

Legalize Drugs:**Legalizing drugs would yield many benefits**

Becky Browning
Guest Writer

The argument to make narcotics legal raises many questions and provokes gut feelings in many people. However, America has fallen victim to a serious drug problem and perhaps a radical solution is needed. Though the idea of legalizing narcotics creates many conflicts, it does carry a lot of weight and should be seriously considered.

Drugs are dangerous and many believe that legalization will increase the number of addicts. Unfortunately this belief has some basis, for while only 10 percent of the people who drink alcohol become alcoholics, 75 percent of all drug users become addicted.

The amount of money spent on the health costs of drug abuse (therapy for addicts, treatment for people who have overdosed, etc.), which currently costs \$60 billion annually, would increase substantially.

Finally, one of the greatest fears surrounding the concept of legalization is that taking drugs would become socially accepted if the laws surrounding it were removed.

Proponents of the concept of legal narcotics have already created standards to control drugs should they become legal. In the beginning the only drugs legal would be marijuana, cocaine and crack, all of which would be sold at fixed, low prices in drug stores.

They will not be sold to people under 21 in order to protect minors who may not realize the full effects of these substances, and a campaign against drug use similar to the effort to prevent smoking would also be started to deter use of these substances.

The argument for legal drugs that has the most clout is the amount of money and time illegal narcotics currently cost U.S. taxpayers. In 1988, \$8 billion was spent on enforcing drug laws and drug-related crimes.

Joseph McNamara, the police commissioner of California's drug-ridden Silicon Valley, claims that 80 percent of his forces' time is spent on drug-related crimes. The result of this has been overcrowded jails and overwhelmed courts.

Because drugs are illegal, dealers charge outrageously high prices as a "risk fee." The high cost turns poor addicts to crime and promotes the formation of gangs which have

transformed once peaceful neighborhoods into shooting galleries.

If narcotics were to be legalized, the gangs would disband and the crime rate would drop severely.

As a result of the narcotics market organized crime has become very powerful in ways that '20s gangsters could only have dreamt. Children in some areas aspire to become drug lords, to get their share of easy money and the key to the good life. If narcotics were legalized, that money would be put into the American system instead of into organized crime.

If drugs become legal, the strained relations between the United States and some Latin American countries would be improved. Every crack-down the United States makes on countries that are unable to control their drug problem creates serious problems in foreign policy.

Legalization would also eliminate the \$2 billion that goes to Latin American drug cartels yearly.

If drugs were legalized the crime rate would drop severely, billions of illegal dollars would be either eliminated or pumped into the U.S. government and our distorted Latin American policy would have a chance to improve. Legalization of narcotics is a valid and underrated solution to a serious problem.

Keep Drugs Illegal:**Discourage addiction by keeping drugs illegal**

Joshua Fraenkel
Staff Writer

While inner city gangs with automatic guns fight over control of the dispersing of drugs in their territories, we commonly hear in the evening news about other casualties of the drug war.

The solution: many people choose to give up what they term "a winless war" by legalizing drugs. If carried out, this policy would still impose some restrictions such as prohibiting the use of drugs by minors, as if this would make any difference. Those who fight

for the legalization of drugs do have a credible concern for all the violence caused by highly valued drugs.

Addicts kill for drugs they cannot afford, and dealers are unwilling to part with drugs without making good money or losing their lives. Thus, those in favor of drug legalization envision that, once this country adopts greater libertarian goals and progresses on the path of an individual's freedom, it will be more inhabitable, with less crime and violence.

With the legalization of drugs comes commercialization and mass distribution, which cannot be restricted to only light drugs like pot, but must include heavy addictive drugs such as heroin and crack if we are to have truly legalized drugs.

If one chooses not to legalize these heavy drugs, then the legalization of any drugs is a total farce and will have no effect on the inner city crime and violence. Thus, automatically with the legalization of drugs comes their easy availability in supermarkets.

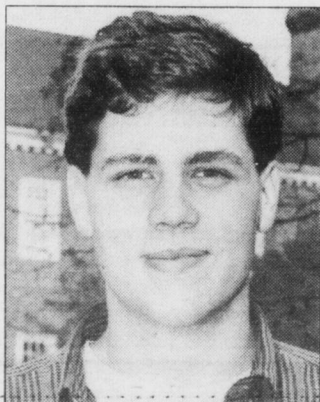
DISCUSSION FORUM: DRUGS AND THE LAW

The aim of the Discussion Forum is to promote understanding by providing two compelling views about issues to Guilford students.

America's recent war on drugs has divided the country into factions. Some claim that the legalization of drugs will eliminate drug-associated violence and murder, while others think legalized drugs will only compound the problem

Should drugs be legalized?

photos by Joan Malloch



"I do think they [drugs] should be legalized. What people do in the privacy of their own homes is their own business, until they infringe on someone else's life. What people forget, though, is that alcohol is the most dangerously abused drug in the United States"

Drew Altizer



"No- I think that because drugs are so destructive to the body, they are morally wrong."

Doug Griffith



"I think certain drugs should be legalized to take pressure off the police force and the judicial process. And the fact that people are going to continue to use certain drugs regardless."

Laura Slaughter

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