



Mule

Tony D'Souza

[Download now](#)

[Read Online ➔](#)

Mule

Tony D'Souza

Mule Tony D'Souza

James and Kate are golden children of the late twentieth century, flush with opportunity. But an economic downturn and an unexpected pregnancy send them searching for a way to make do. A friend in California's Siskiyou County grows prime-grade marijuana; if James transports just one load from Cali to Florida, he'll pull down enough cash to survive for months. And so begins the life of a mule.

A page-turning, Zeitgeist-capturing novel that plunges us into the criminal underworld with little chance to take a breath, *Mule* is about young people trying to make do in a moment when the American Dream they never had to believe in — because it was handed to them, fully wrapped and ready to go at the takeout window — suddenly vanishes from the menu.

Mule Details

Date : Published September 27th 2011 by Mariner Books (first published January 1st 2011)

ISBN : 9780547576718

Author : Tony D'Souza

Format : Paperback 304 pages

Genre : Fiction, Mystery, Crime

 [Download Mule ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Mule ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Mule Tony D'Souza

From Reader Review Mule for online ebook

Larry Buhl says

James and Kate have it all - or much of what a 30something urban professional couple might want. Great careers (he's a hotshot freelance journalist, she's a retail manager of some kind), a good life in a thriving city, more than enough money to waste (not sure how they have so much money though). Then, the recession hits and immediately it all goes poof. Worse, Kate is pregnant. What can James do now? If your first guess was, earn a bundle of money being a mule driving marijuana across country, you would be correct.

We've been seeing a burgeoning mini-genre of recession fiction where middle class people down on their luck turn to illegal activities to make ends meet or to become very wealthy. There's "The Financial Lives of the Poets" about another out-of-work journalist turned to drug dealing/manufacturing/distributing (tough profession, journalism). On TV there's Weeds and Breaking Bad.

SPOILER ALERT DANGER SPOILERS FROM HERE ON

You can assume that running pounds of pot across country won't go smoothly. After all then there wouldn't be a story. You can guess there will be collateral damage, death, constant fear, wrecked lives and a slide down a moral slope. That's all here, and some of the events are pretty gripping. Just as it's a white knuckle ride when you watch a gambler roll the dice long after he should have given up. So, the drama/suspense is pretty much built in to the story. He/they (Kate gets involved too) could be caught, they could go to jail for a long time, and they and their loved ones could be killed, fine.

It's written in first person from James' perspective and the tone is dry, factual, almost like memoir. It's not clumsy; the author just doesn't spend a lot of effort making it arty. Fine. It is a page turner for the most part, and about 75% of it is believable. What's not believable is maddening). The author seems to have done a lot of research. At a few points I wondered if he had been a drug mule himself.

Here's what strains credibility. One, they both go from upper middle class spendthrifts to penniless/homeless in a matter of a few weeks. In the beginning, James is writing for Playboy/Esquire, etc. and living large, very large he tells us. Then suddenly, no assignments from anyone. I have some personal experience with freelance writing; I've done that for most of my career. Any freelance writer who lives large is an idiot. Unless you're writing a story a week for the biggest glossy mags in the world, year in, year out, you're not going to be pulling down as much scratch as this guy seems to. In good economies, bad economies, whenever, it's up and down. It's slow during the holidays, which is why I have time to read novels. If you're lucky and aren't too picky you can have a sorta-middle class, bordering on bohemian lifestyle. You will not and should not live like a rap star.

Two. They do very little to look for work. They just throw up their hands and say, "well I hear nobody's hiring, so screw it all." When someone suggests to James that he could write for online sites, and James says that doesn't pay enough, you might want to smash James in the mouth. I did. Kate has unemployment, which runs out of course. But she worked in retail... a manager, yes, but retail jobs aren't notorious for paying big. These are not hedge fund managers. Can you say, save?

Three. they had more than 20 grand in their baby's college fund (which Jack uses to buy is first few pounds of pot). Maybe they could have tapped into that while they, you know, LOOK FOR WORK? They would have 18 years to build it up again. But no.

Four. REMEMBER THIS IS THE SPOILER SECTION. James leaves a paper trail. He keeps flying to Sacramento one way to pick up his load and then renting a car to drive one way and paying with credit card. For a year. You think the Feds wouldn't pick up on this obvious drug mule behavior at least once?

A bigger problem is characterization. We never learn James and Kate's back stories. They are presented to us basically in the middle of their financial crisis. Kate is mostly a one dimensional shrew, who says "okay don't get caught and you better buy me some nice things." James is a bit of a cipher who turns cold-blooded (a twist at the end that comes too fast and isn't very believable). But it is hard to feel any empathy for him. That makes it an interesting choice to go with first person - we should be able to learn about him and get into his head. But his head seems like an empty place.

I don't need nice or likeable characters. In fact I prefer flawed ones. But I do need to understand where they're coming from. James admits to us toward the end as things spin out of control that his defining characteristic is/has been greediness. But what does money mean to him, deep down? A clue about that would be nice. It didn't seem like he really cared much about being a journalist - again, that's not a profession one is drawn to when one wants to roll in dough. Ask me about it! No, James is shallow and stays relatively shallow. That would work, possibly, for a satire where we enjoy his descent down the rabbit hole and laugh at him getting his comeuppance, when it comes. But this is a straightforward drama/thriller with very little comic relief. The tone is dry, matter-of-fact.

The other characters are pretty broadly drawn, and I had a hard time keeping the names of his connections straight. They were devices for moving the plot forward.

That all sounds like I hated it. I didn't. But it could have been so much better. There is some trenchant social commentary here about American greed at all levels (after all it was Wall Street greed that gave birth to the crisis) and the diminishing value of real work. In fact I'm almost tempted to give it an extra star for providing a detailed handbook of the drug mule life, should I ever have to resort to that. Don't worry, I won't. I save.

Darcia Helle says

For me to enjoy a book, I need to like or connect with at least one of the main characters. I need to care what happens to him/her. That didn't happen with this book. Both James, the narrator, and Kate are lazy, greedy, selfish and childish. I didn't care what happened to them and found the book difficult to read because I couldn't find anything to like about either of them.

I thought the beginning of the book was rushed. James and Kate are a young couple, with money and great jobs. A few pages later, she is pregnant and they have both lost their jobs. I would have liked to get to know more about the people they were before their lives changed and they began making ridiculous choices. Soon after losing their jobs, they decide to move way out in the wilderness where they know there is no chance of finding work. They lie around a lot and seem to have no ambition at all, which I found completely at odds with the high-powered working couple they'd been at the start of the book.

Without giving more of the plot away, I'll just say that other choices made early on didn't make sense to me. This didn't feel like a couple struggling to survive and doing what was necessary, which is what the blurb leads readers to believe. This felt like a couple of spoiled, lazy kids who wanted easy money. As much as I tried, I could find nothing in this one to like.

Kathy Colvin says

Crazy and fun read-there is violence though!

Peter Kelly says

Mule is unstoppable.

Tony D'Souza has written one of the best books I've read in recent years and one that I expect I'll continuously turn to as a masterful example of what it means to write moving, efficient prose in the modern age.

Mule is more than just prose, yet it is never indulgent. As you follow James' slow and steady descent, you will find every next move both "surprising, yet inevitable" (in the unforgettable words of my undergraduate Creative Writing professor). His plight is identifiable, though his actions may be outside the realm of actionability for some out there, thus, I suspect, driving the more negative reviews.

But it's not just his individual tale. The story D'Souza weaves is both immediately impactful as well as insightful. What this book ultimately has to say, it says about the financial collapse of 2008 at large. While this is a dramatized realization of what it can do to a person, it is no way outlandish or overly obscure. It's bold and brash like that, without being obnoxious.

Perhaps most importantly about this novel was the fact that I couldn't stop reading it. You hear that a lot in reviews of good paperbacks. "Oh, it was a page-turner! I couldn't put it down!" - Random Author on every book cover at Hudson News. But in the case of Mule, you'll find that to be the case, if only because it's so damn STRESSFUL. The very first time James moves weight, I was openly sweating into my palms. I was nervous beyond words, yet compelled to continue to the trip.

That might be Mule's greatest accomplishment - its effect is in many ways its chief message. As James and Kate enter a world they didn't totally understand, their lives don't change SO outlandishly in their mundaneness, but rather they soon perceive the mundane with a new lens of agitation, wariness, and nervousness. You feel that as the reader as much as James feels it every time he approaches Eric's house. It's not that the story is so Dan Brown-ish that you need to learn more, it's that if you put down the book, you'll begin to worry more about the unknown of James and Kate's plights, rather than just continuing to read and discover what will become of them yourself.

It's a feeling not unlike what I experienced in watching Breaking Bad. The thematic links are, obviously, similar, and the overwhelming, ever-increasing sense of dread is what makes it so compelling.

While the book is not exactly casual reading due to its subject matter and some graphic moments, I'd recommend it for just about anybody. Hell, I'd be mad if you DIDN'T read it. It's that good.

Jenny says

Review originally published at *Hyphen*.

I put down Tony D'Souza's *Mule: A Novel of Moving Weight* at 2:30 am, two days after starting it. The last 90 pages forced me to stay up late, shirking responsibilities in the morning to finish.

Here's the draw: James and Kate are a young middle-class couple riding the excesses of the economic boom with no plan for the future. Then the recession suddenly hits, plus Kate gets pregnant. James happens upon an opportunity to make fifty thousand dollars in four days. All he has to do is drive his car from Siskiyou County, CA to Tallahassee, FL and risk his life, the security of his family, and his future. He's cautioned to "drive fast and swerve a lot," a send-off joke, because a ten pound brick of weed will be sitting in his trunk. As James' opportunities for making money and their dangers grow exponentially, so are his limits tested beyond anything he's imagined. As the stakes get higher and the lure of money keeps him in the game, you keep waiting for the other shoe to drop because you know it's going to be explosive.

Mule is a timely book, which depicts people in the marijuana trafficking trade as hapless victims of the 2007 recession, Hurricane Katrina, or even casualties of the publishing industry crash. These are ordinary people who are pushed into extraordinary circumstances and for whom survival becomes the impetus for the muling.

One of the more interesting facets of the book is D'Souza's depiction of James' changing psychology. At first, James is the good guy merely trying to support his family, while other people in the trade are flashy, excessive, and unsympathetic. But after being powerless for so long, James enjoys being a kingpin in his mini-empire. He feels important because his new status allows him to give opportunities to his less-than successful friends, including Mason, his stoner Korean American buddy. His sense of importance further colors his awareness of the danger he is putting people in when he draws them into his world. Even after amassing a considerable fortune, James cannot stop smuggling because fear of poverty is deeply entrenched in both his and the American psyche. "Out-of-work guys were spinning signs on corners everywhere now. I'd glance away whenever I'd see one. I'd never let what had happened to Kate and me ever happen again."

The dialogue is spare, the narrative events move rapidly, the characters are mainly sussed out via plot, and D'Souza doesn't spend a lot of time on description. However, he does give insightful details about how drug traffickers are able to circumvent the law. It's fascinating to learn along with James everything you need to know about "moving weight" -- from exercising your Fourth Amendment rights, or withdrawing a large amount of cash from a bank without triggering the Feds, to avoiding being a target for highway patrol officers.

One of the downsides of the book is that the relationship between James and Kate isn't quite believable. Kate shows her concern for James in the beginning but it's a thin line between loving wife and materialistic social climber who chooses to remain oblivious to the dangers in which her husband is placed. I wondered why James was gambling his life away for a woman who seemed to love him less than shopping at Saks.

There are also very few likeable Asian American characters. Mason is a prominent character who's well-intentioned, but he's an unreliable screw-up. There is also brief mention of a scheming underaged Thai prostitute. Most minority characters are untrustworthy or hoodlums and the women in the novel are largely silent.

Despite the drawbacks, *Mule* is still a quick read that will get your palms sweating and your heart pounding from the high. Though D'Souza isn't particularly gifted at composing pretty sentences, he does know how to tell a good story. You won't be disappointed in the come down.

Joyce says

From an award-winning “savvy storyteller”* comes a page-turning, zeitgeist-capturing novel of a young couple who turn to drug trafficking to make it through the recession.

James and Kate are golden children of the late twentieth century, flush with opportunity. But an economic downturn and an unexpected pregnancy send them searching for a way to make do.

A winter in the mountains of California’s Siskiyou County introduces a tempting opportunity. A friend grows prime-grade marijuana; if James transports just one load from Cali to Florida, he’ll pull down enough cash to survive for months.

James navigates life as a mule, then a boss—from moneyhungry friends to gun-toting drug lords, from Sacramento to Tallahassee, from just making the weight move cross-country to making thousands of dollars a day. The risks keep rising, forcing him to the next criminal level. A kidnapping, a shootout, a bank vault—it all culminates in a swirl of action.

Absorbing and timely, *Mule* perfectly captures the anxieties of plunging into the criminal world and of being a young person making do in a moment when the American Dream you never had to believe in—because it was handed to you, fully wrapped and ready to go at the takeout window—suddenly vanishes from the menu.

Alan says

It is rare that I rate a book this low. The beginning was slow, the moves the rookie “mule” made, amateurish and short-sighted. He allowed his friendship to cloud his common sense and ignored all the advice he was given, etc, etc. By the time I was really into the book the exploits were repetitive and lacklustre - barely given notice. The ending - unforgivable!

Stefano says

Con un libro che si legge con lo stesso piacere con cui si sorseggia una bibita ghiacciata in un afoso giorno d'estate, Tony D'Sousa ci propone un ritratto impietoso dell'america di questi anni. Il sogno americano? Non esiste più. "Dio benedica l'America", la torta di mele e i sacri valori su cui si fondano gli USA sono stati accantonati, l'unico Dio è verde, e si chiama dollaro. Se hai i Dollari sei qualcuno, nessuno ti fa domande.

James è un giornalista free-lance d'assalto, lanciato verso una carriera che promette soldi e notorietà. Kate è

la direttrice di una centro commerciale. Sono all'apice delle loro carriere, sono giovani, sono belli, si amano e aspettano un figlio. Il futuro è dalla loro. Ma quel futuro nutre in serbo la devastante crisi economica che a partire dal 2007 ha distrutto l'economia statunitense. In men che non si dica, James e Kate si ritrovano disoccupati ed emarginati. L'unica soluzione per James è inventarsi Mulo, corriere della droga tra uno stato e l'altro. Un lavoro terribile, stressante ma incredibilmente redditizio che lo porterà nuovamente al vertice della società. Alla fine però tutti i nodi vengono al pettine e James dovrà scegliere tra la sua anima e il suo mondo. Un libro bello e appassionante, che si perde solo un po' sul finale moralistico.

Elly Wendy says

3* Tense action, suspense, intrigue. A gripping tale about people hit with the recession and losing all, and their efforts to just get out of it, then getting far more than they were prepared for.
Good one.

Titilayo says

DRIVE FAST AND SERVE A LOT!

this is the second d'souza novel i've read (whiteman was the first). so far he gets two thumbs up. i'm rereading linden hills so it was nice to juxtapose that journey into dante's inferno with this tale about a middle class white dude's descent into a drug ring from california to florida. the first person narrative and omniscient narration sucks you into the plot. it was like being a fly on the wall in the house of usher. especially enjoyed this passage:

"because why?"

"because you let me do the drives."

silence. time. the birth of a chasm.

"because i let you do what you wanted to do?"

"because you let me take those risks."

"because you didn't make me stop."

a sundering.a mitosis. the division of a continent.

"this isn't my fault."

"i know that."

"i've never felt as awful as i do right now."

"i've been sorry every moment since."

we lay there a long time. time did not make it better.

i would have to say that the only part of the novel i did not enjoy would be the ending. things hurried up and ties were too neatly (yet ironically bloody & violently) dispatched. it left me not wanting to know more about what happens after the last time we watch james into his car. it might be nice to know that kind of life his children grow up having, but i'm really not all that interested in the actual main character. the author just went too far left. i wonder what the resolution was like in earlier drafts....never the less, this read was awesome.

Lisa says

From the beginning I was drawn right in and the whole book went down pretty easier than I thought it would. Nothing too shocking considering the subject matter. I've read some reviews that said the beginning was rushed thru, but I considered it an adequate back story; it is after all called *Mule*, not *The Entire Story of Us*. The circular argument James had so often with his wife Kate did get to be a bit tedious, with her so often nagging him about when he was going to quit, that he'll miss seeing his kids grow up, yet not seeming to mind spending the money.

Overall I didn't think there was a lack of character development. In that business I guess the less you know about the people you're dealing with the better, but you should know people. I get that, but the actions some of the characters closer to James seemed inconsistent:

*****Possible Spoiler Alert*****

Mason, for instance, seemed like he'd be cool enough to take things to the next level when he discovered how good the CA stuff was on his visit to James and Kate, but then turns out to be astoundingly naïve on one hand, trusting someone because they went thru Katrina together, and then bloodthirsty the next. Also, there was nothing to indicate that Kate's high school friend (Cristina?), whom seemed to be just a placeholder to keep Kate busy, would turn out to have such a pivotal role near the end.

Brandon Nagel says

Fantastic. One of my favorite of the 50 plus books I have read this year. Anyone interested in the muling of drugs around the country should pick it up. Reads like a memoir. Impossible to put down. Highly recommended.

Dara says

Mule deals with a very timely subject: what happens when the American dream slips away from you in an instant, and the choices people make to survive. James and Kate are a wholly unexceptional but happy go lucky young couple who lose everything in the economic downturn. Faced with a new baby on the way, they turn to moving weight to survive, and in their own way, thrive.

I became addicted to this nerve-wracking and fast-paced novel—I was on edge with every deal. The author manages to make a despicable path seem like a logical course of action. James and Kate are desperate to cement a lifestyle they never really deserved: they are selfish, shallow, status-oriented people with a high sense of entitlement and mounting greed. It is to the author's credit that I felt myself wanting James to succeed at each run, and overcome those who would thwart him. One small compromise in the characters' morals snowballs into a fully debauched way of life. When you finally come up for air at the end of this book, you'll be grateful you've never had to make the choices they did.

Donna says

Fiction that reads like nonfiction. Incredibly believable characters and story that made me care about this couple.

Penny Van Horn says

enjoyed this one over last weekend.
