

BORN AND RAISED  
IN THE STREETS OF

# Compton

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Rowe Publishing

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## PREFACE

This is a book that is not to be taken lightly; it is a rich history of betrayal, hate, intraracial violence, love, and deception backed by concrete facts. Not one incident or thought is that of fiction. Many of the negative events that occur within this story have been changed in regards to time and place. This is done in order to protect those who were living in their time of ignorance. The violence within this work is to be examined, challenged, and cured. This can only be achieved by us, the true soldiers of the struggle ~ a struggle that will prove to culminate in the battle of all battles.

# INTRODUCTION

**B***orn and Raised in the Streets of Compton* is a true story based upon many events among the urban black youth growing up amidst poverty in the notorious city of Compton, California, a place where the navigation of daily life for young black men is, literally, a never ending tightrope between life and death.

This story follows the path of a second generation Crip member, who weaves his journey into the context of the United States sociological history and governmental action that propagated the birth and escalation of gangs and gang violence, now careening out of control. This work represents the personal history of a young black man's struggle in the context of racism, poverty, and violence.

This book also serves as a valuable historical resource. Included in this work is a report that was released by the United States Senate Select Committee on COINTELPRO's activities against the Black Panther Party and Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1975, along with another report that outlined a plot to dismantle stability in the black community. Finally added, is a historical break-down of the evolution of street gangs from the 1930's to the present, which includes a complete compilation of gangs and gang territories in the United States as well as statistical material and an extensive reference listing.

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# The Rites of Passage

*In these bloody days and frightful nights when an urban warrior can find no face more despicable than his own, no ammunition more deadly than self-hate, and no target more deserving of his true aim than his brother, we must wonder how we came so late and lonely to this place...*

— Maya Angelou, August 1965

“**B**oy, get yo’ ass outta’ that window!” screamed Michael’s mother, as the sounds of gunfire rang in a rising crescendo just outside of his bedroom window.

“Aw Mom, you never let me have any fun.”

“Yo stupid butt won’t think it’s any fun when one of those bullets slams into your little black ass!”

As Michael stepped away from the window, reality began to take a firm hold of him. It was August 11, the summer of 1965, in Watts, Los Angeles, California, where he experienced the sight of death firsthand. This deadly cycle of death was much different from what

he had viewed upon their old raggedy black and white television in those episodes of *The Fugitive* (1963-1967, see Appendix) and *The F.B.I.* The faces he now viewed were somewhat familiar. They were like the faces of people to whom his parents had considered friends, people he often saw, hanging around alleyways, sitting upon wooden crates playing dominoes, and drinking cheap Silver Satin wine, while others stood around in front of the stores begging for some pocket change ~ pimps and hustlers, all of whom he considered his peers were now either dead or dying. For what reason, he didn't know.

Michael suddenly ran through his living room and into the kitchen where his mother was and asked, "Why is everyone shootin,' and why are they burning the stores and other buildings on Central Avenue?" (See Appendix).

"It's just another one of those riots boy, so keep yo' little ass in here."

But to Michael's eight-year-old mind, what was happening outside of his home was more than a riot. The prophecy of God destroying the world by fire was coming true, and black people were out in the streets trying to stop God from prevailing by shooting up everything that represented the devil. After all, every time Michael heard black folks speak about white people they referred to them as being devils and things, so to his young mind that's what they were. Black people were out there in the streets fighting in the battle of Armageddon ~ and losing.

"But why are they rioting?" he asked his mother.

"Because things have been bad lately for us black people, and we're tired of it, so we're fighting back."

"Why ain't you out there fighting?"

"I'm not fighting because men do the fighting."

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“Daddy ain’t out there.”

“Boy, you know your daddy is a working man, plus if he was out there fighting and got himself killed, who’s gonna take care of us?”

Trying to sound grown, he replied, “Me.”

“How?” his mother asked.

“Pimping, or I’ll be a gangsta’ just like Ms. Johnson’s son.”

Turning to face him, his mother grabbed him by the shoulders and asked, “Boy, who put that shit in yo’ head?”

“No...nobody, I mean everybody who don’t have any money is either hustling or pimping, I see em’ do it every day, so if I had no father and we needed some money, I’d hustle for it.”

Letting go of him, Michael’s mother stood straight up, and from where she stood, she appeared to be about ten feet tall. From the look that was present in her eyes it seemed as if she was about to give him one of those good backhands to his forehead.

Stepping back a safe distance from her reach, he quickly said, “I ain’t done nuthin’!”

Taking a step toward him, his mother said, “Listen to me you little black-ass nigga. I ain’t raising you to be somebody’s damn ghetto thug, understand me?”

Confused, he replied, “But Mom, I haven’t done anything.”

“I know that boy, but I’m letting you know before you do, plus I don’t want your ass hangin’ wit’ those bad-ass little niggas at Will Rogers Park.”

“Ah, Mom, they are my friends, and they got my back at all times; plus they jumped on those boys who used to pick on me.”

“What boys?”



“You know...the boys who live in the Nickerson’s Garden projects.”

“I never knew about that.”

“Only a sissy runs to his momma with problems.”

“Who told you that, boy?”

“It’s the law of the streets,” he answered.

His mother suddenly stared at him as if he was a stranger. She couldn’t believe, that at eight years old, his mind was rapidly advancing faster than his body. And what she didn’t know was that by the time he would reach ten, he would have experienced everything from sex to murder.

Placing her index finger within inches of his nose, his mother said, “The only law that you’re gonna be following is mine, and if you think you’re too big to obey the laws of this house, then I’m gonna introduce yo’ ass to the laws of gravity, understand me?”

“Yes, Momma.”

“Now go clean up that funky-ass room of yours!”

Complying with her demand he quickly stepped out of the kitchen and within four steps, he was in his bedroom. The place they lived in was very small and cheap, and from what they later learned, the whole apartment building and the surrounding housing projects were built by the Southern Pacific Railroad Corporation. It was in an effort to keep its minority work force near the work site and out of the white community; a clever plan that is still in practice to this very day.

Doing what his mother asked, he began cleaning his room until he was startled by a loud crash that occurred just outside of his bedroom window. Cautiously, he moved toward the window until he was within inches of the curtains. Slowly, he pulled them back and saw a scene that would be a part of his memory for the rest of his life.

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Three white policemen were chasing three black youths in which one had fallen while the other two had escaped their pursuers by jumping over a nearby fence. The lone black youth that had fallen was immediately surrounded by the policemen who began beating him as he pleaded for his life. They were kicking, punching, and hitting him with everything they had. Hoping to put an end to this vicious assault, Michael cried out, "Hey, Momma! Hurry up! Come quick!"

"Fool, who do you think you are screaming at me like some raving lunatic!" responded his mother, as she appeared at the doorway of his room.

"Look," he screamed, gesturing toward the window.

Walking up to the window, Michael and his mother watched the next series of events in terror. She was awestruck as one of the policemen placed his foot on the back of the young child; the other policeman removed a large nightstick from his belt and quickly smashed it into the head of the youngster. Finally, the third policeman spat a wad of saliva upon the boy's fallen body while the other one said, "One less nigger to deal with and one less monkey to fry."

"Ain't that the title of a song?" asked one of the officers.

"I dunno, but it sho' sound good," answered one of the policeman, laughing as they left the bloody scene.

Michael and his mother were at a loss for words as the policemen exited their backyard. It seemed at that very moment they were replaying through their minds the chain of events that occurred before them ~ an event that had left a lasting impression upon Michael's psyche for years to come. In fact, many years later, as he reflected upon this episode, anger and hate would often build up inside of him. He remembered that day

as his first encounter with racism. At that point in his young life, he wanted to kill anyone that was white, and wore a uniform that represented the power structure which white people were sworn to protect, along with those who were known to be corrupt, and hiding behind badges, which gave them the authority to rape, maim, and kill at will.

Michael was also puzzled by the atrocities that black people suffered at the hands of others. During that time he couldn't understand why so many black people had allowed the white man to get away with what they had done to many of them, especially when cultural encounters were virtually unavoidable.

Every day, black people encountered white faces in stores, doctor offices, and on television ~ all smiling and saying nice things about them during the day, but calling them niggers at night. The ones who were bold enough to call them a nigger in their face did so because the black person in question was either out-of-bounds, wandering within the white man's neighborhood, or because they were packing a big gun, which some of them called their "niggerlizer."

Breaking the silence that had overwhelmed them, Michael turned to his mother and said, "Momma, we got to let people know what just happened."

Silently, his mother moved away from the window and pulled him out of his room and into the hallway where she said, in a quiet manner, "No one, absolutely no one can ever know about this."

"But, Mom!"

"No one!" she suddenly shouted.

Afraid, he slid away from her reach and said, "I'm telling daddy, he'll know what to do."

"Yo' daddy won't do nuthin' but git' us all killed, now is that what you want?"

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“But Momma, we ain’t done nuthin’ wrong.”

“That’s just it boy, those police are racist. They hate us black people, so bad that they’ll put the crime on us, so keep yo’ mouth shut!”

Nodding his head as if he understood, he slowly sat down upon their cold hardwood floor. Everything was happening much too fast for his young mind to comprehend. It did seem to him that when a black person got killed, nobody did anything about it, but let it be someone white, and you’d see the police kicking black people’s butts until they break weak.

As he grew older, he discovered that, in fear, black people would sell-out their own brothers and sisters to the police in an attempt to save the neighborhood from further unprovoked attacks. But the unfair practice against black people wouldn’t end there, because the police believed that when they were brutally beating black people, it was justified because they were protecting the American citizenry from the systematic violence of its niggers.

In other words, in the unseeing eyes of whites, black people didn’t rank as being a part of the human race. Like circus animals and toys, they were to be sold and distributed, used and totally abused. They had no political voice, and in some white people’s minds they had no souls. Blacks were regarded as nothing but a bunch of wild niggers ~ a piece of discarded garbage, hated and despised until death.

Suddenly looking up at his mother, Michael said, “I’m gonna keep my mouth shut for now; but later, I’m gonna git’ my weight up with my hate and pay em’ back when I’m bigger.”

Smiling, she said, “When you get bigger you can do all of that; but for right now, let me fix cha’ some of that fried chicken that you love so much.”

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Reluctantly, he got up and followed her into the kitchen. Like always, in every black household, community function, or event when a problem occurs, it was quickly resolved with a plate of fried chicken, black-eyed peas, and a piece of sweet potato pie. For most black people in general would call this action the great black copout. Everyone did it, and therefore it was an easy practice.