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Although a felony offense in all 50 states, organized dog fights still take place in many parts of the country. In some urban areas especially, dogfighters have formed a strong subculture. Dogs that fight are bred and conditioned to never give up when they are fighting, even if it means that they will be badly hurt or killed. Other animals are victims of dog fights, too—it's not uncommon for trainers to encourage their dogs' aggression by using other dogs and smaller animals such as cats, rabbits and rodents as bait. While some might typify dog fighting as a symptom of urban decay, not every dogfighter is economically disadvantaged.

Participants and promoters come from every community and all backgrounds, with audiences including lawyers, judges and teachers and other upstanding community leaders. Unfortunately, a new element has been introduced to the world of dog fighting over the past two decades. Fights have become informal street corner and playground activities. Stripped of the rules and formality of the traditional pit fight, these spontaneous events are triggered by insults and turf invasions—or even the simple taunt, “ My dog can kill your dog.” Many people who participate in these fights lack even a semblance of respect for the animals, often starving and beating them to encourage aggressive behavior