

5 Reasons Marijuana Should Remain Illegal

by John Hawkins

How did we end up in a world where Big Gulps are being banned in New York while the welcome mat for potheads is being rolled out in Colorado? How is it that cigarette smokers are pariahs, while people smoking weed are being cheered? This is despite the fact that potheads are almost universally recognized as unmotivated, low class, degenerate – and, yes, smelly failures. Even the ones that get somewhere in life, like Barack Obama, usually turn out to be mediocrities.

Moreover, we all recognize that smoking is a dirty habit that makes you die younger while drinking is a potentially dangerous habit that leads to hundreds of thousands of deaths per year, but we want to condone pot use on top of that? That's like saying you've got a bad back and a bad shoulder; so why not break your knee cap to top it all off. How many lives are we willing to flush down the drain because a significant number of Americans tried pot a handful of times in their lives, got away with it and now feel guilty about it? One hundred for every person in prison? 1000? 10,000? There's a reason pot was made illegal in the first place and quite frankly, the only reason alcohol and cigarettes are legal is because they're so deeply ingrained in our society that we can't get rid of them.

There is certainly a financial and human cost to keeping marijuana illegal and we can see it in our prisons. But, there would be an even larger cost to making it legal.

1) It's extremely addictive for some people

It would be malpractice to say that cannabis isn't addictive. Anybody who's experienced it, actually been addicted to it, knows how profound that addiction is.... The difficult thing about marijuana addiction is some people, even though they're addicted can do fine with it for many many years before they start to have difficulty, but eventually the high starts wearing off, people start smoking a lot more to try to get that high back and that's when they descend into difficulties. ...I've been treating cannabis addiction for 20 years. When people are addicted to cannabis, cocaine and alcohol the drug they have the most difficult time giving up is the cannabis. It is extremely addictive...for some people. I think that's where people get confused. It's not very addictive for many people. It's a small subset of people with a genetic potential for addiction. But for them it is really tough. You only need talk to them, they'll tell you how tough it is.

Additionally, that "small subset" Dr. Drew is talking about [isn't so small in a big country like America](#). *"Of the 7.3 million persons aged 12 or older classified with illicit drug dependence or abuse in 2012, 4.3 million persons had marijuana dependence or abuse."* It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that the more legal and available marijuana becomes, the higher those numbers are going to go.

2) This experiment hasn't worked out so well for Amsterdam: Humans being what they are, just about any stupid idea we can come up with has already been tried somewhere else. Amsterdam is the most famous place across the world that has effectively legalized pot. It has even turned into a tourist destination for potheads. Legalizing weed has been a huge success there, right? Actually, not so much... Its citizens are [now alarmed that their children are increasingly being exposed to it](#).

Amsterdam today became the first city in the Netherlands to ban students from smoking marijuana at school.

The city's mayor Eberhard van der Laan introduced the law after school chiefs complained about pupils turning up to classes high after rolling up outside the grounds.

Marijuana is widely available in Holland as, although it is technically illegal, police can't prosecute people for possession of small amounts.

But it has also had the unwanted side effect that Dutch children are frequently exposed to the drug in public areas.

Additionally, contrary to the claims that legalizing it will reduce crime, in [Amsterdam it's been found that crime is now centering around the coffeehouses where marijuana is sold](#).

...Certainly the outlook for coffee shops is bleak. Among the few policies that the three parties in the new coalition government agree on is the need to reduce their numbers. The governing agreement released last week laid out plans that will force them to become members-only clubs and shut down those shops located near schools.

The coalition is also advancing the idea of prohibiting the sale of cannabis to non-Dutch residents, which amounts to a death knell for many coffee shops.

...The circumstances that led to the tolerance policies have changed in the past decade, as large-scale crime around coffee shops and the legal sex trade became more visible. In particular, the absence of legal means for coffee shops to obtain cannabis has highlighted their association with organized crime.

But the open-minded instincts that helped foster the policies are also being questioned. And it is not just the far-right opposing coffee shops. The traditional parties of power on the center-right, the Christian Democrats and the Liberal VVD, have also moved against the policies they once promoted.

That doesn't exactly sound like a success story, does it?

3) Marijuana is terrible for your mental health: Marijuana may even be WORSE than cigarettes. At least [cigarettes don't peel points off of your IQ](#).

A recent Northwestern University study found that marijuana users have abnormal brain structure and poor memory and that chronic marijuana abuse may lead to brain changes resembling schizophrenia. The study also reported that the younger the person starts using marijuana, the worse the effects become.

In its own report arguing against marijuana legalization, the American Medical Association said: "Heavy cannabis use in adolescence causes persistent impairments in neurocognitive performance and IQ, and use is

associated with increased rates of anxiety, mood and psychotic thought disorders."

So, there's a good reason most habitual marijuana users come off as stupid. The drug is making them stupider, even when they're not high. You really want your kids on that?

4) Marijuana is terrible for your physical health: How bad is marijuana for you? It's [even more toxic than cigarette smoke](#). Regular users are hit with devastating lung problems as much as [20 years earlier than smokers](#). Even small amounts of marijuana can cause [temporary sterility](#) and it has a terrible impact on the babies of women who smoke including *"birth defects, mental abnormalities and increased risk of leukemia in children."* If your standard is, "Well, it's better for you than Meth or Crack," that's true, but you're deluding yourself if you think pot is anything other than absolutely horrible for your health.

5) The drug decimates many people's lives: Movies portray potheads as harmless, fun-loving people who spend their time giggling and munching Cheetos, but they don't show these people when they're flunking out of school, losing their jobs, frustrated because they can't concentrate or losing the love of their lives because they just don't want to be with a pot smoking loser anymore. [Even in the limited number of studies that are out there, the numbers are stark.](#)

A study of 129 college students found that, among those who smoked the drug at least twenty-seven of the thirty days before being surveyed, critical skills related to attention, memory and learning were seriously diminished. A study of postal workers found that employees who tested positive for marijuana had 55% more accidents, 85% more injuries and a 75% increase in being absent from work. In Australia, a study found that cannabis intoxication was responsible for 4.3% of driver fatalities.

...Students who use marijuana have lower grades and are less likely to get into college than nonsmokers. They simply do not have the same abilities to remember and organize information compared to those who do not use these substances.

It's bad enough that we already lose so many Americans to cigarettes, alcoholism, and drunken driving. Do we really want to endorse the loss of millions more potentially productive Americans via Marijuana? Do we move on from there to Crack, Heroin or Meth? Some people would say, "If they want to do it, great, then it's no business of ours." But, you can also bet that those same people will be complaining about all the junkies and welfare cases that will be created by the policy they endorsed.

So, ask yourself a few key questions. Is legalizing Marijuana going to make this a better country or a worse one? Would you want to live in a neighborhood filled with people who regularly smoke marijuana? Would you want your kids regularly smoking pot? Now is the time to think about it because although it's easy to thoughtlessly legalize a drug like marijuana, when things go predictably wrong down the road, it will be a lot harder to put the genie back in the bottle than people seem to think.