

N.W.A, "Straight Outta Compton" (1988)

Compton is a suburb south of Los Angeles. In 1921, the city adopted racially restrictive policies to bar African Americans and other people of color from the municipality. Civic leaders, real-estate agents, and law-enforcement agencies perpetuated this racial exclusion with their own practices, and up until World War II, the city was 95% white.



By the mid-1950s, African American families took advantage of the U.S. Supreme Court's 1948 ban on restrictive covenants and began to move to Compton, seeking affordable housing and a middle-class lifestyle. In response, real-estate brokers (often with the help of local media) accelerated "white flight" from Compton by "blockbusting," a practice which entailed scaring white families away from neighborhoods by threatening low property values brought about by racial integration, and then reselling the houses with commission to African American families. White families left Compton, and the black population rose from 5 percent in 1940 to 65 percent in 1970. By this point, growing unemployment and poverty in Compton led to a rise in crime, the use of crack cocaine, and gang activity - most notably between the rival Crips and Bloods street gangs.

Emerging from this environment was Arabian Prince, Dr. Dre, Eazy-E, Ice Cube, DJ Yella and MC Ren, collectively known as the rap group N.W.A. Through their debut studio album, *Straight Outta Compton*, N.W.A musically profiled the gang life and police brutality they experienced daily in the city. Most critics consider *Straight Outta Compton* as one of the foundational albums for the sub-genre of Gangsta Rap.



Lyric Excerpt

You are now about to witness the strength of street knowledge
Straight outta Compton, it's a crazy brother named Ice Cube
From the stupid-dope gang with an attitude
When I'm called off, I got a sawed off
Kick knowledge, and bodies are hauled off
You too, boy, if ya get with me
The police are gonna hafta come and get me
Off yo back, that's how I'm goin' out
For the suckas done brothas and showin' out
Some start to mumble, they wanna rumble
Mix'em and cook 'em in a pot like gumbo
Goin' off on everybody like that
with mace that's droppin' in yo face