

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-01711-4 - In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio, Second Edition

Philippe Bourgois

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In Search of Respect

Second Edition

Philippe Bourgois's ethnographic study of social marginalization in inner-city America won critical acclaim when it was first published in 1995. For the first time, an anthropologist had managed to gain the trust and long-term friendship of street-level drug dealers in one of the nation's roughest ghetto neighborhoods – East Harlem. This new edition adds a prologue describing the major dynamics that have altered life on the streets of East Harlem in the years since the first edition. In a new epilogue, Bourgois brings up to date the stories of the people – Primo, Caesar, Luis, Tony, Candy – whom readers come to know in this remarkable window onto the world of the inner-city drug trade.

Philippe Bourgois is Professor and Chair of the Department of Anthropology, History and Social Medicine at the University of California, San Francisco. He has conducted fieldwork in Central America on ethnicity and social unrest and is the author of *Ethnicity at Work: Divided Labor on a Central American Banana Plantation* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989). With photographer Jeff Schonberg he is writing a book on homeless heroin addicts in San Francisco.

<http://www.ucsf.edu/dahsm/pages/faculty/bourgois.html>

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[More information](#)*Praise for the . . .*FIRST EDITION OF *IN SEARCH OF RESPECT*

“A poignant and riveting description of the violent world of crack dealers in East Harlem. Once I began reading this book I could not put it down.”

– William Julius Wilson, Lewis P. and Linda L. Geyser
University Professor at Harvard University

“Remarkable field research. . . . Philippe Bourgois . . . lived for three and a half years in a tenement apartment in East Harlem – otherwise known as El Barrio – studying the culture, the mores, the values, the behavior, the fears, and the self-inflicted wounds of several members of a gang of drug dealers with whom he patiently established close relations.”

– Richard Bernstein, *The New York Times*

“With this devastating ethnography of the raw realities of the crack trade on the streets of Spanish Harlem, Bourgois lays bare the struggle for individual dignity amidst collective destitution in the underbelly of the richest society on earth. He offers a powerful indictment of the United States, exposing the country’s dirty secret of savage inequality and state neglect. This book is a red-hot gauntlet thrown in the face of the national mythology of the American dream to reveal its twin: the real nightmare of Darwinian violence.”

– Loïc Wacquant, University of California-Berkeley and Centre de sociologie européenne du Collège de France

“This explosive book is not for the gentle reader or the faint of heart. Bourgois invents a new genre – an ‘up in your face’ anthropology. Hello, America – where ‘hard working’ low-income crack dealers engage in the only work for which they have the qualifications, while they dream of reentering a legal job market that is decisively closed to them. Bourgois invites readers to confront a culture of violence, terror, and death that is just a few subway stops from the Metropolitan Museum of Art. . . . Though Bourgois is brutally honest and refuses to sanitize the ugliness or let his crack-selling subjects off the hook, after one reads the merciless life stories told to the constant background of gunshots, he makes it hard to blame these mixed-up aggressors who are also the victims of America’s failed promises.”

– Nancy Scheper-Hughes, author of *Death Without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil*

“Philippe Bourgois’s profoundly disturbing book dispels much of the received wisdom on this sector of society. No other account combines so insightfully a structural assessment of their way of life with their own understanding of their circumstances.”

– Eric R. Wolf, Distinguished Professor of Anthropology,
City University of New York

“[The book] offers one of the most closely observed accounts we are likely to get of the urban crack scene. It is not an attractive world and Bourgois – hearing stories

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of gang rape as an accepted rite of adolescent passage, seeing mothers casually pushing strollers into crack houses, and witnessing the calculated use of violence as an accepted business practice – does not hesitate to express his disgust. At the same time, Bourgois seeks to understand the sources of such behavior. . . . A fascinating account.”

– Michael Massing, *The New York Review of Books*

“*In Search of Respect* . . . brings the lives of these crack sellers into brilliant focus. Bourgois’s raw and poignant book delivers a message about the economics of exclusion that should shake public perceptions of the inner-city drug trade. For anyone interested in the brutal truth about drug dealing in our inner cities, *In Search of Respect* is the place to look.”

– Greg Donaldson, *The Washington Post*

“Vigorous and often harrowing, this book is an eye-opener.”

– *Kirkus Review*

“The beauty of the book is in the author’s sharing of his academic mind with the organic intellect of the people who are forced to live in ghettos for economic reasons. Philippe has put together between two covers the harsh reality of the streets. . . . *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio* is must reading for those who care to learn.”

– Piri Thomas, poet and author of *Down These Mean Streets*

“Bourgois spent hundreds of nights with a handful of small-time, mainly Nuyorican dealers and, as they got high and recovered from the daily grind, recorded their comments about work, politics, sexuality, substance abuse, and style. . . . The crack dealers’ talk – ribald, morbid, and improvisatory – crackles with a brio that would be the envy of Quentin Tarantino.”

– Adam Shatz, *The Nation*

“Once in awhile, a new book will offer up a rich, deep, interesting, even exciting look at the entrenched, complex social problems that plague the country’s most troubled urban neighborhoods. Philippe Bourgois’s book does just that.”

– Marjorie Valbrun, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*

“An intimate, disturbing portrait of an alternate world in which the crack-dealing and -using minority dominates public space. . . . The author does not absolve his subjects of individual responsibility, but he compellingly concludes that drugs are more a symptom than the root of the problem: class and ethnic ‘apartheid.’”

– *Publishers Weekly*

“[The book] intercuts five years’ worth of interviews with Puerto Rican crack dealers in New York’s El Barrio district with popular press and scholarly research on informal economies and immigrant communities, as well as numerous informative yet unobtrusive statistics. . . . For Bourgois, the dealers’ main problem is not lack of skills – they manage a complex system involving marketing, distribution of resources, and human relations – but rather their lack of ‘cultural capital’ – literacy, savvy in handling city agencies, or the ability to switch between the street and white-collar worlds.”

– Carolina Gonzalez, *The San Francisco Bay Guardian*

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Structural Analysis in the Social Sciences

Mark Granovetter, editor

The series *Structural Analysis in the Social Sciences* presents approaches that explain social behavior and institutions by reference to *relations* among such concrete entities as persons and organizations. This contrasts with at least four other popular strategies: (a) reductionist attempts to explain by a focus on individuals alone; (b) explanations stressing the causal primacy of such abstract concepts as ideas, values, mental harmonies, and cognitive maps (thus, “structuralism” on the Continent should be distinguished from structural analysis in the present sense); (c) technological and material determinism; (d) explanations using “variables” as the main analytic concepts (as in the “structural equation” models that dominated much of the sociology of the 1970s), where structure is that connecting variables rather than actual social entities.

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Mark Granovetter

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For Emiliano

Born Anew at Each A.M.

The street's got its kicks, man,
 like a bargain shelf.
 In fact, cool-breeze, it's got
 love like anywhere else.

Vaya!

It's got lights that shine up the dark
 like new.
 It sells what you don't need
 and never lets you forget
 what you blew.

It's got high-powered
 salesmen who push *mucho* junk,
 and hustlers who can swallow you
 up in a chunk.
 Aha, check it out.

It's got out beautiful children
 living in all kinds of hell,
 hoping to survive and making it well,
 swinging together in misty darkness
 with all their love to share
 smiling their Christ-like forgiveness
 that only a ghetto cross can bear.
 Oh, yeah, *vaya*, check it out!

Hey, the street's got life, man,
 like a young tender sun,
 and gentleness
 like a long awaited dream to come
Oye, vaya, check it out.

The children are roses,
 with nary a thorn.
 Forced to feel racist scorn.

Ha, ha, *vaya*, check it out!

Our children are beauty
 with the right to be born.
 Born anew at each A.M.
 like a child out of twilight
 flying towards sunlight
 born anew at each A.M.

Punto!

Puri Thomas

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book could not have been written without my friends and neighbors in El Barrio who welcomed me so openly and generously. I changed everyone's name and camouflaged the street addresses to protect individual privacy. Above all, I thank my close friend whom I have called Primo in these pages. He followed my work since the beginning, and he guided much of it. His comments, corrections, and discussions on the half-dozen versions of the manuscript that he read and/or listened to were most helpful. The other major character, whom I have called Caesar, also provided me with analytical insights and critiques on various early drafts of this book. Similarly, Candy was extraordinarily helpful and supportive throughout the fieldwork process and in the early stages of writing. María provided me with comments and moral support right through the final phases of writing the book. More recently, Esperanza and Jasmine, who appear only in the epilogue to this second edition, greatly facilitated my follow-up visits to El Barrio by making me feel warmly welcome in their homes and among their extended families following the publication of the first edition.

I also want to thank the following institutions for their generous financial support: the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation, the Russell Sage Foundation, the Social Science Research Council, the Ford Foundation, the National Institute on Drug Abuse (grants RO1 DA10164 and RO3 DA06413), the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, the United States Bureau of the Census, and at San Francisco State University Marilyn Boxer, Brian Murphy, and Joe Julian. I appreciated having institutional research affiliations with The Research Institute for the Study of Man, the Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños of Hunter College, Columbia University's School of Architecture and Urban Planning, and San Francisco State University's Urban Institute and Anthropology

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Department. Of course, I am most grateful for the faculty position I hold in the Department of Anthropology, History, and Social Medicine at the University of California, San Francisco, which provides me with the long-term financial and logistical security that permits me to write books on social suffering and injustice in the United States.

I am grateful to Marc Edelman, Robert Merton, and the late Eric Wolf, who gave generously of their time to provide me with detailed critiques of substantial portions of the manuscript. No one comes close, however, to the brilliance, precision, and inspired obsession of Loïc Wacquant when it comes to editing text and critiquing intellectual argument. The first half of this book was practically rewritten by him in a forty-eight-hour nonstop binge of editing that only he would have the energy, clarity of mind, and delicacy of plume to deliver just in time. Dozens of other friends, students, colleagues, and mentors also read drafts of this book – or at least heard portions of its central arguments. Many useful insights or points of information were conveyed to me in informal conversations after seminars, classes, and conferences, or even at parties. Some of the feedback was critical, and I did not always incorporate it in the text, but I am thankful for its constructive engagement. In this vein, I thank the late Pierre Bourdieu, who made possible the French translation of this book in his series, and who, more importantly, provided so much clarity and inspiration with his critique of the practice of symbolic power in reproducing hierarchy; Karen Colvard, John Devine, Amy Donovan, Eloise Dunlap, Angelo Falcon, Jerry Floersch, Charles Hale, Arthur Kleinman, Antonio Lauria-Petrocelli, Gloria Levitas, Roberto Lewis-Fernandez, Jeff Longhofer, Peter Lucas, Susan Meiselas, Jim Quesada, Clara Rodriguez, the late Ulysses Santamaria, Saskia Sassen, Nancy Scheper-Hughes, Carol Smith, Carl Taylor, Frank Vardi, Joel Wallman, Eric Wanner, Terry Williams, William Julius Wilson, and my grandmother, the late Peggy Regler.

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Reading Piri Thomas's *Down These Mean Streets* when I was in high school planted the seed for this book. I owe him a great debt for making me confront poverty, racism, and drugs in the city where I grew up. It is a special honor and pleasure for me, consequently, to have his permission to publish in the front the fax he sent me after reading a manuscript version of this book.

Finally, I want to thank my family. I will always be grateful to Charo Chacón-Méndez for immigrating from Costa Rica directly to El Barrio, where we married at the very beginning of this research project. Her help was invaluable during our residence in the neighborhood. I apologize for imposing so much anxiety on her when I regularly stayed out all night on the street, and in crackhouses, for so many years. I hope that is not one of the reasons we are no longer together. If it is, I regret it profoundly. Our son, Emiliano (Nano), loved El Barrio. He was never intimidated by the street. His cerebral palsy was first diagnosed when we had no health insurance by a brusque, harried intern in a free clinic a few blocks from our tenement. I suspect that Nano's tremendous self-confidence, and his wonderful social skills, were partially forged by the success with which he carved respect for himself from even the toughest street hustlers on our block. He melted everyone's heart while proudly learning to use his walker over broken sidewalks littered with crack vials. Better yet, all through the often frustrating process, full of scrapes and tumbles, Nano exuded that magical joy-of-living that only two-and-something-year-olds know the secret to. He helped me appreciate some of the joys of life on the street. The bright flash in his eyes continues to guide me a dozen years later as he enters adolescence full of energy, appreciation, and empathy for most everyone around him.

My mother and father were also supportive throughout the research and writing of this book. I am sure I was deeply shaped by the fact that my

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mother violated apartheid almost every weekday during the 1980s through the 1990s while working with literacy programs in the South Bronx. In the same vein, my father provided me with the wonderful experience of growing up as a New Yorker in a bicultural household. His “typically French” trenchant criticisms of U.S. culture, and especially his abhorrence of the excesses of racism and class inequality in New York City, were a wonderful antidote to the stultifying ideological perspectives that bombarded those of us who grew up at the height of the Cold War in the United States. Perhaps the fact that he escaped on June 7, 1944, from I. G. Farben Community Camp Dwory at Auschwitz instilled in me a commitment to document institutionalized racism in my own lifetime, especially in my own hometown. He may also have first sensitized me to addiction when I was a teenager by telling me, as we were sharing a cigarette, “I was one of the stupid ones in the camps who used to trade his bread for tobacco.” More importantly, my father’s ongoing humble outrage over the fact that so many of those living directly downwind from the Auschwitz gas chambers – himself included – managed to either ignore or joke about the smell of burning human flesh at the height of the Holocaust motivated me, I think, to write this book on the everyday violence of U.S. apartheid at the turn of the twenty-first century.

– *University of California, San Francisco*
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PREFACE TO THE 2003 SECOND EDITION

In the seven years since the first edition of this book went to press in the fall of 1995, four major dynamics altered the tenor of daily life on the streets of East Harlem and deeply affected the lives of the crack dealers and their families depicted in these pages: 1) The U.S. economy entered the most prolonged period of sustained growth in its recorded history; 2) the size of the Mexican immigrant population in New York City and especially in East Harlem increased dramatically; 3) the war on drugs escalated into a quasi-official public policy of criminalizing and incarcerating the poor and the socially marginal; and 4) drug fashion trends among inner-city youth rendered marijuana even more popular and crack and heroin even less popular among Latinos and African Americans.

In 2002, crack, cocaine, and heroin were still sold on the block where I lived, but they were sold less visibly by a smaller number of people. It was still easy to purchase narcotics throughout East Harlem, but much of the drug dealing had moved indoors, out of sight of the police. There were fewer small-time hawkers competing openly on street corners, shouting out the brand names of their drugs. Most importantly, heroin and crack continued to be spurned by Latino and African American youth who had witnessed as children the ravages that those drugs committed on the older generations in their community. Recovered crack addicts in New York City even developed a new genre of autobiographical literature (Stringer, 1998; S. and Bolnick, 2000). Nevertheless, in the U.S. inner city there remained an aging hard-core cohort of addicts. It is difficult to trust the accuracy of surveys on drugs that are conducted over the telephone by government-sponsored interviewers, but the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, which has been conducted every year in the United States since 1994, did not report a decrease in "frequent crack use" during the 1990s (Substance

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Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2000). Hospital emergency room and arrest statistics, however, reported dramatically decreasing cocaine-positive blood tests among males during the late 1990s through the year 2000 (CESAR FAX, 2001).

In most large cities, crack was most visibly ensconced in predominantly African American neighborhoods on the poorest blocks. Crack sales spots often continued to be located in or near large public housing projects, vacant lots, and abandoned buildings. In New York City, Puerto Rican households also continued to be at the epicenter of the ongoing cyclone of crack consumption – even if it was more self-contained than it used to be.

In contrast to crack, heroin consumption increased in many cities during the latter half of the 1990s and early 2000s. Throughout most of the United States, heroin became cheaper and purer, belying any claims that the U.S. war on drugs was winnable. Heroin's new appeal, however, was primarily among younger whites outside the ghetto for whom crack was not a drug of choice. Heroin, especially in intravenous form, remained unpopular among Latino and African American youth in the inner city. In East Harlem, crack- and heroin-copping corners in the year 2001 appeared to be almost geriatric scenes, with the average age of addicted clients hovering in their late thirties through late forties and early fifties.

To summarize, in 2002 both heroin and crack continued to be multibillion-dollar businesses that ravaged inner-city families with special virulence. The younger generations of East Harlem residents, however, were more involved as sellers than as consumers. Those Latino and African American youth who did use crack or heroin generally tried to hide the fact from their friends. We understand poorly why drug fashions change so markedly, but at the opening of the twenty-first century, we were lucky in the United States that for more than a dozen years, marijuana and malt liquor beer had been the substances of choice for use and abuse by African American and Latino youth who participate in street culture (Golub and Johnson, 1999).

More important than changing drug-consumption fashions or the posturing of politicians over drug war campaigns was the effect of the dramatic long-term improvement in the U.S. economy, which resulted in record low rates of unemployment in the late 1990s. Somewhat to my surprise, some of the crack dealers and their families featured in this book benefited from this sustained economic growth spurt, at least up to its nosedive in 2001–02. Slightly less than half of the characters in this book managed to enter the

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lower echelons of the legal labor market prior to the 2001–02 economic downturn. I outline this with greater personal details in the new epilogue to this second edition, but to provide a brief overview during the 2001–02 recession: One dealer was a unionized doorman, another a home health-care attendant, another a plumber's assistant. Three others were construction workers for small-time unlicensed contractors. One was a cashier in a discount tourist souvenir store. Two of the sisters of the crack dealers depicted in this book were nurses aides and another was a secretary. One of the women companions of one of the crack dealers was a bank teller, another was a security guard, and a third sold Avon products. One of the sons of the dealers was a cashier in a fast food restaurant, while another sold drugs and yet another two were incarcerated for the sale of drugs and petty burglary, respectively. Three or four of the dealers were still selling drugs, but most of them were selling marijuana instead of crack or heroin. Another three of the dealers were in prison with long-term sentences and, ironically, were probably employed at well below minimum wage in the burgeoning prison-based manufacturing sector.

In short, the dramatic improvement in the U.S. economy in the late 1990s forced employers and unions to integrate increasing numbers of marginalized Puerto Ricans and African Americans into the labor market. This represented a structural contrast to the late 1980s and early 1990s when the research for this book was conducted and the economy was weaker. Nevertheless, even at the height of the surge in the U.S. economy in the summer of 2000, a large sector of street youth found themselves excluded. These marginals had become almost completely superfluous to the legal economy; they remained enmeshed in a still lucrative drug economy, a burgeoning prison system, and a quagmire of chronic substance abuse and everyday interpersonal violence. From a long-term political and economic perspective, the future did not bode well for the inner-city poor of New York, irrespective of the shorter-term fluctuations in the national and regional economy, as was evidenced by the economic downturn following the September 11, 2001, World Trade Center disaster. In the year 2000, the United States had the largest disparity between rich and poor of any industrialized nation in the world – and this gap was increasing rather than decreasing (*New York Times*, September 26, 2001:A12; see also U.S. Census Bureau, 2001). At a more local level, over the last three decades of the twentieth century, the state of New York suffered the largest growth in income inequality of all fifty states in the nation (*New York Times*, January 19, 2000:B5).

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A side effect of New York's strong but poorly paid entry-level employment market was the accelerated immigration of undocumented Mexicans fleeing rural poverty, who were prepared to work hard for poverty wages. When I left the neighborhood in 1991, Mexican immigration was, of course, already extremely visible, and I discussed the rising violent tensions between young Puerto Ricans and new Mexican immigrants. In the original epilogue to the English edition written in late 1994 and included in this edition, I provide statistics on the rapid rise in the local Mexican population. This increase proceeded at an even faster pace during the second half of the 1990s and was palpably visible on the street where I lived. In 1991 on the blocks immediately surrounding me, there were at least three buildings entirely occupied by Mexican new immigrants (not to mention two by rural Senegalese new immigrants). On one of my recent return visits to prepare the preface for this second edition, I found that an entire block (next to the one where I lived) had "become Mexican." Throughout the rest of East Harlem, dozens of Mexican restaurants and specialty grocery stores were visible. In contrast, when I resided there, I knew of only one Mexican restaurant and it did not sport a sign, presumably because it was not licensed to sell food. In short, yet another new wave of ethnic succession was remaking East Harlem at the dawn of the twenty-first century on the fringes of the U.S. economy, but striving for the American Dream.

Throughout East Harlem, new small businesses in the year 2002 were visible on formerly boarded-up, abandoned blocks. On the block where I lived, for example, the revitalization that I described as incipient in 1994 had accelerated significantly. The garbage-strewn lot, which had stood vacant for well over a dozen years on one side of the apartment where I lived, was occupied by a row of newly constructed four-story tenements. The large, abandoned building on the other side of my tenement, which had been burned down ten years before I moved onto the block, was a renovated halfway house for mothers recovering from substance abuse. There were five new legal businesses on the block: two hairdressers, a video rental store, a Chinese takeout restaurant, and a pizzeria.

Only one of the two original grocery stores on the block still sold drugs and its sales were limited to marijuana. Heroin could still be obtained on the corner, purer than ever, but no longer from three competing brand-name companies. At night, the working class majority of the population still ceded much of their control of public space to drug dealers and addicts, just as they had in the late 1980s and early 1990s when I lived there.

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Overall, however, the significantly strengthened economy, buttressed by the coincidences of evolving drug fashions and the logic of large-scale, low-wage labor migration streams, had reinvigorated working class culture on the street, decreasing the destructive magnetism of drugs, crime, and violence for those pursuing upward mobility.

In contrast to the invigorating effects on the neighborhood of private sector growth and of undocumented working class migration, the U.S. public sector continued its policy of malign neglect toward the inner city, especially toward Latino and African American neighborhoods. During the 1990s, the formerly underfunded and rachitic U.S. social welfare safety net was refurbished into an expensive, rigorous, criminal dragnet. The already enormous U.S. penal system grew vertiginously to become a bona fide criminal industrial complex larger in the year 2000 in relative per capita terms than that of any other nation in the world except Russia and Rwanda. The U.S. incarceration rate doubled during the 1990s; it was six to twelve times higher than that of any of the nations in the European Union (Wacquant, 1999:72). The sheer mass of people locked up assumed an aura of apartheid when one examines the racial disparities involved (Wacquant, 2000). According to objective statistical probability, one in three African American males could expect to be incarcerated in their lifetime, compared to one in twenty-five white males and one in six Latinos. The ethnic disparities in incarceration rates were driven in the 1990s and 2000s by the "War on Drugs." African Americans were twenty times more likely to be incarcerated on drug offenses than were whites. In New York State, where 89 percent of the prisoners are African American or Latino, this carceral segregation is even more dramatic (Macallair and Taqi-Eddin, 1999).

The mayor of New York City from 1993 to 2001, Rudolph Giuliani, became known worldwide for promoting a zero-tolerance approach to petty crime, implementing the notorious "fixing broken windows" policy (Kelling and Coles, 1996). He targeted "quality-of-life crimes," which meant aggressively arresting beggars, window washers, fare dodgers on the subway, and black and Latino youth dressed in hip hop style who loitered on the street. This policy came at a high cost in human rights violations due to a dramatic increase in racially targeted police brutality culminating in public scandals, such as the torture of a Haitian immigrant who was repeatedly sodomized with a broken broom stick by police interrogators in a precinct office, and the murder of an unarmed Guinean immigrant who was shot forty-one times in the foyer of his own apartment building.

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New York's get-tough-on-crime policy was also extraordinarily expensive. The number of New York City police dramatically increased by more than 7,000 officers in the 1990s to 40,000, the largest in its history, even as the budgets for health, education, foster child care, public education, and so on were streamlined. During the 1990s, New York State spent more than \$4.5 billion building new prisons. This figure does not include operating costs, which in 1998 ran \$32,000 per inmate per year in the upstate prisons and more than \$66,000 per capita per year on Riker's Island, New York City's municipal jail (Camp and Camp, 1998).

Proponents of repressive drug enforcement policy point to significantly reduced crime rates in New York City during the late 1990s. They fail to note, however, that New York did not lower its crime rate significantly more than those cities that did not criminalize street people or increase police arrest rates. In fact, statisticians have calculated that states that increased their prison populations the most in the 1990s benefited from a smaller reduction in crime rate than those states with below-average increases in incarceration (*New York Times*, September 28, 2000). Most importantly, crime in New York, as well as throughout the nation, had already begun dropping in the years before the New York City's mayor's get-tough-on-crime measures were instituted in 1994. Policy analysts who crunch numbers argue that the overall improvement of the economy and the demographic shifts that have reduced the number of eighteen- to twenty-year-olds have had a far larger effect on decreasing crime rates than have changes in crime-control strategies (Blumstein and Wallman, 2000). Academic and statistical policy critiques notwithstanding, New York City policing became a triumphant symbol for neoliberal solutions to urban plight: "locking up petty delinquents and especially addicts" and "criminalizing misery" (Wacquant, 1999:74, 151). The unsightliness of the poor living in crisis was removed from white, middle class public space in the city. With the festering signs of social suffering safely sanitized, property values soared and tourism reached record highs.

Almost surprisingly, most of the dealers I befriended, with the exception of the younger, inexperienced, and more violent ones, have managed to avoid incarceration. The immediate concrete effect of the escalation in the war on drugs in the late 1990s on the lives of the major characters in this book has been the strict enforcement of federal public housing one-strike-you're-out rulings by New York City officials. The presence of a felon in a household living in public housing in the mid-1990s became

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legal cause for all the members of that household to be evicted, no matter their age or level of social vulnerability. Many cities have not chosen to enforce this federal edict aggressively, but New York City did. Most of the dealers consequently were evicted from their homes, usually with their extended families; most – including the two main characters in this book – were forced to move out of Manhattan or even out of state. Throughout New York City, grandparents found themselves on the street for sheltering their grandson or granddaughter on their living room couch. It did not matter that a grandmother may have been senile and was unaware of the criminal activity of her grandchild or was perhaps intimidated by the child (cf. *New York Times*, March 27, 2002). Most dramatically, because of New York's unconditional enforcement of one-strike-you're-out, in three separate cases newborns whose mothers allowed dealers (who are major characters in this book) to live with them ended up taking refuge in homeless shelters or doubling up in the living rooms of relatives.

The most troubling trend is the ongoing pattern of destruction befalling most of the children of the crack dealers in this book. I have returned to New York at least once or twice a year since the publication of the first edition of this book. I seek out the characters from the book to say hello and catch up on the old days. On my follow-up visits I have had a chance to meet, as budding adolescents and subsequently as young adults, the former children of the crack dealers, many of whom appear only occasionally in these pages. Spending time with these children provided me with yet another glimpse of the chronic social suffering that continued to be generated in East Harlem despite any positive fluctuation in the economy, and despite the decrease in youthful hard-drug consumption. The most vulnerable inner-city residents are the children of children. They are chewed up and spit out by the American Dream, only to find themselves recycled a dozen or so years later at extraordinary financial and human cost into the prison industrial complex.

San Francisco, April 2002