

Module 2:

The Future of American Drug Policy

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The problem of illicit drugs has been a thorn on the side of healthy communities, medical industry, and law enforcement in the United State. As explained in Dr Erik Fritzvold's lecture, Dr Acosta, former of the United Nations office of Drug Control police, once stated that the international drug trade "is not a small enemy against which we struggle, it is a monster." That statement has proven true as the United States continues to struggle with this growing health concern (Fritzvold, 2020).

As Director of the National Drug Control Policy, my policy would be to legalize drugs in the United States. This controversial move will enable our government to control, make, and sell the drugs in a responsible and safer manner. The second aspect would allocate monies resulting from the multi-billion dollar industry to be distributed to our inner city and socio-economic impacted communities that have been historically affected by drug abuse and broken families. The third aspect would be for nationwide strengthened education and prevention efforts for narcotic use. The use of medical and psychological professionals in order to assist with addictions and the psychological need for drugs. Lastly the monies and resources will be directed to the homeless and mental health victims of our communities.

The "War on Drugs" has been a 45-year struggle within law enforcement. In Dr. Erik Fritzvold's presentation on the Socio-Historic Analysis of Punitive Prohibition he explains that Dr. John Dombink stated, "American drug policy has largely used the criminal justice system as the primary vehicle to again deter and punish those involved with drug use in the drug trade (Fritzvold, 2020). Looking back we have to ponder why this social and medical issue has been left on the lap of law enforcement to solve. Between local, state, and national level of law enforcement, the narcotic issue has drained the resources of taxpayers and the manpower of the law enforcement communities. Dr Fritzvold continues to explain that in light of the high enforcement efforts of the last 45 years, cost of illicit drugs has actually decreased and the street sales have increased in our communities (Fritzvold, 2020).

“The legalization of marijuana is found in the majority of the United States, as 11 states have legal marijuana sales, and 33 states allow it for medical purposes,” the process has made direct criminal and economic benefits (Berke & Guld, 2020). “Legalization eliminates arrests for trafficking and possession,” explains Jeffrey Miron, director of undergraduate studies at Harvard University. Miron also explains that, “Second, legalization saves judicial and incarceration expenses. Third, legalization allows taxation of drug production and sale” (Reuteman, 2012). The monies spent on enforcement can be allocated to provide much needed services and attention to our challenged socio-economic neighborhoods in our communities.

Dr. Fritzvold explains in his Socio-historic presentation of the various perspectives of drug use and abuse. These include moral weakness, personality disorder, addiction, escapism, or a “byproduct of poverty or growing up in a disadvantaged environment with limited educational opportunities...manifest in drug use” (Fritzvold, 2020). The latter issue of poverty and the disadvantaged environment and communities can be focused on and improved. A police officer working in a drug infested community explains that in the rough Eastern Baltimore area, “Drugs is bad, but these people got issues that got nothing to do with drugs. People have to start investing in the city. In schools. Show the kids something better. But it’ll take time” (Moskos, 2009, p. 48). This holds true as drug sales and the “thug life” is glamorized and proven financially fruitful. The consequences of prison and violence is an afterthought.

However, with the drug sales relegated to the government, the local drug dealer will no longer thrive in these inner cities as the competition will destroy his business. Many of the Baltimore officers believe that, “A ghetto culture of violence, sex, and drug use creates poverty” (Moskos, 2020, p.39). By focusing on programs and job skills, parenting classes, education incentives and scholarships, as well as a variety of after school programs, such as film and music production, we can invest in stronger and healthier communities.

The elements of education and drug prevention will be a mandate in schools and our communities. Moreover, the homeless and the mental health issues of the inner cities will be

focused upon with additional resources in order to combat those afflicted with severe mental health concerns. In the documentary, "Seattle is Dying," drug use and abuse has created many tent communities that thrive with the billion dollar resources that the city has provided. The proposed government control and sale of drugs and its monies can provide stronger drug rehabilitation for those addicted as well as increased mental health facilities. The amount of people in mental health crisis are staggering. The cost for care and proper housing in imperative for their well being as well as the communities.

"Nationwide, prescription opioids caused more than 16,000 deaths across all ages in 2013, a 50 percent increase from three years before, according the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Law enforcement officials say that abuse of the drugs has also contributed to a spike in heroin usage and deaths from heroin overdoses as some opioid users switch to the cheaper narcotic" (Kearney, 2015). The use of the "Providence Model" should be further explored. This medication assistance program has shown to help those break away from drugs such as heroin and methamphetamines (Seattle is Dying, 2017). This program along with a positive and healthy environment, should assist these afflicted with drug abuse. The government can also ensure the quality of its product, as it reduces the negative elements as well as the accidental overdose.

The multi-billion dollar struggle with drugs, and the continued dependency on law enforcement to punish for drug use and abuse have proven futile. The frustrations of communities and their cities that have felt the negative affects of trash, homeless encampments, and the amount of drug impacted users have only grown over time. The government control of these street drugs can control the disbursement and sales, as well as use the funds to provide eduction and revitalize the neighborhoods that sorely need improvement and attention. This policy change will release the demands on law enforcement, and place the burden on our medical and psychological communities to take better care of members of our community that require the assistance. This will also provide training for job skills and education for those afflicted to positively transform their lives .

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