

# Ghettoside Summary

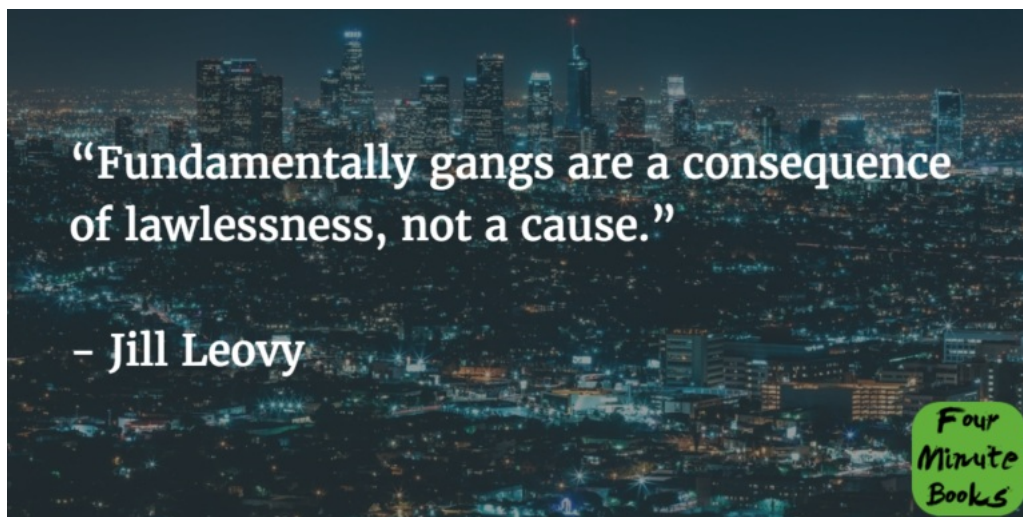
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 [fourminutebooks.com/ghettoside-summary](https://fourminutebooks.com/ghettoside-summary)

**1-Sentence-Summary:** *Ghettoside* explains the history of homicide in the United States and why particularly black communities struggle with high murder rates, as well as what can and must be done to change the status quo for the better.

**Read in:** 4 minutes

**Favorite quote from the author:**



Jill Leovy has been a reporter for the LA times for over 20 years. And in those two decades, for one of which she was crime correspondent, she witnessed not only the “homicide epidemic” sweeping through LA’s south, but also discovered that these crimes were poorly documented, turned into faceless statistics and in part, strategically swept under the rug.

The answer to this question is a highly complex one, but Jill has done a great job at answering it in *Ghettoside*. Let’s see if we can fit explain what’s going on in 3 lessons:

1. Black communities have a history of developing alternate justice systems, which causes crime rates to spike.
2. By focusing on crime prevention, the US police spend their money and energy on the wrong end of the problem.
3. Solving murder cases is the only way to restore peoples’ trust in the system.

Are you ready to jump to the Ghettoside to learn more about one of society’s biggest problems? Let’s go!

**Lesson 1:** Historically, black communities have developed their own, internal justice systems, which causes higher crime rates.

Usually, the state is the only institution that's allowed to use violence to ensure the law is held in place, for example by arresting people, breaking up fights and riots, or, worst case, fire back if someone runs amok. In an ideal world, the police wouldn't even have to use these measures. But even if our world isn't perfect, in most places where installed, this system works well.

However, because of the complicated history of black people in the United States, with all its racism and discrimination, the supremacist leaders in the late 1800s and early 1900s never made a big effort to popularize the state monopoly on violence model in black communities.

In turn, these black communities came up with their own, alternative systems of justice. Thus, **violence became a legitimate tool in solving your issues** – if you can't rely on the police to protect you, you might take matters in your own hands.

And because these systems replace the governmental law where in effect, they make it very hard for police to get access later. For example, the LAPD rarely gets people in South Central to talk about crimes, because being a "snitch" (=traitor) is a death sentence by the law of the street.

In essence, these problems don't cause disregard for the law, they're the result of no proper legal system having ever been put in place to begin with.

## Lesson 2: Because US police focuses on prevention, they approach the problem from the wrong end.

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The best way to deal with a problem is to prevent it, right? Technically, yes, but in this case prevention doesn't work. The LAPD has a strong tradition of patrolling, mass arrests and punishing little crimes, like possession of marijuana or shoplifting – all preventative measures.

In the case of the high homicide rates in LA though, this carries two problems:

1. **The people in charge of dealing with these bigger issues are underfunded and understaffed.** Detectives often can't solve cases, because they lack the staff, resources and time.
2. **The victims and their families disrespect the police even more,** because they punish them for trivialities, but don't seem to care about the real issues like violence and murder.

If people are so hopeless and desperate about the legal system that they've come up with and accepted their own jurisdiction, there's nothing to prevent any longer. You have to restore peoples' faith in the original system.

But how do you do that?

## Lesson 3: The only way to restore peoples' faith in the legal system is to start solving murder cases, no matter the race of the victim.

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Given the above, this might seem obvious, but with only 1 in 3 murder cases with a black victim solved, it's worth iterating.

**The police must start solving more murder cases, no matter the skin color of the victim.**

This would send a signal that the government cares about all its citizens equally, start mending the broken ties with local communities and begin to regain their trust.

With the dedication of more resources, aka money, people and time, this isn't even as massive of an effort as it might seem. Many murder cases are well publicized *within* the communities that they happen in, and with the right amount of pressure at the right points, information is easy to obtain (LAPD have even dubbed the local rumor network GIN – Ghetto Information Network – because it's so well-informed).

This of course a sensitive topic and one that's tough to draw attention to in the right way, but if we can pull it off, things don't have to be the way they've always been.

## Ghettoside Review

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I had no idea how big the gap in homicide cases was, this was really shocking. I knew from Freakonomics that Black communities had bigger problems with crime than their White counterparts, but I didn't know the disparity was this big and where it comes from. I love how logically and historically sensical Jill argued her way to the solution in Ghettoside and this is a topic that deserves a lot more attention than it gets, which makes this a definite recommend!

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## What else can you learn from the blinks?

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- How insanely high the murder rate of young black men got in the 90s at its peak
- What the acronym "NHI" stands for and how it shows LAPD's racism
- Which phrase is used to sweep a murder case under the rug
- How the history of alternative justice systems developed in the 20th century

## Who would I recommend the Ghettoside summary to?

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The 22 year old, who just moved to LA, and is afraid of becoming the victim of a crime, the 35 year old social worker, who deals with lots of different local communities, and anyone who doesn't feel protected by their local police.