

||| WE ARE ALL ||| ||| CRIMINALS |||

One in four people in the U.S. has a criminal record.
This is the other 75%.

Participants in We Are All Criminals tell stories of crimes they got away with. The stories range from humorous to humbling, but all have one thing in common: they are privately held memories without public stigma. Each shows that often times the only thing separating *clean* from *criminal* is who gets caught.

PRIVATE MEMORY:
HE ASSAULTED SOMEONE
WITH A LEAD PIPE.
NOW HE'S A BIOPHYSICIST.



He was 14 when his parents moved to the neighborhood. The six-by-five block radius was rough but not the roughest in town. That said, when J found himself befriended by two older guys from around the corner, things got noticeably better... In some sense, if he really thought about it, J supposed he was in a gang.

The summer J turned 15 started off uneventfully. His parents worked double shifts and were rarely home and there was little to do other than hang out and will the cool morning air to linger a little longer into the afternoon. It was on one of those ordinary mornings that everything changed.

...

One by one everyone took a turn til it came to J. It wasn't a question. It was an ultimatum. Do it, or you're next.

J remembers the sound of the lead pipe hitting the boy – a soft wet pop, like the sound canned jam makes when the vacuum seal is broken. He remembers the smell of sick and blood and piss, the stench of hate and fear and nothingness. He remembers the knots swelling up on the boy's face like midday suns threatening to explode.

PUBLIC RECORD: ASSAULT

She was new to the school, and the girls didn't take kindly to her. Her first week she was pushed down a flight of stairs, cornered in a bathroom stall, and called a series of names ranging from banal insults to words that cut deeper and wider than she had thought words ever could. Before the semester was over, she found herself taking a knife to a classmate, slashing an angry crescent that stretched from navel to side. She was tried as an adult and placed in a juvenile facility.

There she met a social worker who believed in her. He was the first adult in her life who seemed to believe that she was a good kid – not the throwaway that many people assumed. She turned her life around, and with the help of the social worker, found a good job and safe housing.

Unfortunately, after a neighbor found her record through an online search, she was evicted. The stress of being homeless ended up in missed shifts and she lost her job. With a serious assault on her record, she's ineligible for public housing and hasn't been able to get an interview at even the most menial jobs.

ON THE DOCKET:

||| Criminal Law in American Society |||
U of M, Minneapolis, MN
8.5

||| American Sociological Association
Annual Conference, "Hard Times" |||
San Francisco, CA
8.18

||| St. Cloud Unitarian Universalist
Fellowship |||
St. Cloud, MN
8.23

IN THE NEWS:

JUVENILE INCARCERATION AND INVESTMENT

According to Neil Bernstein's new book, *Burning Down the House*, not only does the U.S. spend \$88,000 per year to keep a youth locked up – more than is spent on a child's education – not only do Americans incarcerated juveniles at a rate 7 times that of Great Britain and 18 times that of France, but juvenile incarceration doesn't work.

"The greatest predictor that a kid would grow up to be a criminal was being incarcerated in a juvenile facility," Bernstein [says](#). Gang involvement, family issues and even delinquency itself failed to predict adult criminality as well as juvenile incarceration.

To fight the chances that young adults end up adults with records, two programs take a holistic approach. Both [Homeboy Industries](#) and [Brotherhood, Inc.](#) invest in youth.

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