons, death, and our own families' and friends' experiences with them.

Gangstas, Wankstas and Wannabes

All of the above, more than anything, crave respect and dignity! Forget all of the unformed ideas about the homies wanting the families, fathers and love that they never had. That plays a part, but if you think that the homies only need some more hugs, then you've drunk the kool-aid! Actually, even if you did have a good father and a loving family/extended family, if everything in society is geared toward lessening your self-worth because of your youth, race, tastes in dress, music, speech, lack of material trappings, etc., then you will still hunger for some respect, which if it came, would lead you to knowing dignity within yourself. Even suburban, middle and upper-class youth confront this-to a lesser degree.

All of the beefin', flossin', frontin', set-trippin', violence and bodies piling up comes from the pursuit of respect and dignity. This is how 50 Cent put it:

Niggas out there sellin' drugs is after what I got from rappin'...When you walk into a club and the bouncers stop doin' whatever the fuck they doing to let you in and say everybody else wait. He special. That's the same shit they do when you start killin' niggas in you hood. This is what we been after the whole time. Just the wrong route. ("Life of a Hunted Man", posted on Rolling Stone website, April 3, 2003; in *Never Drank the Kool-Aid*, op. cit.)

Admittedly, at times that simple, but raw truth is so intertwined with so many other things that it's hard to grasp. Namely, nowadays, the drug game, other git-money games, and most sets do provide a sort of alternative family. They also provide a strong cohesion that is mistakenly called love. Hence, to cut through the distractions, I'll illustrate my point as follows:

When the Second Wave was left hanging by the defeated and demoralized First Wave, its members unknowingly reverted to methods of seeking dignity and respect that the First Wave had elevated themselves above during their struggle for radical and revolutionary change. This was a period during which gang wars and gang banging were anathema! The revolutionary psychiatrist Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* notes that the colonized and oppressed are quick to grab their knife against a neighbor or stranger, thereby in a subconscious way ducking their fear of directing their pent up rage at those responsible for their suffering: their colonial oppressors.

The notable early sets-like the Bloods, Crips and Gangster Disciples-primary activity was banging, or gang warring over "turf": neighborhoods, schools, etc., as well as over real or imagined slights. But the real underlying motivation was of all of the parties' desires to build their reputations and earn stripes, meaning to gain prestige in the eyes of fellow bangers. This translated

into respect amongst their peers. It also caused these youth to bond with each other like soldiers do in combat; a bonding like a family-even more so. Not surprisingly, many outsiders decreed that this bonding was love. Some youth also thought that. However, to exchange love, you first have to love yourself, and the gang banger by definition has no love for his or her self. They in fact are desperately seeking respect, without which love is impossible.

Example: If you respect your body, you can also love your body, and you would not dare destroy it with drugs or alcohol. But if you don't respect your body and you go on to destroy it in that fashion, then it follows that you have no love for it either.

The bangin' raged on for years, piling up as many deaths and injuries as the U.S. suffered during the Vietnam War. Each incident elevated either the attacker's or victim's stature in the eyes of his or her peers. As might be expected during those years, the overseers of the oppressive system bemoaned the carnage while locking up untold numbers of bangers for a few years; but overall, they did absolutely nothing to try to arrest the problem.

Now here's where it really gets interesting. Drugs, as noted, had been flooding into these same communities since the 1960's. Back then, however, it was mainly heroin, with marijuana and meth playing relatively minor roles. Remember the movies *Serpico* and *The French Connection* exposing that? But the early gangs, to their credit, never got deeply involved in that. They saw dope fiends as weak and, although those early gangs would blow some sherm or chronic, it was just a pass-time activity for them. They were serious about bangin'!

The bangers were in fact all co-opted, wedded as they were to their form of fratricidal gangsterism and totally separated from the remnants of the First Wave, about whom they knew next to nothing. Meanwhile, the "good kids" were being indoctrinated in passive, legal, get-a-good-education approaches. And both groups were scared to death of the police! For despite the bangers' hate and contempt, any two cops could lay out a dozen of them on all fours-at will. Hence, Tupac's later iconic stature amongst them, since he could walk his talk:

...the fact that while everyone else talks about it, Tupac is the only known rapper who has actually shot a police officer; the walking away from being shot five times with no permanent damage and walking away from the hospital the next day and the rolling into court for a brief but dramatic wheelchair-bound courtroom appearance-it's been dangerously compelling and ecstatically brilliant. ("Tupac", *The Village Voice*, 1995, in never Drank the Kool-Aid; op. cit.)

At that time this madness was contained in lower class communities since the ruling class believed that technology had made what it dubbed the underclass obsolete anyway. To do this the ruling classes' henchmen made sure that their Gestapo-like police were heavily armed and fully supported. I urge people to see Sean Penn and Robert Duval's movie, *Colors*.

But something was on the horizon that was about to cause a seismic shift in this already sorry state of affairs. It was to alter things in ways that most still cannot or will not believe.

Peep the Game

South Amerikan cocaine replaced French Connection and CIAcontrolled Southeast Asian/Golden Triangle-grown heroin as the drug of choice in the early 1980's. Remember *Miami Vice*? Well, as might be expected, this country's government, intelligence agencies and large banks

immediately began a struggle to control this new trade. Remember: control-not get rid of-in complete contrast to their lying propaganda projects like the War on Drugs! Thus, they were in fact dealing with-not fighting-the South Amerikan governments, militaries and large landowners who controlled the raising, processing and shipping of the cocaine. (For a few years, however, the latter themselves had to battle a few independent drug lords, most notably Pablo Escobar Ochoa and his Medellin Cartel).

In this country at that time the youth gangs had next to nothing to do with the cocaine trade, which was then primarily servicing a middle and upper class-and white-clientele. The traffic employed a few old-school big time hustlers along with some Spanish-speaking wholesalers, who also had their own crews to handle matters. Although after the fact, the Hip hop cult movie favorites Scarface and New Jack City are good descriptions of that period, albeit they both-purposely-left out the dominant role that the U.S. government and intelligence agencies played in controlling things.

All right, I know you're down with all of that-and love it! So let's move on.

In the middle 1980's the U.S. began backing a secret war designed to overthrow the revolutionary Sandinista government that had fought a long and bloody civil war to rid Nicaragua of its U.S.-sponsored dictator (Somoza) in 1979. But after being exposed to the world, the U.S. Congress forbade then-president Reagan from continuing this secret war. Like a lot of U.S. presidents, however, he just ignored Congress and had the CIA raise the money, recruit the mercenaries and buy or steal the military equipment to continue the war.

Consequently, that's how and why crack and the mayhem it's caused came upon us. Here, however, you won't see Hollywood and TV giving up the raw. With few exceptions like Black director Bill Duke's Deep Cover, starring Laurence Fishburn, and Above the Law with Steven Segal, you have to search hard to see it portrayed so clearly. Later I'll explain why.

Anyway, most people have heard that crack was dumped into South Central Los Angeles in the mid-'80's-along with an arsenal of military-style assault rifles that would make a First Wave BPP member ashamed of how poorly equipped s/he was. Needless to say, the huge profits from the crack sales, coupled with everyone being financially strapped, magnified the body count! And, since crack was also so easy to manufacture locally and so dirt cheap, just about anybody in the hood could get into the business. Gone were the old days of a few big-time hustlers, except on the wholesale level.

But, make no mistake about it, the wholesale cocaine sold for the production of crack was fully controlled and distributed by selected CIA-controlled operatives.

So, to all of you dawgs who have been bragging about how big you are/were, a top-to-bottom organization chart would in fact look something like this:

At the top would be the president: Ronald Reagan; then former CIA director George Bush, Sr.; the National Security Advisor; Secretary of State; major banking executives; Colonel Oliver North; General Secord; arms dealers; mercenary pilots; South and Central Amerikan government and military leaders, including Escobar and the Medellin Cartel originally; U.S. Navy, Coast Guard, Customs and Border Patrol officers; state and local police, and county sheriffs and their deputies, and their successors in office; and at the bottom of the barrel: YOU DAWG!

Now I know that you already knew in your hearts that there were some big dawgs over you, but I bet you never imagined the game came straight out of the White House, or that you were straight up pawns on the board. If that sounds too wild, then tell me why it's harder to find any government, CIA, military or bankers, like George Bush, Sr., and his crew, in prison, than it is to

win the lottery? Yeah, they double-crossed Noriega, Escobar and the Medellin Cartel, and made Oliver North do some community service, but that's all. The real crime lords-the government, military, CIA and banking dons-all got away. Finally, and only after Congresswoman Maxine Waters made a stink about it, was the CIA forced to do two investigations and post on its official website their findings together with an admission of being a drug dealer.

Naw dawg, y'all were played! Face it.

That's what happened to you O.G.'s from the '80's. But as Morpheus said in The Matrix, let me "show you how deep the rabbit hole goes".

Gradually the U.S. government was forced to crack down on the cocaine coming through Florida, but by then the South Amerikan cartels and their government and military allies had found new routes through Mexico. At first the the members of the Mexican underworld were just middlemen; but quickly recognizing a golden opportunity, they essentially seized control of most of the trade between South Amerika and the U.S. They forced the South Amerikans into becoming junior partners who were responsible only for growing and processing, the cheaper the better. The Mexicans now purchased mountains of cocaine for transshipment and smuggling into the U.S. wholesale market, resulting in oil and automotive industry-type profits.

One might wonder why the South Amerikans-powerful players would go for a deal like that. As ever the answers can be found in the Machiavellian and serpentine maneuverings of the United States government and its poor Mexican counterpart. You see, in the 1980's the Mexican government was overseeing an economy that was so bad, that for all practical purposes, it was bankrupt. Indeed, the U.S. and its underlings in the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) were forced periodically to give the Mexican government millions upon millions in loans, in return for unfair trading concessions, in order to prop it up with the economy. The U.S. was then and is now extremely vulnerable to conditions in Mexico because common sense and past experience has told its rulers that the worse things became in Mexico, the more conditions would force its already dirt poor majority to find a way to enter the U.S. to find a means to feed themselves and their families. And the U.S. could not keep prevailing upon the IMF and WB to lend Mexico more money-especially since the U.S. ruling classes saw another way temporarily to plug up the hole in their control of matters in the international financial world.

Thus, another unholy alliance was formed. This one was between the U.S. government, CIA, State Department, banks, and the other usual suspects on one side; and their Mexican counterparts-including their first fledgling cartels-on the other, with the South Amerikans now in a junior partnership role. However, I don't want to give the impression that it was arranged diplomatically, all neat and tidy. Far from that!

No, it evolved through visionaries amongst the usual suspects, putting their ideas before other select insiders and working to craft an unwritten consensus. It was the same way that they along with Cuban exiles in Florida-had used the earlier cocaine trade to fuel the growth around Miami. Only this time it would be Mexico, a much more pressing and unstable situation.

It was recognized by all parties that Mexico's underworld would eventually land in the driver's seat due to its ability to take the kind of risks called for, its geographical proximity to the U.S. border and, most important, its strong desire to avoid confronting the U.S. and Mexican governments as Pablo Escobar had done. Thus, the members of the Mexican underworld were more than willing to guarantee that most of their drug profits would be pumped back into the moribund

Mexican economy through large building projects, upgrading the tourist industry, big-time farming and other clearly national ventures. And, on the messy side, their gunmen were becoming experts at making reluctant parties fall into line by offering them a stark choice between gold or lead.

Nevertheless, avoid thinking that the Mexican and South American underworld ever became anything but hired hands of the big dawgs in the United States government and their partners in the banking industry, who always remained in a position to destroy their underlings' smuggling and money laundering operations through tighter control of U.S. borders and/or by making it extremely difficult to launder the mountains of small-denomination bills which the traffickers had to deal with. In fact, that's what happened when then-president George Bush, Sr., ordered the invasion of Panama, which was/is a major offshore money laundering hub, after hired hand Gen. Manuel Noriega had become unruly in 1989.

Plus, these hired hands would insure that their chosen corrupt politicians would always win in Mexico's elections by distributing the planeloads of money that the South American gangsters and government/military partners would make available as overhead. But more important for the United States, a major part of the proceeds would be pumped into the Mexican economy in order to forestall the looming bankruptcy.

Consequently by the middle 1990's the Mexican underworld had established the superpowerful Gulf, Juarez, Guadalajara, Sinaloa and Tijuana cartels. Moreover, the underworld had consolidated its power by not only controlling who all were elected to key political posts in Mexico, but had also perfected the art of bribing key local, state and regional police heads as well as strategic generals in Mexico's armed forces. Check out the movies Traffic, Once Upon a Time in Mexico, and Antonio Banderas/Selma Hayek's Desperado. Once again, after the fact, you'll see Hollywood making money by spilling the beans. But you should not let the stunt work lull you into thinking there's no substance to the plots!

Remember: Mexico's cartels wouldn't be able to function without the collaboration and protection from the highest levels within the U.S. establishment. Just as the CIA has openly admitted it was a drug merchant during an earlier period, you can believe nothing has changed-except partners!

The hilarious part is that none of the wannabe real gangstas in the U.S. know that in reality they're low-paid, low level CIA flunkies without pensions or benefits; or they can't wait until they get out of prison to become undercover government agents-slingin' crack.

Alas, most people think it's crazy to believe that the government of the U.S. would allow its cities and small towns to be flooded with cocaine from South America. Even the wannabe gangstas don't really believe that. They prefer to think that such ideas are good for conspiracy junkies and cling to the illusion that they are more than just pawns on the chessboard.

Further, if one does not get beyond the idea that this whole thing was just a plot to destroy the Black and Brown peoples-a favorite, though shortsighted theory-there's no way to see just how deep the drug game really is. I repeat: the main objective was to pump billions of dollars into the Mexican economy in order to avoid a complete meltdown and the subsequent fleeing to the U.S. of sixty or more million Mexicans out of its ninetyplus million inhabitants. This would have been a crisis that would have dwarfed the numbers who are just beginning to make their presence known!

Actually, the big dawgs in the U.S. probably didn't know just how they were gonna control the fallout that would inevitably accompany their cocaine/crack tax. They routinely tax alcohol,

gambling (from the lotteries to the casinos), and even prostitution in certain areas, don't they? So yeah, it was a clandestine operation to use cocaine to rescue Mexico and stave off an economically induced invasion of the U.S. by its destitute populace. The Mexican people, especially its Indigenous population, were made poverty-stricken by 500 years of colonialism, slavery, peonage, neo-colonialism and the theft of one-third of their country by the United States in the 19th century.

Sadly, though, our First Wave's degeneration into the glamorization of gangsterism, the Second Wave's hunger for respect and recognition that was fueling the senseless gang carnage, the Hip Hop generation's ability to provide the youth with vicarious fantasies to indulge their senses with the hypnotic allure of the temporary power that the drug game could bring them-led the youth in the United States back to emulating the First Wave's Superfly and Scarface days. Others also see that:

My theory is that nine times out of ten, if there's a depression, more a social depression than anything, it brings out the best art in Black people. The best example is Reagan and Bush gave us the best years of hip hop...Hip hop is created thanks to the conditions that crack set: easy money but a lot of work, the violence involved, the stories it produced-crack helped birth hip hop. Now, I'm part conspiracy theorist because you can't develop something that dangerous and it not be planned. I don't think crack happened by accident...Crack offered a lot of money to the inner city youth who didn't have to go to college. Which enabled them to become businessmen. It also turned us into marksmen. It also turned us comatose. (Ahmir Thompson, aka Quest Love, "The Believer", in *Never Drank the Kool-Aid*, op. cit.; also, "The Believer-Interview with Ahmir Thompson" at www.believmag.com/issues/200308/?read+interview_thompson)

With the deft moves of a conjurer, the big dawgs in the U.S. seized upon all of this and began to nudge these elements around on the international chess board-within their giant con game. Moreover, these big dawgs in the United States had very little choice where to start their triage in order to gain some relief from their manufactured domestic crisis. I'll tell you why.

Cocaine in its powder and crack forms is so addictive that the cultures that use them regularly-the rich and famous, the Hollywood Set, corporate executives, lawyers, doctors, weekenders, entertainers, athletes, college kids, suburbanites, hoodrats, hustlers, pipers, etc.-bring a guaranteed demand!

In most ways, it could be argued, the effect has been the same as with alcohol and tobacco, which have never been successfully suppressed in the U.S.

It follows then that despite all of their propaganda about Just Say No and the bogus War on Drugs, the big dawgs never had any intention of even trying to eradicate the use of cocaine. In fact, crack had turned their lower class neighborhoods into lucrative mainstays of the big dawgs' alternative taxing scheme. At the same time, however, the Black and Brown communities were becoming major headaches that if left unchecked could eventually evolve into a real strategic threat! In contrast to the relatively tranquil non-Black/Brown communities, which used more, mostly powder, cocaine, the trade in the Black and Brown hoods and barrios was accompanied by an exponential increase of drug-related violence especially after the gangs got seriously involved.

Now, as I've pointed out, the gangs were mainly just pursuing respect prior to getting involved with hustling drugs. And the carnage connected to that was not a real concern to the big dawgs.

But the crack/cocaine trade was different from the earlier dumping of heroin in those communities which was accompanied by the comparatively isolated violence of the Black Mafia-style groups. That violence, though terrifying, was also more selective. The more widespread availability of crack and assault weapons led the big dawgs to understand that if they didn't aggressively deal with the ultra-violent inner city drug gangs, the latter would eventually move to consolidate their gains by forming South American and Mexican-style cartels. Afterward, they, like their Mexican forerunners, could gradually take over inner city politics for themselves once they realized that the money and power would not of themselves provide them with the kind of respect and dignity they sought. To understand why not, just observe the rich and famous hip hop artists who continue to wild-out because they still lack the respect and dignity that comes with struggling for something other than money or power: in short, some type of (political or higher) cause.

Anyway, the hip hop generational favorite TV drama *The Wire* lays out the entire phenomenon pretty much as it had earlier played itself out in Baltimore and other urban areas. In fact, the fictional TV series derives its realness from an earlier long-running expose featured in a Baltimore newspaper (another after the fact but still useful piece of work to study). Indeed, the parts of that show which depict earlier years of the Black gangs getting deep into the crack trade clearly illustrate my points about the gangs evolving into proto-cartels-and then being triaged before maturing into real strategic threats, thereby leaving the crack trade intact.

That's why "The Prison Industrial Complex" was formed! It was set up as a tool to neutralize the Second Wave before its members woke up to the fact that, despite their money and power they were being used: played like suckers, a rub that the more astute big dawgs feared that money would not soothe. Thus, all of your draconian gun-related and mandatory sentencing laws were first formulated on the federal level, where most of the big dawgs have their power, and then forced upon most of the states. This was to insure that the Second Wave would never be able to consolidate any real power. Precisely because the latter were proving themselves to be such ruthless gangstas, in imitation of their Hollywood idols, coupled with the power they derived from their share of the undercover tax being extracted from their communities, the ruling classes took the position that they should be triaged before they got too big, a period which averaged from one to three years in a run, and that everything they acquired should be taken. The martyred hip hop icon The Notorious B.I.G. put it all together in his classic song, rightly titled *Respect*:

Put the drugs on the shelf/ Nah, I couldn't see it/ Scarface, King of New York/ I
wanna be it...Until I got incarcerated/ kinda scary...Not able to move behind the steel
gate/ Time to contemplate/ Damn, where did I fail?/ All the money I stacked was all
the money for bail. ("Biggie Smalls", *The New York Times*, 1994, in *Never Drank the
Kool-Aid*, op. cit.)

Let's get another thing straight!-like the angle that continues to have shortsighted individuals chasing ghosts about why powder cocaine and crack are treated so differently. In the big dawgs' calculations, there is no reason to punish harshly the powder cocaine dealers and users in the same manner as the crack crowd.. Racism has not been the driving motive; rather it was the armed threat posed by these proto-cartels! The big dawgs witnessed a clear example of what might come by way of the Jamaican Posses that cropped up in the Black communities. These young men from the Jamaican and Caribbean diaspora were also a consequence of the degeneration of those regions' lower classes' attempts to throw off the economic and social effects of

their former slavery and colonial oppression. Led by the socialist Michael Manley and inspired by the revolutionary music of Bob Nesta Marley (which can be glimpsed in the later movies, *Marked for Death* with Steven Segal, and *Belly* with DMX and Nas), the Jamaican Posses were the Black Mafia on steroids! Moreover, despite their quasi-religious nationalism and their ability to operate with heavily armed soldiers in the U.S. and the Caribbean, their ten thousand or so members were nothing compared to the hundreds of thousands in the wings of the Black and Brown communities!

The cry from the big dawgs' mouthpieces in Congress was about the gunplay, not so much the drugs. What was not said, however, was the big dawgs' anxieties about stopping these gun-slingers before they got over their mental blocks about using their weapons against the police-or the system. Stop them while they're hung up on imitating their Hollywood and Euro-Mafia icons who made a mantra out of not using their weapons against the police. Indeed, with a few exceptions, the Second Wave allowed itself to be disarmed and carted off to prison like pussycats!

In addition, to appease some of the conservative segments in the U.S. which were upset about capitalism's globalization drive, the big dawgs dangled the prospect of thousands of new jobs for the rural communities which were being destroyed by it (hence, the Prison Industrial Complex and its neo-slavery).

Therefore, we must struggle against the shortsighted idea that racism alone is the driving motive which has fueled the construction of the Prison Industrial Complex.

Instead, if you do a follow-up and add your own research, you'll be able to document the who, when, where and how the big dawgs set everything in motion; as well as how they continue to use us as pawns in their giant international con game.

Conclusion

Ask yourself the following questions:

1. How can we salvage anything from how the people of the First and Second Waves allowed their search for respect and dignity to degenerate into gangsterism?
2. In what ways can we help the Next Wave avoid our mistakes?
3. What can we do to contribute to documenting who the real big dawgs are behind the drug trade?
4. Why have they never been held accountable?
5. How come our families and communities have been the only ones to suffer?
6. How can we overcome our brainwashing?
7. How can we truly gain respect and dignity?
8. In what ways can we atone for our wrongs and redeem ourselves, families, and communities?
9. What are some ways to fight for restitution and reparations for all of those harmed by the government-imposed undercover drug tax?

10. How can we overturn the 13th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and finally abolish legal slavery in the U.S.?

Once you answer those questions and begin to move to materialize your conclusions, then you will have made the choice between Liberation or Gangsterism: Freedom or Slavery.

Things to Read

1. The Wretched of the Earth, Frantz Fanon (an in-depth explanation of what the oppressed must do in order to gain true respect and dignity)
2. We Want Freedom, Mumia Abu-Jamal
3. Assata, Assata Shakur
4. A Taste of Power, Elaine Brown
5. Blood in My Eye, George Jackson
6. Liberation, Imagination and the Black Panther Party, Kathleen Cleaver and G. Katsifias, eds.
7. Black Brothers, Inc.: The Violent Rise and Fall of Philadelphia's Black Mafia
8. Monster: The Autobiography of a L.A. Gang Member, Sanyika Shakur (From gangster into liberator)
9. Dark Alliance, Gary Webb (documents how the CIA introduced crack into the U.S.)
10. Lost History, Robert Parry (an even more in-depth expose of the CIA and cocaine)
11. Down by the River: Drugs, Money, Murder and Family, Charles Bowden (the U.S. and Mexican governments' partnership with the drug cartels)
12. Inspector General's First and Final Reports on Iran-Contra and the Illegal Drug Trade, posted on the CIA's official website (the U.S. government's admissions about its dealing drugs)
13. We Are Our Own Liberators, Jalil Muntaquim
14. Beyond Smoke and Mirrors: Mexican Immigration, D.S. Hassey, Jorge Durand and Nolan J. Malone (how the Mexican economy collapsed while the Drug Enforcement Administration admitted that 85% of the drugs shipped from Mexico got across the U.S. border-with no action taken)

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