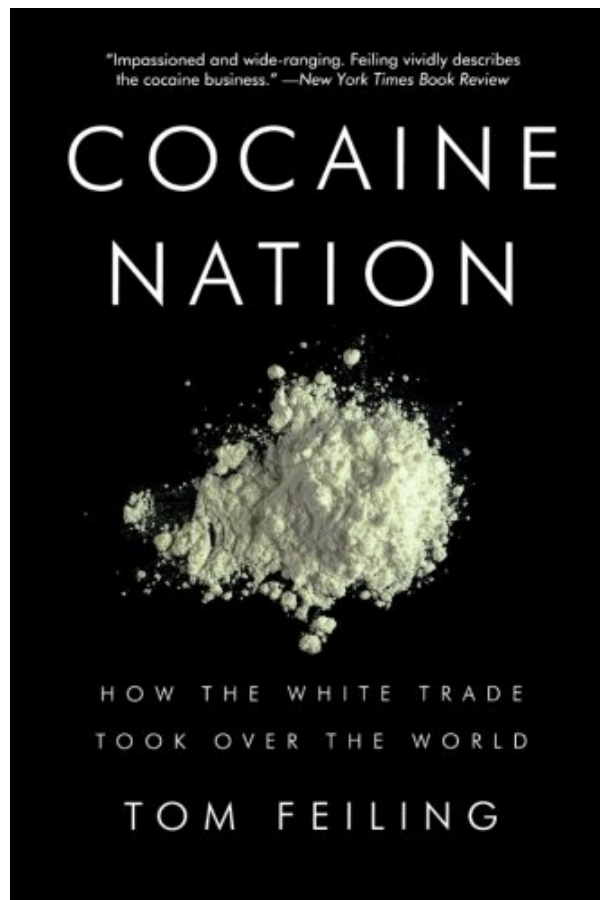


COCAINE NATION: HOW THE WHITE TRADE TOOK OVER THE WORLD BY THOMAS FEILING



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"Impassioned and wide-ranging. Feiling vividly describes the cocaine business." —*New York Times Book Review*

COCAINE NATION



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Cutting through the myths about the white trade, this is the story of cocaine as it's never been told before.

Cocaine is big business and getting bigger. Governments spend millions on a losing war against it, yet it's still the drug of choice in the West.

In Cocaine Nation, Tom Feiling travels the trade routes from Colombia via Miami, Kingston, and Tijuana to London and New York. Cutting through the myths about the white trade, this is the story of cocaine as it's never been told before.

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Most helpful customer reviews

11 of 12 people found the following review helpful.

Well Researched and Informative

By J. W. Alford

Cocaine Nation is unique in the market of drug non-fiction, in that it focuses on one particular drug. I found the book to be very thoroughly researched. The author is clearly well read on the subject and references abound. Tom Feiling takes a step back in the drug debate and takes a more objective and historical look at cocaine and coca as well as what the illegal drug trade does to the producing countries, the countries along the "trade" routes, and their affect in the consuming countries. I, as an American, always enjoy the more objective tone that a foreign author is able to take when discussing the American 'War on Drugs'. I highly recommend the book. It was well researched, well written, and extremely informative.

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

Lots of purported facts, but little analysis in this demand for drug legalization

By Jerry Saperstein

There is a breathlessness running through this book that makes me want to suggest meditation training for the author in the hope he'll relax a bit.

The theme is a sure winner: a focused history of cocaine and how it has become a multi-billion dollar industry that supports two distinct infrastructures. The first is that of the producer through the distributors of the drug. The second consists of the huge number of people who are involved in "combating" the scourge of cocaine. Both groups employ hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people. Each group exists because cocaine has been criminalized. The distributors are able to inflate their prices by virtue of a closed market which they control. On the other side are bankers, lawyers, judges, police, social workers, prison guards and a host of others who profit grandly from the criminalization of the drug, its distributors and its users.

The story of all this on a global basis could be enthralling, but Tom Feiling isn't up to the task of pulling all the strings together.

First, he is preaching to the choir of those who want to legalize cocaine and other drugs and he belittles those who don't share his views. In fact, far too much of this book is preaching the cause of drug legalization.

Feiling has done some research. Determining how much research he has done and assessing its quality is a difficult task. Feiling engages in an old trick of the lazy writer or, all too often, the writer with an agenda. For example, in one paragraph, Feiling makes seven very distinct claims (i.e., "Twenty-two percent of cocaine users in the United States account for 70% of total consumption.") He ends the paragraph with a single footnote, a reference to a 15 year old RAND study. Are all seven points to be found in the study? Or perhaps only three or four, while the rest are fudged from other sources or simply made up? Feiling provides no

specifics, no cites to page or table numbers. As it happens the claim I quoted is contained in the particular study cited, but I am not going to take the time to check out all seven. Likewise, just a few paragraphs later, Feiling uses a Hollywood movie on drug trafficking as the basis for an argument. Uh huh.

There are far too many entirely unsupported statements - like the one I just made. Obviously the reader is left wanting.

In able hands, this could have been a great book, a detailed investigation into the drug trade and not only how it supports criminals, but a host of "do-gooders" who make fat livings from it. There is a reason why low-level drug dealers and users fill our prisons - it supports very strong prison guard unions, especially in states like California. Police departments in the United States use the excuse of fighting illegal drugs to expand their ever increasing budgets. Legions of social works and educators claim billions to turn out anti-drug propaganda, run seminars. Politicians sponsor drug testing laws and accept contributions from the winners of those lucrative contracts.

Indeed, the global war on drugs is not simply a single scandal, but thousands of scandals of waste and corruption. On the other hand, despite Feiling's ocean of claims to the contrary, there is no definitive proof that legalization of illicit drugs would be without significant harm to society.

Feiling fastened upon a truly fascinating subject and he did do some research. Unfortunately, his focus on selling his agenda of drug legalization and his relatively modest writing skills are not up to the task. This isn't an awful book. If you spot it on the remainder table for a dollar or two, it's worth picking up. Or borrow it from the library. Just remember, as you surely will, that Feiling is on a mission and did not write this book to simply provide a basis for an informed decision.

Jerry

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Great read

By Jessica

Quite academic and also a bit more like a lengthy persuasive essay. However the book provides a great deal of information and insight into the history and culture of the world's consumption and prohibition of drugs.

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