



Chasing the Scream: The First and Last Days of the War on Drugs

Johann Hari

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NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

It is now one hundred years since drugs were first banned in the United States. On the eve of this centenary, journalist Johann Hari set off on an epic three-year, thirty-thousand-mile journey into the war on drugs. What he found is that more and more people all over the world have begun to recognize three startling truths: Drugs are not what we think they are. Addiction is not what we think it is. And the drug war has very different motives to the ones we have seen on our TV screens for so long.

In *Chasing the Scream*, Hari reveals his discoveries entirely through the stories of people across the world whose lives have been transformed by this war. They range from a transsexual crack dealer in Brooklyn searching for her mother, to a teenage hit-man in Mexico searching for a way out. It begins with Hari's discovery that at the birth of the drug war, Billie Holiday was stalked and killed by the man who launched this crusade--and it ends with the story of a brave doctor who has led his country to decriminalize every drug, from cannabis to crack, with remarkable results.

Chasing the Scream lays bare what we really have been chasing in our century of drug war--in our hunger for drugs, and in our attempt to destroy them. This book will challenge and change how you think about one of the most controversial--and consequential--questions of our time.

Chasing the Scream: The First and Last Days of the War on Drugs Details

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Johann Hari**

From Reader Review Chasing the Scream: The First and Last Days of the War on Drugs for online ebook

Michael Flanagan says

Every now or then a book comes along that leaves you breathless and changes the way you look at the world. Chasing The Scream is one of those books a profound read that has made me rethink the war on drugs on made me look at how I carry out my own work.

The war on drugs whether you know it or not has changed the very nature of the society we live in. It has turned a health issue into one of crime and by doing so encouraged more crime and violence. The evidence gathered in this book is overwhelming and when coupled together with the stories gathered by the author make for an unforgettable read. I defy anyone to read this book and tell me the War on Drugs is right and just. The author not only gathers evidence and personal stories but also traces the history of the War on drugs to deliver a well rounded read.

As a Correctional officer that deals with the Drug Policy I thought I had a good grasp on this issues. I now find myself completely rethinking how we go about our drug policy and how we can move away from a punitive model to one that is supportive and understanding of drugs and addictions. I am in total awe of what Johann Hari has managed to deliver in this book and rate this as one of the most important books I have read.

Barry says

A very worthy, well-researched and well-written book. It should, I hope, come to be regarded as an important book.

I don't like the title, and I don't like that there are whole classes of drugs he ignores - concentrating on cannabis and heroin with a nod to cocaine, but largely ignoring the others, except to assassinate Timothy Leary. What he does cover though, he covers sensibly, intelligently and with touching humanity.

Lisa says

This is an eye opening book that everyone should read. It will change the way you think. Our War on Drugs does not work. It actually makes crime worse and the people who need help the most get thrown out by society. I don't like drugs but this book changed my mind on how we are treating the drug problem. It's been almost 100 years of doing it in a way that has only made it worse. We have high crime, drug addicts, diseases, gangs, death on the streets, incarceration that is off the charts, people afraid of cops, on and on. Read the book and you just might agree there are other ways to make it better. It truly is time to change our drug policies.

Melissa says

This is one of the best books I have read in a long time and should be a must read for anyone who works in the field of substance abuse/ addiction. It is well researched and offers a valid alternative to the failed war on drugs in the USA. I have always advocated for the legalization of drugs and a total overhaul in our drug policies - this book provides evidence on why legalization is the way to go. It is compelling and fascinating. Seriously, just read it. Even if the topic doesn't appeal to you much, you should still read it. It was that good.

Ana Rînceanu says

This is a good introduction into how the drug war took over America. I still think Carl Hart's High Price is a more engrossing and scientific read, but this book condenses over 100 years of history for us non-drug users and I like that the desire to write it came from a place of compassion.

Jenny says

This is the single most important book I've read all year. If only I could give America mandatory reading homework... Johann artfully and passionately exposes the tragic failure of the war on drugs - and points to glimmers of hope (Switzerland, Vancouver, Uruguay, Portugal) for the future. He presents solid argument after solid argument in fluid, story form. If this book doesn't light an activist fire under your ass, you're probably the worst kind of Republican.

Lauren says

I've seen television interviews and roundtables with Hari, and when I found out that he had written a book about drug policy and the science and sociology of addiction, I immediately added the book to my library list.

The book was not what I was expecting - but this is not because I was disappointed with it in any way. What struck me is how very *personal* this book was for Hari. His first chapter explains the history of drug addiction in his family, and how it has also affected him personally. This first-person narrative continues throughout the book as he interviews people all over the world, recounting detailed history of the beginnings of the drug war - how "Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup" (laced with morphine) was a bestselling tonic in Victorian times... and a few decades later, these opiates were suddenly vilified and rebelled against.

The historical opening chapters were an eye-opening narrative of a famous singer and the law enforcement officer who obsessively worked to bring her down - and expose her addiction to the world, thereby going on to change drug laws not only in the US, but all over the world, and the first drug- dealing gangster of NYC and his manical and deadly rule over the boroughs. Incredible detail and strong writing - great introduction to the book, and Hari refers back to this "groundwork" many times throughout the book.

Hari travels to the US, to Mexico, to Uruguay, to Canada, to Portugal, to Switzerland, and his own UK to learn about the global ramifications of this war on drugs. In the US and Latin America, the stories of powerful and horrific *narco* gangs are the true stories that have inspired popular films and television series (*Sin Nombre*, *Narcos*, *Sicario*, *Breaking Bad*) in recent years. In the US and Canada, and Europe, we learn of the addicts, and the deep stigmas and vilification of this population, and how some places - like Vancouver,

BC - have worked extremely hard to change these stigmas.

The addiction conversation continues as Hari works with scientists and sociologists who turn the tables on how society can help addicts. All of these pieces fit together for the final case for decriminalization and legalization of these drugs. All drugs? Certain drugs? The debate rages on, and Hari describes this in detail.

The final chapter takes a close look at the two US states (at the time of writing in 2015) who have legalized marijuana for recreational use: Colorado and Washington. Hari interviews the advocates that worked in both states to legalize the substance, and how their philosophies and reasoning was vastly different. One of the final quotes in the book gave me a laugh, but also a pause - how much things have changed in a relatively short amount of time - and what we can expect in the future.

Spoken by one of the Colorado attorneys who played a key role in the Colorado campaign: "For years, the only discussion was: 'How long should we be locking people up for possessing marijuana?' Now we're discussing what the font should be on the label of the pot brownies."

4.5 /5 - rounded up because I learned so much from this book.

J. Ewbank says

That noise you just heard are the flying away of my presuppositions about the drug war. I have been naive in the area of drugs and so have been pretty anti drugs. The things I heard about were scary and awful. Though much of this remains true, I can see where legalization of some of the drugs would certainly hurt the drug traffickers and we could use the money to much more humanely work with those who are and will become addicted. Johann Hari has asked and worked years to answer many of the questions You and I have had concerning the drug wars. It is an interesting and very thought provoking analysis.

J. Robert Ewbank author "John Wesley, Natural Man, and the Isms" "Wesley's Wars" and "To Whom It May Concern"

Hugo Marroquín says

No pude imaginar lo que encontraría dentro. Ni siquiera el aviso en portada donde Elton John dice "impresionante" o Naomi Klein "apasionante" o bien Noam Chomsky como "fantástico". Bueno, nadie me lo ha pedido pero yo agregaría "humanamente abrumador".

Hemos escuchado hasta el cansancio sobre la guerra contra las drogas, la gente de la CDMX lo vive como algo lejano y un poco ajeno, los de Durango vieron su vida trastornada, los de Juárez su sociedad fracturada, y en Tamaulipas, arrasada. Sobre Colombia la historia se cuenta ahora en Netflix, se vive en una sociedad que busca redefinirse, reinventarse.

Pero ¿qué sabemos en realidad sobre las drogas y la guerra contra las drogas? En lo personal he seguido los debates sobre la despenalización o sobre la legalización de la marihuana cuando los ha habido, he tomado una postura personal al respecto, a favor por si ocupan saber. Pero he sido severo en mi juicio a aquellos

consumidores que desde mi punto de vista alentaban la economía del narco con su consumo, igual reconocí a aquellos que no lo hicieron al sembrar la de consumo personal. Pero sobre todo, al terminar *Tras el grito*, me doy cuenta que he sido poco humano ante una cuestión que nunca tuve en mi rango de visión. Lo lamento por aquellos a quienes juzgué o no supe comprender.

Tras el grito de Johann Hari nos lleva a la comprensión del origen de la guerra contra las drogas, que vas mucho más allá de la imagen de Calderón montado con su diminuto tamaño en un vehículo militar al inicio de su mandato, más allá de los supuestos pactos de políticos y priistas para mantener la paz en las ciudades, más allá de los zetas o los narco de antaño que se movían con código de honor. Nos lleva al Estados Unidos de principios de 1900, nos cuenta la historia de vida de un personaje clave, quien motivado por el odio racial tendría una influencia que traspasaría las fronteras estadounidenses y a costa de la vida de personas como de la cantante de jazz Billie Holiday, definiría una política pública de prohibición y lucha contra las drogas que lo mismo se aplica en México, que en Colombia o Europa y casi todos los países del mundo.

Tras el grito nos resume tres años de investigación de Hari por Brooklyn, Londres, Uruguay, Portugal y la más dolorosa para mí, por Juárez, con el doloroso asesinato de Maricela Escobedo de un balazo en la cabeza el 16 de diciembre de 2010 frente al Palacio de Gobierno de Chihuahua a plena luz del día como resultado de la corrupción, la insensibilidad, el desinterés de su gobernante y el miedo de la sociedad.

Tras el grito es un puñetazo en la boca del estómago en la que todo lo que te han dicho, lo que crees que sabes, lo que insisten en los noticieros, los programas sociales para los adictos, todo eso sobre sobre la guerra contra las drogas y la adicción misma, se derrumba.

Tras el grito es humanamente abrumador porque pone en el centro lo esencial que hemos dejado del lado: al humano. Y digo que es abrumador pues nos obliga a comprender una historia de manera diferente a lo que el mainstream nos dice, lejana a la versión gubernamental que los medios de comunicación distribuyen como los cables hacen con la electricidad, lejana a discursos típicos de "vive sin drogas" o "las drogas destruyen". Pues nos pone en evidencia consideraciones nunca mencionadas.

Tras el grito es para mí desde ahora un libro esencial, imprescindible para cualquier persona, pues no necesitamos ser partícipes del debate sobre la legalización, no necesitamos tener consumidores en nuestro círculo cercano, no necesitamos ser consumidores nosotros mismos, es un libro para cualquier ciudadano pues le dará una información que necesita para vivir en el mundo que vivimos, pues en él se encuentra una semilla que si germina, hará un mundo mejor.

Léelo, cuando lo termines te darás cuenta que lo necesitabas saber.

Quiero dedicar esta reseña a la memoria de Marisela Escobedo, una injusta víctima más de la guerra contra las drogas, la corrupción y la indiferencia gubernamental en México

Richard says

Brilliantly constructed, lucid, compelling and mind changing

I am 100% changed in my views.

Thoroughly recommended

Josh Johnson says

It's quite ironic that this is probably the most addictive book I've ever read. Harrowing and emotional but something everyone should read!

Heather says

Johann Hari sets out to answer some of our most pressing questions about “the war on drugs” in his book Chasing the Scream. Within the pages of this book, you will find out how and why the “war” began, how it impacts people from all walks of life, and how cities and countries across the world are changing the way they deal with both drugs and drug users.

Chasing the Scream is an absolute gem, and I honestly feel that it's one of the best examinations of drug policy that I've read. Hari examines the motivations behind drug policy (past and present) by weaving together facts and personal stories. He discusses the racial and economic biases that led to the desire to criminalize drugs in the first place as well as how these biases are seen in today's policies. Few people are willing to admit that the “war on drugs” was, at least in part, a war on societies “undesirables” and seeing this discussed so candidly was refreshing.

I grew up in a county that, at one point, had the highest rate of methamphetamine use in the state so I'm no stranger to the world of drugs and addiction. I thought I knew how drugs worked and why people became addicted. I thought I even knew why prohibition didn't work too well. This book challenged all of these ideas and has caused me to rethink a few of my opinions.

I would absolutely recommend this book to anyone whose interested in drug policy or even the culture that surrounds drugs and their abuse.

Note: I received this ebook free courtesy of Negalley in exchange for an honest review.

Jen says

ok. So, I am a harm reduction activist and an addictions researcher. I write those "dry sociological studies" that Hari enjoys rolling his eyes at. I basically hate-read this book out of a sense of professional obligation. Not because of the story Hari told, but for the atrociously bad way he told it.

I hated this book a whole lot. This is a sensationalist and problematic book. It has been touted as some kind of game changer in the conversation about addiction, but none of the information in this book is new, and Hari didn't even bother to fact check some of the things he's saying about certain scholars. This book is overtly anti-intellectual. Hari frequently attributes thoughts and motivations to people who are long dead--people whose thoughts and motivations he has no access to. It's also clumsily written, his only rhetorical move apparently is the section break with a cold narrative opening. He uses this technique with tiring frequency in the text.

But, above all, the biggest problem with this book is that there is nothing new in it. This is not "investigative journalism". It's about as investigative as interviewing a handful of physicists and then writing a book about how I "discovered" calculus. This book regurgitates messaging that harm reduction activists have been offering for years and years, and then packages it in a disingenuous veneer of disbelief and personal bias.

But, honestly, can we expect much more from a person who had to give back his Orwell because he plagiarized the piece that won the prize? (<http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johann...>)

I could MAYBE recommend this text for someone who is completely ignorant of contemporary conversations around drug use. If you can explain the public health impact of a needle exchange, though, this book is beneath you.

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Perry says

Engrossing Exploration of Drug War Failures

"I've seen the needle and the damage done
A little part of it in everyone
But every junkie's like a settin' sun."
"Needle and the Damage Done," Neil Young, 1972

An engrossing exploration of the failures of the "war on drugs." The narrative tracks through the war's czar in the U.S., users and abusers, peddlers, law enforcement, the poor souls who have been "collaterally damaged" (family members and innocent bystanders), current policy makers, as well as governments who have legalized certain drugs (like marijuana in Vancouver) and all drugs (Portugal). I also found his coverage of studies on addiction fascinating.

The psychology is such a crucial piece of the logical simple economics equation: people will NOT stop using and abusing drugs. Governments will fail at stopping **demand**, prohibitions and restrictions on **supply** thus only influence prices and buyer patterns. This generates huger profits leading to bigger, stronger criminal rackets (gangs, cartels, etc.) and wars among them, as well as many more crimes by the drug abusers (thefts, muggings, murders) to keep the addiction fed, all of which results in much more harm to many more victims, deaths and exponentially higher costs to society.

Keith Richards, *Day-by-Day Devastation of Heroin Addiction*

With a conversational writing style, Mr. Hari makes a compelling argument for legalization of all but darkly-affecting drugs like heroin and crack. While I do not believe I will see such legalization happen in my lifetime, this is a much-needed treatment of the subject that is certain to start conversations in some of the right locations. I cannot say he's convinced me of the answers, but I am much closer to his side of the fence on certain drugs after reading this book.

I was definitely enlightened by this non-fiction book and recommend it, certainly if you have someone near and/or dear to you with a drug problem.
