

## DRUGS & RACE

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In 1969 America was in turmoil. There were demonstrations against the Vietnam war and riots in our cities. The civil rights movement was growing rapidly. H.R. Halderman, President Nixon's Chief of Staff, said, in his diary, that Nixon emphasized that **"...the whole problem is really the blacks. The key is to devise a system that recognizes this while not appealing to."** And so today's war on drugs began.

Now, more than three decades later, we see how effective that terrible policy has become.

- One in three black men between the ages of 20 and 29 years old is under correctional supervision or control.
- According to the federal Household Survey, **"most current illicit drug users are white.** There were an estimated 9.9 million whites (72 percent of all users), 2.0 million blacks (15 percent), and 1.4 million Hispanics (10 percent) who were current illicit drug users in 1998." And yet, blacks constitute 36.8% of those arrested for drug violations, over 42% of those in federal prisons for drug violations. African-Americans comprise almost 58% of those in state prisons for drug felonies; Hispanics account for 20.7%.
- America imprisons about the same number of its black citizens as did South Africa under apartheid.

- In New York State 94% of drug offenders serving time in state prison are either black or Hispanic.
- Regardless of similar or equal levels of illicit drug use during pregnancy, black women are 10 times more likely than white women to be reported to child welfare agencies for prenatal drug use.
- The incarceration rate for white men is 649 per 100,000. For African-American men, the rate is 4,810 per 100,000; for Hispanic men the rate is 1,740 per 100,000. Currently there are almost two million children with one or both parents in prison.

Racist or not, with all these people in prison at least our streets are safe... or are they? Drug gang related violence has escalated in recent years and will continue to escalate unless the profits made possible by drug dealing are substantially reduced.

We can no longer afford to encourage the growth of violent gangs by supporting prohibitionist policies that make participating in the drug trade so lucrative. The time has come to learn the lesson we should have learned from the era of alcohol prohibition. Prohibition creates more problems than it solves.

Our current drug laws have no deterrent effect on drug dealers because the profits are so great and the risk of getting caught is slight. Most youths report that it is easier to obtain illegal drugs than it is to obtain alcohol because the market for alcohol is regulated and the black market for drugs is not. Drugs are more available, more potent, and cheaper than in 1968. There are more prisons than ever and they're bursting at the seams. People are dying daily in our streets as a result of drug-business related violence.

Obviously, what we've been doing is causing more harm than good, especially to the black community. We want safe streets. We want to get rid of the gangs. We want to put more money into programs to help our youth, not put them in prison, and to help families, not tear them apart.

### *What should we do?*

- ◆ **Work to repeal harsh drug laws like New York's Rockefeller Drug Laws.**
- ◆ **Work toward regulating the sale of the currently illegal drugs.**

***We need to put the drug dealers out of business once and for all and take back control of our neighborhoods.***

**RECONSIDER our drug policy NOW!**

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