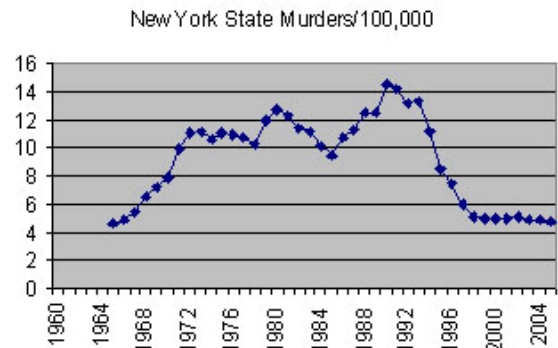


P.F.H Interviews on the collapse of the crimewave

October 2005 – 125th St Harlem & Fordham Rd. Bronx

The graph clearly shows the end of the crimewave as a major permanent change, which hardly made any news. The studies I'd read credited things that didn't match the time, speed or finality of the change, and didn't include opinions from those in the middle of it. I think the finality of the change in particular marks the end of a major system, and that what really happened was inside it.



I had good conversations with about 10 people on 125th St on 10/2, 10 on Fordham Rd on 10/10, and 30 on 125th St on 10/21, mostly asking “were you around here in the 90’s” or “do you remember when the crimewave stopped?” The recorder (Sony mini-disk) gave me problems and several conversations were lost, none were recorded on the 1st day.

What comes through is a mosaic of believable causes, with one still missing, how at the last moment the street culture producing the violence lost its hold on the inner city youth and fell away. It attracted no one’s attention at all. People of every background on the street now seem remarkably congenial, and in the 70’s and 80’s it would have been quite dangerous for me to be where I was asking about it. That’s the big global change, and how something like that could seem to happen rapidly is the question. The nearly universal opinion is that it’s a real mystery. Following is a list of factors people thought mattered. It’s inevitably influenced by my own filtering for what I thought made sense. I left out a variety of popular conspiracy theories, for example. The reason for the study? There’s a scientific issue¹, and a story that should be told.

1. The severe experience of the crack epidemic at its peak, over the top life styles, and how bad people looked on it, the clearly visible harm it did that shocked people into recognizing something was wrong.
2. Though NY was hard hit by the recession of 90-91¹, a major economic up-turn followed (more in later years), creating reams of low end service jobs², affirmative action and government programs that put money onto the street, so that street people had choices on how to get with legal hustles. 1987-94 was a period of big changes, by 1987 there were a million cell phones, the fall of communism was in 1991.
3. For many families multiple members were crime victims and in prison for very long times, and pulling together as a community of women-left-behind gave power to a message of pain and love

¹ It’s the shape of the curve that tips off the presence of inside system structures being responsible. That’s generally the indication for curves displaying local shifts of level or exponential segments. In this case it’s the abrupt shift from a high variable period to a low static period. It’s a marvelous research tool for exposing natural systems and has implications for general theory.

² “In 90’s Economy, Middle Class Stayed Put, Analysis Suggests” By JANNY SCOTT, New York Times, August 31, 2001 <http://www.contemporaryfamilies.org/public/articles/change49.htm>

that got through to the kids and the street. That was sometimes reinforced when the addicts and bangers were cut off from the family support that was their safety net.

4. The “message” getting through. Things “being processed” Seeing the “common enemy”. The individual voices of people like Keith Haring, Louis Farrakhan, Al Sharpton and the organizers of the Million Man March. Mayor Giuliani for being straight and doing what was right, not worrying about people’s opinions.
5. The huge expansion of the jails and the severe reaction when violent crime spilled over into white communities, the TNT taskforce, Gov. Pataki cutting parole for violent offenses.
6. Longer and better training for cops at the academy and an increase in numbers, Giuliani cutting police corruption (the cops had been as messed up as the criminals) and more attention to enforcing respect for public order.
7. The public and school education programs that finally succeeded in getting across the simple dangers of the street, like SPECTER, explaining it so that kids could watch it happening.
8. The huge Harlem machine of drug lords AZ, Alpo (Dominican Alberto Martinez) & Rich Porter collapsed and no one picked it up again. (except to make them the subject of rap lyrics)(the trio were icons of a high style Harlem world in the mid to late 80’s, influencing the origins of hip hop)(Alpo murdered his boyhood friend, Rich Porter, in Jan 1990 and fled to DC where he was arrested a year later.)(a similar Washington Heights drug cartel call the Wild Cowboys had similar influence and catastrophic end).

Things not mentioned, but that I might add to the list.

9. The new policing that protected the subway cars from graffiti artists also took away their canvases and turned them to using their art for vivid public memorials for the victims of the street. These displays were usually commissioned by the families and friends of the victims and gave very public voice from within the culture to the pain and love felt for those killed by it. These displays reached a peak around 1992-93 and apparently declined thereafter, though they still continue at a lower level. There’s a book about the paintings, “R.I.P. Memorial Wall Art” 1993. Though I remember noticing them in 1990-93 as part of a new generation of messages that sounded like they would get through, those in the culture I’ve asked recently don’t remember them that way. Maybe others would remember differently, or I make note of them mainly because they gave me a first glimpse as an outsider of a widely taken for granted change of heart.
10. The cultural self-confidence and life direction coming to the youth from hot art movements: the tagging and wild style graffiti, rap, hip hop, break dancing.
11. That the public and school education programs and government services in and out of prison learned how to not talk down to people, to send messages that were helpful and not preaching.
12. Speculatively, that the drug culture hustle lost its allure, was no longer a game that brought you respect, stopped being cool. The uncontrolled rage from the 60’s that set the whole thing off may have quietly worn off long before 93-96 when its absence became apparent, exposing a congenial do-it-yourself culture that had quietly grown up in its place.

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Notes on conversations: Some phrases I think worth mentioning are in bold. It's very abbreviated.
 -Track #'s on original disk.

Date	track	time	Loc	Comment	Content
10/21/05	1	0:41	125 th Apollo	Start record, Mr. Heinz	Several recording errors, tracks 4, 7, 16-19, 24, 25 only a few seconds, others w/ long periods of background sound between conversations.
10/21/05	2	3:02	125 th Apollo	Steve	Really don't know, interesting point, interesting, don't do memorials so much since not so many deaths , still put out the candles and things, from 129 th & Lenox, the most murderous block in the city, no you hardly hear any shooting at all.
10/21/05	3	8:47	125 th Apollo	Sam * AUDIO	affect of affirmative action , CIA brought in the crack, turn around was million man march , this stuff was being processed before then , had million plus men locked up, dragged down the family structure and gave women a lot of, wasn't the government which is constantly taking, Guiliani didn't do nothing , politics, there was things being processed, the memorial walls are still up , there was a peak then, the murder rate was heavy, Al Sharpton, Farrakhan, million man march, there's nothing else to explain it , there was nothing the government did, politics, they don't even hire no black Americans in these stores.
10/21/05	5	5:02	125 th Apollo	Sam 2 * AUDIO	Involved with family changed his life , Al Sharpton, Farrakhan, leadership in the community, the black man started seeing the hole before he fell into it , they pointed out some of the wisdom that pointed out the hole , you can't credit anything to the government. Government built a lot of prisons, what changed the lives is the calculation of however you want to calculate it, your statistics shows whatever you want. Murder dropped, but every day things are happening, change in only one thing, been part of crack and heroin and everything, seen the wars and seen the casualties of all those wars, AIDS is a germ, a man made germ, being controlled by man.
10/21/05	6	1:37	125 th Apollo	anonomous	The law is really cracking down on the drugs, people changing their lives and getting help , 93-97?, that's when they started,
10/21/05	8	2:49	125 th Apollo	error	Background... Approaching folks, "excuse me, where you around here in the 90's..."
10/21/05	9	5:56	125 th Apollo	Jose Lopez 29 (17 in 83) * AUDIO	Wasn't that Dinkins then Gulilani, they say what a mayor does takes effect later, in the 80' there was a lot of drugs, the crack was just a drug of choice, but realized it was so potent was when they started to do something, school program SPECTER explained the details to the drug trade to the kids , had an effect, when they were using crack it changed their lives and they looked bad and everyone noticed . Sometimes they would ostracize that person, if there was a functioning for money going around they wouldn't invite that person because they knew what that person was about, that they wouldn't bring anything positive. Keith Herring "crack is whack" people respect it, started painting darker images. You can see it from the FDR, people remember the color orange.
10/21/05	10	0:06	125 th Apollo	Error	Background
10/21/05	11	3:42	125 th Apollo	Error Anon	Background, Were you around here in the 90's... I think Giuliani did it, I don't think Dinkins did it, he wasn't tough enough. Background

10/21/05	12	3:32	125 th Apollo	James	TNT came through, drug taskforce , police picking up anybody for anything, when the crack hit the white neighborhood , before they just let it go, in 95 Pataki came into office (94 elec), focus on violent crime , they're still up north, under Pataki violence was hard on, no early release
10/21/05	13	0:55	125 th Apollo	Error	Were you around here in the 90's... I was in jail
10/21/05	14 a	10:00	125 th Apollo	Joseph	[Guy who came back] prophecies, the curse of the leviathan, people seeing the common enemy , the greed of corporations, people seeing them ripping us off left and right, people are struggling and they raised the subway fare, the hypothesis, all now come down to one thing the people, what happened actually 87-90 a lot of change, the collapse of communism, Marx and Engle, the human relation becomes an economic relation. You see the unification of the Euro Dollar, and we become aware of the giant corps that are just plain greedy. 94, wasn't that when the mother ship was coming, I need these thing and you're ripping me off, the appearance of cell phones. The graffiti murals? The creative spark was put back to sleep. Only cultural change, people locked in their box.. being out of the loop
10/21/05	14 b	10:13	125 th Apollo	Moses	got tired of going to jail, a lot to do with the economy , there was a big takeoff, had nothing to do with Giuliani , any mayor, not to Bloomberg either, I don't think they still get along. Today it's a new era, a new generation and they don't know anything about this. People in midtown only been her 3 years. Back then everyone was bad. Guilani changed the academy from 6 to 12 months and cracked down on police corruption . Now you don't find veterans, they're now doing the right thing. Looking at each drop and rise, the economy started taking off. But rape went up, rape is now highest. Don't give Giuliani credit except he took the cooked cops off the street. Cabbie
10/21/05	15	2:15	125 th Apollo	Daniel	Do you remember, definitely, more jails, still there, no idea why they stopped shooting at each other, think they're still doing it
10/21/05	20	3:24	125 th Apollo	Roselin Benson	Responded to more cops and prisons , not really surprising change, the mayor, think he did a very good job, didn't pay attention to what people say about him he just went on and did what he think is right, Giuliani too. He doing what he supposed to do.
10/21/05	21	5:22	125 th Apollo	Error	Background
10/21/05	22 a	12:58	125 th Apollo	Sociology student	The money took over , back then you wouldn't find you and me standing here talking, that's when Giuliani came in, but the drug arrest curve crosses the other way, surge in money, the city got really rich. Crack caused a lot of murders. Prompting, 'this was a system and it died' yes it definitely did. East NY, Brownsville big cleanup but still rough. Giuliani fought hard, not enough is being done for those people making less than 80,000. That's the biggest problem. General conversation about change.
10/21/05	22 b	2:49	125 th Apollo	James	Blue Note hustler. Everywhere you look you see police . 59 years old, 10 years ago if you didn't have the police y'all wouldn't be walking around here, day or night. Time changes everything was change, you know I going to tell you something, it's wrong and it's detrimental to you, it always gets better, so keep the change.
10/21/05	23	3:20	125 th Apollo	Rosa	Remember in the 70's before the stores had to have the gates, crime goes down and goes up like everything else, it fluctuates, what the media focuses on sells newspapers
10/21/05	26	0:59	125 th	James Harold	Giuliani did it, slowed down the crime, but he didn't do nothing as far

			Apollo		as for helping poor people.
10/21/05	27	1:07	125 th Apollo	Moise	No recollection
10/21/05	28	0:11	125 th Apollo	End 3:40	
10/21/05	29	2:17	125 th Apollo	Crystal * AUDIO	Guy with her didn't want to be recorded. I think it didn't go down. It depends on what neighborhood you're in . She was From the south Bronx and didn't see the crime rate go down, thinks the statistic sucks. When it went up they called it the revolution in the 60's that's what they called it, another big shift, I think the statistic is crap, In the S Bronx there's a murder every week, every other day, and I got two family who were killed, and I'm a victim of crime, I think there should be another statistic.
10/21/05	pg		125 th Apollo	Will email	Look up Rich Porter & Alpo movie & documentary, king pins who got canned, the event that tipped the break-up of the Harlem drug culture . Guy said he'd send an audio file. Asked about the graffiti murals and Said it got to be too much (talking about the total coverage I think). Thought the murals & memorial displays were definitely a precursor to the similar 9/11 street memorials. Web search: Alpo Alberto Martinez murder The machine of drug lords AZ, Alpo (Dominican Alberto Martinez) & Rich Porter collapsed and no one picked it up again. (except to make them the subject of a lot of rap lyrics)(the trio were icons of a high style world through the late 80's, influencing the origins of hip hop)(Alpo murdered his boyhood friend Rich in Jan 1990) Alpo moved his operations down to DC when Ray got bagged. There was an opening in the market and he came in got it done. He got bagged in DC November 8, 1991; Page d3 [Washington Post?] A New York man sought by the FBI for more than a year on cocaine distribution charges in Northern Virginia and wanted for questioning in drug-related killings from Washington to New York was arrested yesterday in the District Alberto "Alpo" Martinez, 25, was arrested just after midnight Thursday by the FBI and D.C. police as he drove his truck in Southeast Washington near Pennsylvania and Minnesota avenues, said his attorney, Thomas Abbenante.
10/10/05	e	3:07	Fordham Rd	Mr wild cowboys	Why it went down, cops I guess. Buy the book The Wild Cowboys, read that book, tell you a lot of story. From 179 th & Brook Ave.
10/10/05	f	2:33	Fordham Rd	Ishmael Rivera	Was in the Bronx, is now low the crime, the mayor is doing pretty good. Was here in the 60's, now it's much different, more protection, more police, don't carry guns any more , Bloomberg is doing very well
10/10/05	g	1:24	Fordham Rd	Tenneson Herd	On Fordham rd all life, greater police presence, more responsive, have no idea why the crime culture fell apart except for the police presence.
10/10/05	h	10:56 ½ chat	Fordham Rd	Chad	Dinkins programs, Giuliani got the credit, was in Jersey City then, a lot of them died and got arrested, it's still around, it was really intense, then tourists started to come back after 9/11, don't know what happened, trying different things, been a little bit of a spike, 5 th graders, special ed, so angry and violent and constantly fighting, fetal alcohol?, a whole subsection, a lot of angry kids . Still hears shots at night. The Bronx looked very different in the 80's
10/10/05	i	1:11	Fordham Rd	Mike Uflorez	Giuliani started fighting crime and gave longer sentence and scared them away.
102/05	0	Pg	125 th	1 st start	125 th st opposite the apolo theater, 200 fliers, 5-6 good conversations

			Apollo		<p>- mostly said “what do you think happened” as I handed them the flier w/ the 63-2003 curve of nys murder rates</p> <p>- full range of responses, no pattern except maybe that most people didn’t have any idea what happened [thought it was a mystery]. - it was uncanny, but I just didn’t feel comfortable asking the question of the few white folks on the street, though I guess I should overcome that.</p> <p>- recorder failure, mike was off. Excited & having fun I guess and didn’t check it out. Asked if OK to record and they gave their names, but I didn’t write them down.</p>
102/05	1	Pg	125 th Apollo	Smart guy	<p>very clear headed black guy 35, grew up there and listed all his residences, immediately listed a dozen environmental factors I hadn’t heard of before, but only caught the gist, -the govt. had put more money on the street, - there were more little hustles like selling CD’s and incense that you could get bye on, -most every family had someone put away for a good long time, -somehow the message started getting across. Pointed out most of those things wouldn’t explain the sudden compete change, which he acknowledged but didn’t think of what would.</p>
102/05	2	Pg	125 th Apollo	Minister	<p>self confident black minister, -It was the ‘million man march’, (asked when that was, 95, pointed out that was after the turnaround) and what led up to it. He drifted far afield w/ political symbols, but he let me lead him back to the subject.</p>
102/05	3	Pg	125 th Apollo	Gruff	<p>gruff 40’s black guy, 50, -It was the cops, and that Guiliani is around the corner waiting for you if you act up, that keeps it from coming back.</p>
102/05	4	Pg	125 th Apollo	Tall guy	<p>clean cut tall quick walking black guy, 40, -didn’t stop to chat, but came back 20 min for another flier and asked who was putting out the poll. I just said “me” and he seemed very satisfied.</p>
102/05	5	Pg	125 th Apollo		<p>2 older hip guys together, maybe 50, one stopped and called his friend back, who almost immediately challenged what I was doing (what answer I was trying to prove, and what was in it for me) and was suspicious even when I told him exactly what I was after, to make a name in my field so I could get a job, and to get his opinion without telling him mine since I didn’t want to influence what <u>he</u> would say happened. The first guy thought that was just the right answer but the 2nd thought there still had to be sth hidden and we exchanged good greetings and they walked on. I should have said I thought it was important to let this story tell itself. [a few years ago this and much harsher versions would have been the majority response to a white guy poking around I think, but this was the only one].</p>
102/05	6	Pg	125 th Apollo		<p>mom 50 and daughter 25 ‘radical girl’ – very chatty pair, going all over the place, it was the cops, the community programs, the increased jail time, the churches, but both agreed how things completely changed was a real mystery. Cops were only always around before elections, so maybe that wasn’t it, then there were the big cuts in school programs in the late 80’s so maybe that wasn’t it.</p>