ForeWord Reviews

SUSTAINABLE LIVING

Green Washed: Why We Can't Buy Our Way to a Green Planet
Kendra Pierre-Louis
Ig Publishing
978-1-935439-43-1
(Mar 27, 2012)

Sometimes it seems as though America was founded upon the idea of consumption. With capitalism as the form of economic distribution, buying things is what Americans seem to do best. In response to growing concern over the environment, a new green consumer movement has evolved, and people are switching to so-called “green” products like metal water bottles, fluorescent light bulbs, and electric cars. But according to Kendra Pierre-Louis’s new book, these products may not be as healthy for the environment as people may think. In *Green Washed* , the author challenges the sustainability of dozens of products, including organic food, clothing made from recycled items, green housing, and fuel. Following “green” objects from their production to distribution and on through the disposal process, Pierre-Louis attempts to answer this startling question: Is the green consumer movement really any better for the planet?

In Part 1, “How Green Is Green?” Pierre-Louis describes products that claim not to harm the environment or at least harm it less than their mainstream counterparts. For example, while organic cotton does not use the deadly pesticides that conventionally grown cotton requires, it can only be planted in dry, tropical climates and therefore must use either imported water or the already scarce drinking water from the area. To top that scenario off, a single cotton t-shirt requires four hundred gallons of water for its production. Part 2, “Fueling the Future,” reveals that corn-based ethanol consumes 29 percent more fossil energy than the fuel it produces, as well as explores the impact of clean coal and various energy alternatives. In Part 3, “The Way Forward,” Pierre-Louis exposes the mind-boggling extent of human consumption, such as the New York Fresh Kills Landfill that covers a shocking 2,200 acres, but she also offers comforting ways that Americans can consume less.

Heavily research-based, Green Washed is a thorough analysis of the green consumer movement and its effects on the environment, the economy, and American culture. The surprising statistics and criticism of popular products are engaging and effective, as are the descriptions of the production of many materials thought to be ecologically safe. *Green Washed* covers a diverse array of topics, providing convincing information in clear, concise language.

With sparse jargon, *Green Washed* will interest small business owners and American consumers wishing to make a more positive impact on the environment.

As the sustainable development editor for justmeans.com and a researcher for Terrapin Bright Green, an environmental consulting firm, Kendra Pierre-Louis is an authority in sustainability matters. By revealing the dirty secrets of landfills, big industries, organic agriculture, home building, and more, *Green Washed* asserts first and foremost that sustainability can be attained not by buying green, but by buying less.

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