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Our Country is Addicted to Control: Legalize Drugs

Victoria Hood
vhood@gmail.com

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Rebecca, only eleven years old, has lived in her closet, full of fear, ever since she could remember. She has a nightly routine that is beginning to run dry. Her father comes home at seven thirty and begins to drink; she's typically done all homework and has made herself dinner so she can hide away. By eight o'clock her father has downed five beers and has no sense of reality. Rebecca is now reading in her closet. Eight thirty rolls around and Rebecca can smell alcohol in the air and hears her father roaring up the steps screaming for her. Rebecca turns off the light in her closet and pretends to sleep. No matter how quiet she is or how still she stays her father rips her from her closet, leaving tears on her cheeks and freshly tear filled pillow. Rebecca has lost her sense of will and allows her father to beat her as he does every night; she is left wishing and hoping that one day her mother will come back for her - driven away by her fathers' angry words and senseless beatings. Nine o'clock and he has typically gotten all his anger out, shouting words of how alcohol is the only thing keeping him alive and he wishes he never had a daughter. He drops his half full bottle of vodka and slams the door shut. Rebecca begins to come back from her fog of abuse and can still smell the alcohol in the air. At the age of eleven Rebecca takes her first swig of vodka and adds another step to her nightly routine; before her father comes upstairs in an alcohol daze to beat her; she will get drunk enough for it not to hurt her and maybe even drunk enough not to remember it.

Brett is seventeen and works at Wal-Mart. His mother works at another local grocery store. His father works as a real estate agent. His father has been smoking since the age of twelve and never cared about any of the gobbily-gook of the side effects. He's always been in great shape and cared for Brett and his siblings. He loves his wife dearly and wouldn't change anything about their life. One day, Brett's father is diagnosed with lung cancer. From the length of his smoking, it has become very severe and after a year and a half of treatment passes away. As the major bread winner the loss of money is becoming too much along with the heartache. Brett has dropped out of college and works full time. He came across his dad's favorite cigarette brand at work. Brett now averages a pack a day.

Although America likes to think that their people are protected because drugs like marijuana and other narcotics are illegal; they are not. People have and will abuse legal drugs that have severe negative side effects such as alcohol and cigarettes. At no point will everyone be safe, but at every point we should have freedom; the freedom of free will and the right to our own private behavior, as it is said in our rights, but it seems that as the days pass more and more will be taken from the United States citizens. Not only is the government censoring what we can do in public and online, but censoring our own private behavior? Illegal drugs, such as marijuana and narcotics, should be legalized, because every person has a right to their own behavior, it will help clean our gene pool, and they will

create safer conditions for drug users while stimulating our economy. There are down sides to every point of view, but in the end, our rights need to be defended.

Recently narcotics, such as heroin, have been on a rise. This is due to the higher purity and lower prices which creates a higher stimulus for less money than usual, creating an up rise in the market. This has also created an up rise in the deaths from heroin – in 1970, there were two thousand deaths and today's over doses are over four thousand, the majority being in Baltimore, Orlando and Plano, Texas (Constantine 2000, 2). It is also shown that seventy-five percent of heroin sold in America was smuggled in from South America which can be sold for cheaper and cheaper and has created "brand name" heroin in markets. Promoting a specific brand has helped entice none users by giving them free samples which can get them hooked instantly. Heroin in today's market is forty to ninety percent pure which means that it doesn't have to only be injected (smoked), this also helps introduce heroin to more users (Constantine 2000, 1).

Heroin has also created a theft pool, which is explained clearly by Bruce Anderson, former editor at large and political editor for the *Spectator*, a British weekly magazine. Doctors were once able to prescribe heroin as a medical treatment and to keep a handful of addicts at bay; this kept crime down, because addicts no longer had to steal for their high or turn to methods such as prostitution to receive, most likely, bad heroin (2004, 1). Since the ban on heroin there has been two hundred seventy thousand addicts recorded and one addict, on average, steals approximately thirteen thousand dollars of money, or goods to sell for money. The jail sentence for possession of heroin is up to seven years, for a supply of heroin it can be life imprisonment. The deaths have also gone up since heroin became illegal. Jail, death and addiction are neglected for a high (2004, 2). Methamphetamines are also on the rise. The control of methamphetamines has gone from motorcycle gangs to Mexican drug lords; the use of this has increased two hundred eighty percent from 1991 due to the heavy ban (Constantine 2000, 2).

Drugs are looked at as evil; ruining our society and economy because of the danger and lure. However, our economy has continued to grow and the life expectancy is staying strong in the seventies and eighties and continued growth in our technological advances is evident. Drugs do not debilitate our society simply because people use them. They can only debilitate the body of users (Lamberton 2005, 6). It is possible to keep the debilitation of bodies lower and lower; many users are attracted to the edgy sense of drugs/the glamour of doing illegal activities. This has been displayed through the prohibition of alcohol. When alcohol was made illegal it became a glamour drug and usage increased, the same is happening to the prohibition of narcotics and marijuana. The bigger the risk, the more people it will entice (Lamberton 2005, 2).

During the Nixon years, the war on drugs became a huge movement. Federal bodies began to be used to crack down on drug possession, selling and usage. On average the government spends seventy percent of all anti-drug money on law enforcement and the control of boarders, mainly Mexico. This money is not only spent on paying law enforcement to find and arrest all users or possessors, but also to jail typically non-violent criminals. This method is often driven by political campaigns for votes; politicians typically say they'll crack down on drugs and crack down on the crime they create. Instead they, are spending thousands of dollars jailing addicts that don't want to harm anybody; they just want their drug (Kalet 2000, 1).

As it has been established, the Libertarian Party is one of the biggest advocates for drug legalization. The Libertarian Party supports that everyone has to right to their own behavior; in the Bill of Rights, it is stated that every person have the right to their private behavior. The question is: if it is in plain writing that every American has the right to their private behavior, why is the government trying to control it? People have been given rights; therefore, Americans shouldn't have them taken away. Everyone has rights to "Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness", our property is our property and our lives are our lives; therefore, drugs, being our property and a part of our lives, are a right given to us years ago (Lamberton 2005, 1). As Sanho Tree of the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington has stated:

We're heading for a showdown, it's hard to talk about a tipping point, but I think we are close to one with regard to cannabis. This is a clear sign that people are looking for a different paradigm.

This is in reference to states beginning to legalize recreational usage of marijuana and that now is the time to start changing (Baird 2012, 13).

This is not to say that all are for legalization; Mothers Against Drugs is a huge organization against drug usage. They believe that once drugs become legal that doesn't mean that illegal drugs will stop and neither does the selling of these substances, which will be dangerous. They also believe that the law is the only thing standing between kids and drugs; their fear of being a criminal will keep kids from being experimental (Grant 2005, 1). Also, it will stop drug dealers from pushing drugs on them. A huge point behind drugs being illegal is that there is no way, or plan, on how to legalize those (Jacobs 1990, 28). What many people don't realize is that many pro-drug legalization people have never been affected by victims of addiction and drug abuse; they have not been fully introduced to the world of drug abuse (Constantine 2000, 1).

In the battle of drug legalization, there is much to be discussed and much to learn about; a main drive behind this controversy is both the profitability of legalizing drugs and how much this could debilitate our economy. In Afghan, their farm land has turned into poppy fields. Farming of drug plants brings

promise of money to the farmers and land, because even as illegal as they may be, people will still consume drugs. The United States could be using this same technique, America already is for tobacco which is the most farmed crop in America, which could bring money and more employment to the American people. This would also help Afghan farmers land become more fertile, because they wouldn't be the only one's farming this plant. The United States has Turks growing medical opium when it could be grown on American soil and lowering America's high unemployment rates. These Turks use much of the opium they grow to help drug lords by funding drug lords and terrorists. When Americans are able to farm these crops unemployment will decrease and the monopoly on opiates will be destroyed (Hitchens 2007, 41). The debate on prices for legal drugs is a huge one; too low and consumption can rise, too high and the business will continue to go to drug lords. Finding the right price and the right marketing technique is one that has to be agreed upon (Baird 2012, 17).

It has been shown that the consumption of hard core drugs (narcotics) may actually go down with legalization because the users will no longer have to find nonusers to sell to so they can sustain their habit. Also, much of the money spent on the war on drugs can go to better the uses. Sixty-seven billion dollars is annually spent to decrease drug use, yet drug use is still happening and in demand. To make a difference is to observe society and notice drugs will always be here; to make them safer for society is to protect them, not ignore the habits because it isn't what fits politician's schedules (Lamberton 2005, 4).

Not only illegal drugs, but legal drugs cause many deaths every year. The fact that they're illegal because they kill could also be said about many legal drugs, pills, alcohol and effects from cigarettes. More people in the United States have died from over dose of prescription drugs than heroin and cocaine combined (Bennet 2013, 1). In 1995, the World Health Organization said:

There are no recorded cases of over dose fatalities attributed to cannabis, and the estimated lethal dose for humans extrapolated from animal studies is so high that it cannot be achieved by...users.

The amount of THC (the chemical marijuana that causes the high/hallucinations) has gone up, however. Marijuana (also known as, weed, ganja, grass, good and so on) has a THC level of over five percent when it used to be under one percent and in some South American countries it is over twenty percent (U.S. 2009, 4).

A study in Scotland has shown that by age sixteen nearly all children have been offered drugs and of two point six million offenses, ninety percent are drug related. By kids eleventh birthday one of one hundred kids have taken drugs; something is obviously not right with children or the drug market in today's world (Grant 2005, 2). The question that is at hand is: Should America be cracking down on drug abuse, or is legalization the answer? Katie Grant, a columnist and book reviewer at the *Spectator*, a British weekly magazine, has some thoughts, "If

using cheaper heroin meant taking a bit of a risk, they would think the risks worth taking, just as they go to a loan shark instead of a bank” (2005, 1). This quote, as sad as some may see it, is true. Addicts will always exist and to protect some is better than to ignore the problem, drugs can be made safer and less people can die from overdose and laced drugs, legalization is the only answer. Arguments against legalization is that adult’s private behavior should be regulated (the government does know best). However, cigarettes cause more deaths than any illegal drug, alcohol is legal along with abortion, adultery and divorce which causes just as much heartache and pain as illegal narcotics and marijuana and all listed above is in their private lives and not regulated. So why drugs (Anderson 2004, 1)?

Many believe that legalization will only allow younger and younger people to become exposed to drugs such as marijuana, heroin and cocaine. This is simply shown by the drinking age; when the drinking age is twenty-one eighteen, nineteen and twenty-year-olds drink, but when it was moved to eighteen fifteen, sixteen and seventeen-year-olds drank. So depending on the age for ganja and narcotics there would be far too many younger kids on drugs (Rundles 2012, 46).

The fact that these younger kids are drinking isn’t always due to the fact of their age – sometimes it is simply how they’re raised and who they’re friends with. If a seventeen or sixteen-year-old is friends with a twenty-one-year old it brings them into the drinking life faster, the same goes for illegal drugs at any age. Having the drugs become legal may actually deter younger kids from consuming them at a younger age. When the drugs are illegal, there is no will or incentive to wait to do them – they’ll be in trouble no matter what age. However, when they know that in only a year there will be no punishment they are more likely to wait.

Legalization will also have a huge stride forward written in – the eradication of the addictive gene. Although it is always sad that someone dies because of addiction, it is inevitable. Legalizing drugs can help make our drugs cleaner and safer, but it will also kill those with the addictive gene, because they won’t be able to stop consuming the drug. Legalization of drugs would clean the gene pool. Addiction – whether environmental or genetic – runs in families. Those who are predisposed to the addiction will most likely die off whether legal or illegal, but when they become legal those with the predisposed addiction can die off that normally wouldn’t – this will bring down the death rate in the future and the addiction rate. Drugs can once again be recreational, like they’re meant to be – an escape from the world.

There are options for the future of marijuana and narcotics; decriminalization, legalization, education and prohibition. Marijuana can be decriminalized and taxed heavily, but not heavily enough for people to go to illegal marijuana. The rules that apply for tobacco should be the same for

marijuana – the only difference being that with decriminalization the drugs can be taken away for misuse, but no legal implications will follow. This would help keep drug lords in poverty, cut down on those in jail for drug use who are typically no danger and help keep drugs safer. Decriminalization could cause less gang violence. Also, the crime rate would decrease – not only because less drug users would be breaking the law, but there would be less turf wars occurring. The current approach of prohibition only causes a great demand and more glamour (Hitchens 2007, 42). As Baird has put in a very good way, “Prohibition is a simplistic solution to a complex problem that simply does not work.” Throughout history it has been shown that prohibition increases consumption, death and addiction rate (2012, 17).

People should be more educated on what drugs do to one’s body. In the 1980-1990’s usage of cocaine and heroin decreased due to education, not legalization or decriminalization. Strong prevention will cut back usage and death along with use of ads about negative side effects (Bennett 2013, 2). Instead of money being spent on the “war on drugs” it can be spent on addiction help, health matters, prevention of drug abuse and overall education. Instead of banning drugs that will be used either way, we should educate people about the danger that they are putting into their body (Baird 2012, 16).

Finally, the option of legalization. Legalization would not increase drug use because those who are already doing it aren’t going to stop because it’s illegal or increase usage only because it’s legalized. Drug usage will remain the same or even decrease because some people only do it to break the law (Gardner 2002, 15). Besides recreational use there are also medical benefits to marijuana. Cannabis has anti cancer activates that has proven through preclinical and clinical data that has concluded that cancer cells reproduce less quickly. It has been proven that medical marijuana does not just alleviate symptoms, but actually help modify diseases. Cannabis helps moderate autoimmune disorder such as Alzheimer’s and Lou Gehrig’s disease (Armento 2013, 2).

What many people confuse with legalization is that it is promoting drugs – it is simply saying people want to change the laws so conditions can be made safer for users. Legalization takes a big weight off the addict’s shoulders – they’re no longer in it for doing something illegal and if they need help, they’re more likely to go and get it (Baird 2012, 15). Legalization is a great alternative to decriminalization or prohibition.

Legalization will help stimulate the economy by creating new jobs, both farming, manufacturing stories and new sales men. Unemployment is at an all time high and it is time to do something about this. Both Rebecca and Brett have experienced the difficulties of already legal drugs and America still supports the use and legalization of them. It is time to support the future of our country – legalization of marijuana and narcotics. Legalization will help eradicate the

addictive gene while still making drugs safer for those using it recreationally. It will also help the medical field through the benefits that marijuana brings. Lastly, it is a right. In the Bill of Rights, it states that we have the right to our private behavior and there is no reason to regulate our private behavior on drugs when we can cause just as much harm through adultery and divorce. There are many positives to drug legalization – both marijuana and narcotics.

Through my research and knowledge, I have personally concluded that it is not only in the people's best interest, but in the government's best interest. The decrease in unemployment rate should be a major encouragement, along with the promise of eradication of the addictive gene. I believe that people should be educated on the matter. Everyone should know what they're doing to their body, how their body will be affected and how they can stay clean. HIV/AIDS is on an up rise due to unsanitary needles being shared. Legalization will help give addicts the push to receive help with dirty needles and addiction. I have personally been affected by drug abuse and the horrors that go along with it and I know firsthand what it is like to lose someone because of addiction over dose and side effects from someone over dosing. I hope to think that if they would have been more educated about the subject then they may have been able to better their lives by choosing a different path. However, we all have the right to choose what goes into our bodies. We have a right to damage our bodies recreationally and we also have the right to benefit them medically through the benefits of marijuana and other helpful narcotics. There will always be drugs in the world, education can reduce abuse and legalization will remain the rights that we were given. Our country is addicted to control – legalize drugs.

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