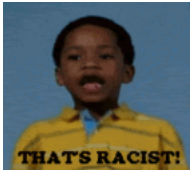




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The War on Drugs: It's Time to Roll Out the Portuguese Model

Posted September 12th 12:03pm by [Larry Harris, Jr.](#)

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In June of 2011 [the Global Commission on Drug Policy](#), a 19-member panel of world leaders, issued a report saying that “the global war on drugs has failed.”

Conventional wisdom on drug policy, however, has not yet caught up with the dominating opinion of our world's leaders. Yes, a majority (55%) of Americans now support legalizing marijuana, according to [a recent poll by Angus Reid Public Opinion](#). But, while marijuana legalization in the United States is certainly a step in the right direction to a more sensible global drug policy, being only in favor of marijuana legalization instead of decriminalizing the possession of all drugs is kind of missing the point. In the same Angus Reid Public Opinion poll, researchers found that when asked about legalizing other drugs (cocaine, methamphetamine, heroin, and ecstasy), none had more than 10% support from Americans.



LEGALIZE.

I understand that America's Second Favorite Pastime — [42% of Americans admit to having tried marijuana](#) — isn't perceived as a “big deal” like experimenting with harmful drugs such as cocaine, meth or heroin. And, I'm not advocating full legalization of anything truly harmful. [I support the legalization of marijuana based on research about its use, effects and medicinal benefits.](#)

But in terms of harmful narcotics, I support the *decriminalization* of possession.

Drug use and drug dependency are medical issues, not criminal justice issues. People who are susceptible to addiction or addicted to harmful drugs in the United States should be treated in a similar or more comprehensive manner than the way we treat alcoholics. I support [the Portuguese model](#): ¹

At the recommendation of a national commission charged with addressing Portugal's drug problem, jail time was replaced with the offer of therapy. The argument was that the fear of prison drives addicts underground and that incarceration is more expensive than treatment — so why not give drug addicts health services instead? Under Portugal's new regime, people found guilty of possessing small amounts of drugs are sent to a panel consisting of a psychologist, social worker and legal adviser for appropriate treatment (which may be refused without criminal punishment), instead of jail.

Portugal's new drug policy has been met with truly interesting results. The Cato Institute called Portugal's drug policy “[a resounding success](#)”:

The Cato paper reports that between 2001 and 2006 in Portugal, rates of lifetime use of any illegal drug among seventh through ninth graders fell from 14.1% to 10.6%; drug use in older teens also declined. Lifetime heroin use among 16-to-18-year-olds fell from 2.5% to 1.8% (although there was a slight increase in marijuana use in that age group). New HIV infections in drug users fell by 17% between 1999 and 2003, and deaths related to heroin and similar drugs were cut by more than half. In addition, the number of people on methadone and buprenorphine treatment for drug addiction rose to 14,877 from 6,040, after decriminalization, and money saved on enforcement allowed for increased funding of drug-free treatment as well.

After 40 years of debate, data collection and experience, we now have enough facts about drug use and the efficacy of prohibition to understand that prohibition isn't a reasonable policy. But, the question remains: Why does the Portuguese model work?

Demand for drugs around the world is [inelastic](#) like demand for alcohol always has been, and oil is currently. That means, no matter what the change is in the supply of drugs around the world, including when the War on Drugs is operating to control the supply side, demand will remain constant. So, a Black Market is created to supply the rampant demand for prohibited drugs, just like the days of Al Capone and the liquor bootleggers.

Today's bootleggers are international drug lords, inner city gang members, meth lab operators, Mexican cartels and your local pot dealer. Stopping supply will never work, as evidenced in the Global Commission on Drug Policy report. The demand for drugs is so high that no matter how hard international and local police make it for drugs to enter society, they will make it here. Pursuing prohibition on drugs from the demand side is also not reasonable. Instead of telling people to “Just Say No” or sending them to jail for drug use, we should be encouraging drug abusers to go seek treatment.

Larry Harris, Jr. is Black Bobby — an MC, libertarian political activist, social entrepreneur and the second most interesting man in the world. He lives in Miami but is originally from Washington, DC. Stunt Hard, my friends: [blackbobby.com](#). Also, read his full HV archive [HERE](#).

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Kevin_smith202

America has been so captivated by the propaganda handed down by Nixon which started it all that they now place people who struggle with addiction in the same category as murders thieves and rapists. When did law stray away from these three most important issues? Seems like now-a-days, laws are just ways of controlling free will even when that free will is not endangering anyone. I was sentenced to four years in a Kentucky prison for possession of a half of an oxycontin. That same day, a man was released on probation via an Alford plea on a murder charge. Now tell me where is justice? While I was incarcerated I was then required to complete a six month SAP program before I could be released on parole. It took 18 months after I made parole before I could even get into a SAP program and then another 6 months of prison drug treatment. By the time I completed the program I was served out on good behavior. My question is why is it considered a crime first just to possess something but after incarcerated it is considered a disease which requires treatment before somebody can make parole? When did free will become a crime in this country that lives by the phrase "Land of the Free"? Why can somebody tell me that by putting a substance inside my body that constitutes some horrible crime? And if addiction is a sickness then why are we locking people away in prison for it? Morality was pushed out the window when Nixon started his war on drugs and America has been brainwashed into being cruel toward the suffering simply because society as a whole conformed to the bullshit under the illusion of free will! The only freedom we possess is the freedoms passed down by congress!

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grow in a way that would honor and preserve their legacies as ours.

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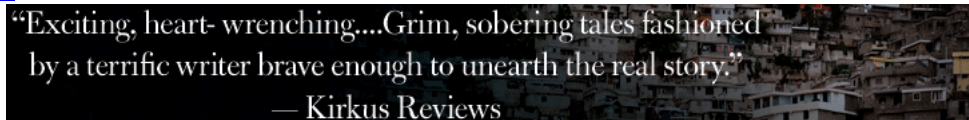
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