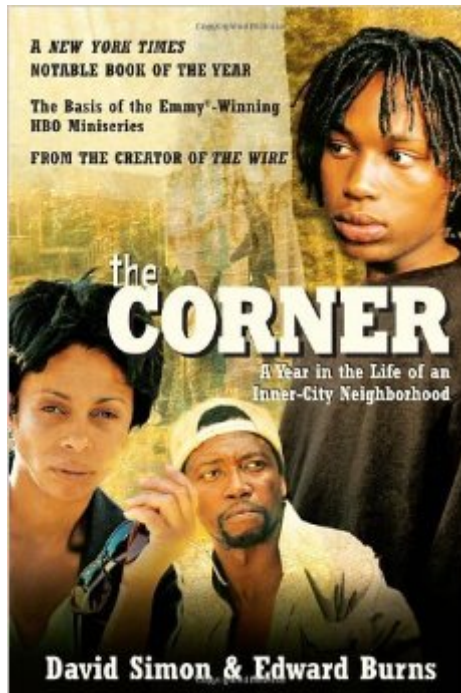


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The Corner: A Year In The Life Of An Inner-City Neighborhood



Synopsis

The crime-infested intersection of West Fayette and Monroe Streets is well-known--and cautiously avoided--by most of Baltimore. But this notorious corner's 24-hour open-air drug market provides the economic fuel for a dying neighborhood. David Simon, an award-winning author and crime reporter, and Edward Burns, a 20-year veteran of the urban drug war, tell the chilling story of this desolate crossroad. Through the eyes of one broken family--two drug-addicted adults and their smart, vulnerable 15-year-old son, DeAndre McCollough, Simon and Burns examine the sinister realities of inner cities across the country and unflinchingly assess why law enforcement policies, moral crusades, and the welfare system have accomplished so little. This extraordinary book is a crucial look at the price of the drug culture and the poignant scenes of hope, caring, and love that astonishingly rise in the midst of a place America has abandoned.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The Corner is one of those stories that stops us out-to-save-the-world types in our tracks. What do you do with a situation like this? Police, politicians, charitable organizations, treatment centers, educators, and tireless optimistic reformers seem to be completely ineffective throughout the book. The book has its bright spots: when someone goes into rehab, when a long-term user leaves the corner for good, when one of the kids returns to school. But everyone knows, and the reader begins to have a sense, that the changes don't last long and tragedy will strike again, so why hope? But the book is much more than a recounting of failed social programs and policing. The Corner is the story of real people with real desires and dreams. All have dreams beyond the corner, but none have a

way to get there. Some have fallen from successful pasts, and some were born into the strange West Baltimore economy of buying, selling, and using. The authors looked closely enough to know that Gary was once a successful businessman, that Fran was once planning to attend college, that Blue is an accomplished artist. But to most of America, they are faceless drug addicts who should know better, who should clean themselves up and get out of there. As the yearlong account unfolds, it is clear that getting "out of there" is not a realistic option. Few have any support system to speak of, and the government programs designed to help don't always-even if someone manages to navigate the endless bureaucracy. In the end, the corner triumphs in all but a few cases. The Corner is an eye-opening story that asks us to become aware of the people caught in situations like these in inner-city America.

This is one of my top ten non-fiction books of all time. Here is why: First, it is well-written and intriguing. There is little to no academic jargon to wade through. It is a plain spoken book about the realities of inner-city life. It is not difficult to read in a literary sense, but certainly in an ethical and moral sense. This brings me to the second reason why I found it to be such an important book: It puts a face on the experiences of poor minorities living in urban areas. I'm 23 and I've been working in inner-city communities since I was 15. When I hear people talk disparagingly about minorities, inner-city youth, single moms, "welfare moms," my heart breaks, and in many ways, I am also angry that people talk so much about a life they know so little about. I found that this book accurately put a face on the people who are so often referred to as one statistics or another (related to drugs, single moms, incarceration, welfare). There was no glorification and little over-victimization of the people in the book and their experiences as poor, black, and affected by drugs and the underground economy. This book should be required reading for all Americans who wish to learn more about and develop informed opinions about poor, inner-city communities and the people who live there. I find it particularly relevant to those interested in drug laws and sentencing, as well as access to drug treatment. I think that this would also be a very helpful book for people who work in urban areas or are planning to someday (social work, education, ministry). The book leaves very big questions to be answered by the reader. How do I judge the people in this book? What would I do if I grew up in such a community? How do I go forth from here? A very powerful book.

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