

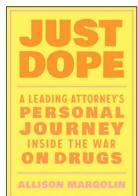
IF YOU CAN'T BEAT 'EM, JOIN 'EM

Two new books argue that drugs won the drug war.

Just Dope: The Case for Legalizing All Drugs for a More Just World

Allison Margolin. North Atlantic, \$16.95 trade paper (234p) ISBN 978-1-62317-686-0

"The war on drugs is bullshit," according to this frank but uneven memoir-cum-manifesto. Calling for the legalization of all drugs, criminal defense attorney Margolin builds her case with a mixture of social history, autobiography, and legal analysis—an immersive if somewhat jumbled approach that finds her hopscotching

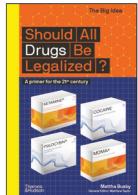


from the "problematic cocaine habit" she developed in her 20s to her custody battles with her daughter's father to analyses of the "media frenzy" over "crack babies" in the 1980s and '90s. Some of Margolin's best arguments draw on her courtroom experience to reveal how harsh and convoluted drug laws can be, even in states like California, where recreational cannabis sales are permitted. Elsewhere, she contends that negative legal and social consequences prevent people from seeking help for their addictions or calling 911 in the case of overdoses; critiques the abstinence-only messaging of the D.A.R.E. program; and praises the policies of reformers including L.A. County district attorney George Gascon, who has declined to prosecute many low-level crimes, including drug possession. Margolin is an impassioned advocate and a fluid writer, but the thread of her argument frequently gets lost in a mishmash of personal history and broad generalizations. This call for change is more spirited than persuasive. (Aug.)

Should All Drugs Be Legalized? A Primer for the 21st Century

Mattha Busby. Thames & Hudson, \$18.95 trade paper (144p) ISBN 978-0-500-29568-7

Journalist Busby delivers a brisk and informative introduction to the case for decriminalizing drugs. Contending that when "used judiciously, drugs can induce feelings ranging from ecstasy to serenity, relaxation and calm, while helping people to embrace spiritual and emotional intimacy," Busby notes that cannabis was first



cultivated in China 12,000 years ago and that Indigenous people in Latin America have been chewing cocoa leaves for 8,000 years. Throughout, Busby contends that harsh prohibition policies have "done more to harm people than the drugs themselves." He alleges that the U.S.-led war on drugs has turned Juárez, Mexico, into a "dystopian nightmare" and fueled violent insurgencies in Afghanistan and Colombia; details the medical and therapeutic benefits of psilocybin, esketamine, ayahuasca, and other psychedelics; and notes that Portugal's death and HIV infection rates declined rapidly after drugs there were decriminalized in 2001. Though the title is somewhat of a misnomer, as Busby gives short shrift to arguments against decriminalization, he builds a convincing case that the current system is not working. Enriched by vibrant photographs and plenty of statistical and anecdotal evidence, this is an invigorating argument for rethinking humankind's relationship with mind-altering substances. Illus. (July)

Pulp Power: The Shadow, Doc Savage, and the Art of the Street & Smith Universe

Neil McGinnness. Abrams, \$65 (352p)
ISBN 978-1-4197-5616-0

Writer McGinnness follows up his 2021 revival of the classic pulp comic hero The Shadow with an impressive look at the

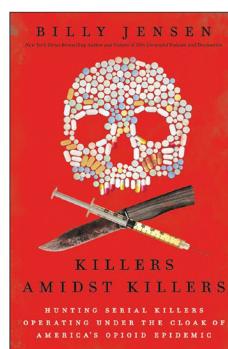
fictional universe that gave rise to the character in the 1930s. Combining enthralling historical analysis with original artwork, McGinnness surveys publisher Street & Smith's role in creating and marketing comic heroes. When, in 1930, the publisher adapted stories from its *Detective Story* magazine, "narrated by a mysterious

host named The Shadow," for radio, the program's immediate popularity led Street & Smith to commission novels featuring The Shadow, who, McGinnness notes, later became the archetype for other superheroes, including Batman. As McGinnness traces The Shadow's development over the decades—including his radio portrayal by Orson Welles in 1937—he brings to life the origin stories of other characters in the universe, including Doc Savage, whose resemblance of "a young and overly tan Clark Gable" served as the perfect counterpart to The Shadow's "dark avenger" persona. While his writing is marked by a clear reverence, McGinnness is judicious in his execution, noting, for example, criticism of Doc Savage's use of brain surgery to rehabilitate criminals, as well as The Shadow's troubling m.o. of gunning down his adversaries. It amounts to a fascinating take on a seminal yet overlooked era that shaped a multi-billion-dollar genre. (July)

★ Killers Amidst Killers: Hunting Serial Killers Operating Under the Cloak of America's Opioid Epidemic

Billy Jensen. Morrow, \$27.99 (256p) ISBN 978-0-06-302653-7

Jensen (*Chase Darkness with Me: How One True-Crime Writer Started Solving Murders*) asks a lot of questions but gets few answers in this thought-provoking and disturbing examination of how serial killers could have operated unsuspected in areas of Ohio ravaged by the opioid epidemic during the 2010s. Factors include poor record keeping, unshared information (so that the m.o. of a murder in one county might remain unknown to investigators in a neighboring county), and lack of public concern about the lives of the victims, who were typically impoverished, abused, and addicted sex workers.



Jensen gives the victims a vital presence through the voices of the loved ones they left behind. In particular, he focuses on the heartbreaking stories of two Columbus sex

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