

Cop in the Hood

A book by Peter Moskos

Extract published in <http://www.game-bred.com>

Cop in the Hood is an explosive insider's story of what it is really like to be a police officer on the front lines of the war on drugs. Harvard-trained sociologist Peter Moskos became a cop in Baltimore's roughest neighborhood —the Eastern District, also the location for the critically acclaimed HBO drama *The Wire*. He provides an unforgettable window into this world that outsiders never see. Those who read it will never view the badge the same way.

Saturday, September 1, 2007

Dog fight

So Michael Vic apologized for dog fighting. I don't believe him. He likes dog fighting. He's not the only one. There's lots of dog fighting in the Eastern District. That's just the way it is.

Many cops I worked with were very upset at animal mistreatment. One time I answered a call for a pit bull on somebody's stoop. The dog wasn't causing any trouble but was quite large and in no mood to leave. He just sat there and took in the scene. One family couldn't leave their home. From behind the screen door, they had no idea where the dog came from and why it was on their stoop. We stayed very near our car for our protection.

The dog had clear scars on his face from fighting. My partner said, "It's sad that I feel more for the dog than the people here. . . What did the dog do to deserve this?... I mean, I can rationalize and say that the people choose to live this way. But the dog?"

I don't feel more for dogs than people. Seeing a lot of human suffering makes me less concerned about animals. In poor neighborhoods and countries, when faced with mistreated people, it bothers me less to see mistreated animals. That's just the way it is. It would be great if no human or animal had to suffer but in the meantime it's all about priorities. People matter more.

It shouldn't be a zero-sum world. It's not that one tortured dog means one person living better. You should care about all living things. But a lot of things bother me about people "*shocked*" about dog [fighting](#). Why aren't more people shocked about the misery *people* suffer? I wish that people would take some of the sympathy they have for a suffering dog and transfer it to a suffering person. If you already care about suffering people, than by all means worry about dogs, too.

And why are people so shocked that there is a dog fighting culture? All they would have to do is ask anybody with any connection to the ghetto. But the people who are *shocked* have no connection with the ghetto. And that's why it bothers me that they pass judgment so quickly and so passionately. They have no clue.

I don't like dogfighting. But what if I did? I've had an urge to breed fighting [game cocks](#) (I will resist) ever since I read Alex Haley's beautiful description of Chicken George in Roots. I mean, that man loved his chickens. And he fought them. That's why he loved them. It was beautiful. At least in the book.

I've been in countries (and states) where chicken fighting is legal. I haven't seen a cock fight yet. But who am I to judge? I feel like it's none of my business. Cock fighting, dog fighting, is there a big difference? Yeah they're both bad. To you and me.

As a cop, I wish there were fewer laws, not more. It's not right to want to outlaw something just because *you* don't like it. A lot of people don't like that I eat meat. I don't want them outlawing animal slaughter. The whole point of live and let live is to let people do what they want, even when you don't like it. Just like free speech only matters when somebody says something offensive.

Some people want to fight dogs. And some dogs want to fight. That's what they're raised for. Is it worse than dog racing? Is it worse than factory farming and slaughter? Is it worse than eating meat? The answer to all those is probably yes, but what if I'm wrong? How can I feel smug saying dogfighting is horrible while waving a hamburger for emphasis?

I'm always skeptical of judgmental middle-class America outlawing the recreational choices of poor America. There's a long history of that. Nine times out of ten, when poor people start getting into something, we make it illegal. Everything from drinking to drugs to [gambling](#) to prostitution to kids playing stickball in the street. We love telling poor people what they can't do. And then we lock them up for doing it.

I saw a lot of messed up dogs in Baltimore (they pronounce the word "dugs," but the way). And small packs of wild dogs roam the streets at night. The packs actually looked pretty happy and healthy, but it can't be good for property values.