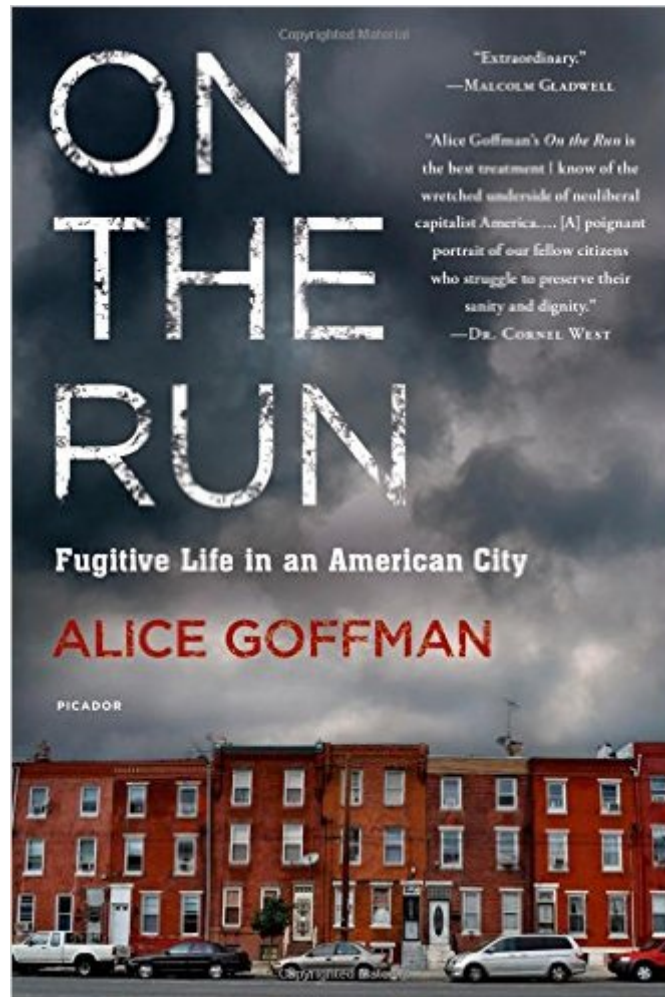


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On The Run: Fugitive Life In An American City



Synopsis

A RIVETING, GROUNDBREAKING ACCOUNT OF HOW THE WAR ON CRIME HAS TORN APART INNER-CITY COMMUNITIES

Forty years in, the tough on crime turn in American politics has spurred a prison boom of historic proportions that disproportionately affects Black communities. It has also torn at the lives of those on the outside. As arrest quotas and high tech surveillance criminalize entire blocks, a climate of fear and suspicion pervades daily life, not only for young men entangled in the legal system, but for their family members and working neighbors. Alice Goffman spent six years in one Philadelphia neighborhood, documenting the routine stops, searches, raids, and beatings that young men navigate as they come of age. In the course of her research, she became roommates with Mike and Chuck, two friends trying to make ends meet between low wage jobs and the drug trade. Like many in the neighborhood, Mike and Chuck were caught up in a cycle of court cases, probation sentences, and low level warrants, with no clear way out. We observe their girlfriends and mothers enduring raids and interrogations, "clean" residents struggling to go to school and work every day as the cops chase down neighbors in the streets, and others eking out a living by providing clean urine, fake documents, and off the books medical care. This fugitive world is the hidden counterpoint to mass incarceration, the grim underside of our nation's social experiment in punishing Black men and their families. While recognizing the drug trade's damage, *On The Run* reveals a justice system gone awry: it is an exemplary work of scholarship highlighting the failures of the War on Crime, and a compassionate chronicle of the families caught in the midst of it. "A remarkable feat of reporting . . . The level of detail in this book and Goffman's ability to understand her subjects' motivations are astonishing and riveting." —The New York Times Book Review

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Customer Reviews

This book is a sociologist's Ph.D thesis. It is endlessly repetitive and demonstrates the author's shocking moral blindness. As a career criminal defense attorney in a crime- ridden American city,, I am well aware of police excesses and brutality. Philadelphia, about which this book is written has a police department that historically has many things to answer for in its treatment of the Black community. That being said, the author's thesis is essentially that the neighborhood she studied, and the criminal she came to know and love, have their lives constantly interrupted by the police who use sophisticated techniques and relentless pursuit to track down and arrest its residents. The author attended 19 funerals occasioned by violent death in the neighborhood, mentions in passing dozens of almost casual shootouts engaged in on public streets, her subjects (now friends) shooting into houses, she is present when robberies are planned, she hides a man in her apartment who is sought for attempted murder, she helps someone smuggle drugs into jail, and she exults when a teacher who is the victim of a violent crime by one of his students (one of her subjects) fails to come to court, and she believes that giving information to the police to help them apprehend violent felons ("snitching") is unforgivable. Finally, after one of her armed friends is killed by someone who thought her friend was going to kill him, she sets out with an avenger with a Glock looking for the perpetrator. "I just wanted him dead" says Ms Goffman. Nice. She describes without comment the FIRST children of teenagers and their "baby mamas" well after the fact, implying they've had more.

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