We were not born for crime.
When our mothers first pushed us from imagination into reality,
When we first breathed in the bitter taste of humanity,
We dreamt of a future beyond the scope of four walls.

We were once a promise.
We first did time in desks,
As wardens of knowledge preached at us about a future
We were naïve enough to think we would be granted –
Our lack of pedigree meant we were not groomed for more.

Instead, they turned us loose to follow the paths
Our fathers lay down before us.

The cycle continued.
Freed from our chains we learned to obey the proverbial master
So high he could not see us toiling,
Working long hours for low pay
Until the day we said enough.

Together we pushed the system with the formation
Of the one word that could make the mighty tremble: Union.
And in union we garnered more work, more wages, more benefits
Until the refrain of more, more, more stopped being a demand

And became an anthem for the progress
Our mothers always knew we were capable of.

We did not live like kings; we lived like human beings.

For a brief, glorious moment, our humanity was restored.
In our triumph we turned our backs to the systems of old;
When the whip cracked down upon them,
We had nobody to blame but our own.

This new master was not tied to the plantation,
So when we failed to bring in his crop on his terms
He took his greens overseas, where the native populations
Still look to the stars to guide them to safety.

We became Wall Street's beggars.
We went from job to job in masses, praying for scraps of work.
We were a town in the desert, and when the well ran dry
We dug holes in our neighbor's yards to make ends meet.

Anger, starvation, desperation: these are forces that cause wars.

Armed with our broken expectations
We have gone to battle against our cities.

We were robbed of opportunity, but when we take back what we’re owed
We are taken to court against those same high-seated overseers.
That rode off and left us in the dust.
If stealing is a crime imprison those who stole our futures.
If killing is a crime, justice for those who die trying to make ends meet.
  We were not born for crime.
  We have been bred for it.