

INTRODUCTION

In the dangerous underbelly of South-side Jamaica, a neighborhood in Queens, New York, death is lurking around every street-corner. Survival of the fittest is the name of the game. And the losers are either dead, in jail, or strung out on drugs. The winners are lucky to be alive. It doesn't matter which side you represent. For better or worse, everyone needs an exit strategy. But escaping the madness of being broke is difficult in a place where predators prey on the weak. Death or imprisonment is guaranteed to those who make one wrong move when trying to get ahead. And the local police department is on standby, waiting for that to happen.

Crime is valued as the best way of escaping the insanity of poverty. But the law-abiding citizens think otherwise. Without them, all hope would be lost. And the idea of getting money, as much as one can get, gives hope to the have-nots. Some, residing in housing projects, are stacked on top of each other like sardines in a can. They understand the struggle, and they hate the system for creating it. But they have no choice but to make something out of nothing. Their hardworking parents are trying their best to raise them right. But many of the parents are juggling two to three jobs to make ends meet. So they do what they can: providing food, shelter, and clothing. But the rest is left for their children to overcome. But instead of getting their high school diplomas, some of the children are out in the streets receiving their bachelor's and master's degrees in selling drugs and shooting automatic weapons at each other. So the future seems dim when they look out of their project windows. All they see is misery, knowing that hopelessness is not too far behind. Eventually, they spiral out of control because peer pressure is their greatest obstacle. And they would rather kill themselves than to be labeled uncool, because where they are from, nerds are considered clowns, but in reality, the nerds are the brains of the world.