
THE CITIZEN

for Social Responsibility

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FREE

The Plague of Drugs and...Our Children

The United States of America is among the most violent of societies in the world. Central to many of the U.S.A.'s ills, if not the main cause of many social problems, are illicit drugs which tax health, welfare, social programs and contribute to AIDS, general crime and violence.

Since 1981, the federal drug budget has soared from about \$1.5 billion a year to well over \$25 billion. The nation's state and federal prisons, which in 1980 housed fewer than 30,000 drug offenders, today house about half a million! The immense cost of this plague is paid by all taxpayers and by families, whose children grow up and must face this dilemma in the schools they attend and in the social activities they will frequent.

DRUGS ARE BIG "BUSINESS." Traffickers are well organized in close-knit groups and they have the money at their disposal to buy just about anything or anybody, (see sources, Underground Empire, Cocaine Politics). Episodically the public obtains glimpses; such as the cases in NYC with the NAP commission, the Serpico affair, and more recently in Los Angeles. Although those directly implicated in such corruption cases tend to be small in number, society will probably never truly know the extent or true numbers of those involved.

Drug traffickers are almost invariably tied to organized crime. The money they get from their street sales is laundered (cleaned, made legitimate) by passing the money through "front businesses" that ordinarily are cash businesses, like restaurants, supermarkets, money transmitter companies, or deposited at foreign banks.

What drives this? Greed. And your kids, our children is where the money comes from! No child grows up wanting to be a drug addict. They are introduced to it by peers, by "friends" who sell drugs or by others who they meet at parties, or at nightclubs. What parent will tell their children that they cannot go to a birthday party, to

a mall, or go out occasionally with their friends who "seem OK"? However, by the time a parent finds out that their son or daughter has a problem, it is often too late and very difficult to get them to stop their addiction. By this time they are rebellious and will do anything to continue to feed their habit.

The cocktail of drugs that our children face, include what sometimes are called "soft drugs" like; marijuana which can be called --"reefer", "roach", "a joint"; cocaine also called coke; amphetamines which are pills; and Ecstasy; a designer drug used to lower a person's will and which gives a sense of euphoria. It is commonly available and used by many who go to nightclubs.

Drugs are not just sold in nightclubs or on street corners by "pushers." They are sold in schools by students or others, and have even been known to be delivered in pizza boxes to drug users at home!

Newark's Drug Baron

By: Victor Saraiva

Manuel Simoes was a well known personality in the Ironbound section of Newark. A well to do restaurateur who slowly built up his business and came to be known as "Fininho"-- a Portuguese term meaning extremely fine or well done. His future alias was acquired after the term, which was part of an advertising campaign for his restaurant's prime selection; suckling pig, became quite successful.

He contributed to causes and even came to be considered something of a philanthropist, by donating to charities, and charging less for events that were held at his restaurant and were sponsored by church groups. He bought team jerseys for local youth soccer teams, and even hosted an international gathering for the Portuguese athletic organization, **Sporting**, at his place of business.

Then, in the mid 80's he sold his well known restaurant on Jefferson Street, in Newark, packed his bags and returned to his native land--Portugal.

Upon arriving, he purchased a professional soccer team, built an athletic stadium, got involved in real estate and opened a nightclub, in a prime location in one of the largest cities of Portugal.

Within seven years of returning to his homeland he was finally arrested by the Portuguese Federal Police for trafficking in cocaine. His odyssey which was detailed in the **Sabado Magazine** (see sources), links Mr. Simoes to the then existent Cali cartel in Colombia. He and his henchmen imported cocaine smuggled inside industrial equipment that was made of iron and lead, and resistant to X-rays. The drug was then sold at his nightclub and on the street.

In retrospect one must wonder how Mr. Simoes, whom I knew as a hard working, rather simple, unassuming and unthreatening individual, was able to amass such "underworld connections" and involve himself in such a life. Indeed, his wealth was built here in this city, and many of his acquaintances and business associates were from here. Many still, are here.

One is left to wonder and speculate...

"1996 Monitoring the Future Study"
8th, 10th and 12th graders 1991-1996

Percent of U.S. Students Who Have Used Any ILLICIT Drug During Lifetime *

| GRADE | 1991 | 1996 |
|------------------|-------|-------|
| 8 TH | 18.7% | 31.2% |
| 10 TH | 30.6% | 45.4% |
| 12 TH | 44.1% | 50.8% |

* SOURCE National Institute on Drug and Alcohol Abuse

Percent of U.S. Students Who Have Used COCAINE During the Last Twelve Months *

| GRADE | 1991 | 1996 |
|------------------|------|------|
| 8 TH | 1.1% | 3.0% |
| 10 TH | 2.2% | 4.2% |
| 12 TH | 3.5% | 4.9% |

* SOURCE National Institute on Drug and Alcohol Abuse

What can we do ?

Plenty ! We can educate our children to know what drugs truly are about...victimization, and greed. You can help our children avoid this plague, teach them to defend themselves before they face the danger through peer pressure. **Knowledge is power.** Nearly all studies into the drug epidemic agree on one point--**prevention is the key.**

According to a leading anti-drug grassroots organization; **RED RIBBON WORKS**, which began in honor of a slain DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration) undercover agent; parents are crucial in the fight against drugs. RED RIBBON suggests the following;

1. Spend quality time with your children. Know what is troubling them. Help them resolve problems by considering options.
2. Give your children chores to do around the home. Give them responsibilities that contribute to the family and its "togetherness."
3. Establish family boundaries; explain what is acceptable behavior and what is not. Don't be excessively judgmental. Teach your children how to foresee the consequences of his or her actions.
4. **HELP YOUR CHILD SAY NO.** Show your child that there are times when they must think through a situation; (Where are we going ? Who is involved ? What can happen if I do this ?) Help your children understand that they can always say no and walk away from the situation. They can say something like; My mom will ground me till I'm 30 if she finds out.
5. Role play with your child, how to get out of a bad situation. Pick a code word like, Aunt Maggie or spaghetti, so that your child can call you if he/she needs to get away from a potentially bad situation. For

example he or she is at a party, and things are getting out of hand and your child wants to be picked up by you. The code word allows them to save face, escape peer pressure, and stay safe.

In a recent Parade Magazine interview with Gen. Barry McCaffrey, the federal government's drug czar, he outlined some additional points which all parents should heed;

1. Know your child's friends and spend time with them.

2. Show enthusiasm about what your children think is important. Do fun things as a family.

3. Make your home a positive and a good place to be.

4. Be a nosy parent. Know where they go, what they do and who they are with. Let your children know why you want to know; to make them safe and because you love them.

Whatever you decide to do, one thing you can never do; be apathetic and think the problem will go away. It won't. Evil thrives when good people do nothing !

One Person *can* Make a Difference

Enrique Camarena made a difference. Known by his friends as Kiki, he died in the line of duty as an undercover DEA agent. Kiki came to this country with his family from Mexico and grew up amid the difficulties of our inner cities. He saw his friends and neighbors get caught up in gang violence, crime and what he saw as the primary culprit of much of the violence--drugs.

Although his family could not afford to put him through college, he stayed in school, worked his way through school and obtained a degree in criminal justice. He eventually joined the DEA, our government's special police force which works to keep drugs from coming into this country.

His work was dangerous, he knew this and so did his family. His mother asked him not to do it because she was afraid for him, but he said, "NO, even if I'm only one person, I can make a difference" (see source: Red Ribbon Works).

While he was working undercover in Mexico, he was assassinated by those whom he was gathering evidence against for trafficking in drugs. Kiki's death was supposed to be a statement by the drug lords to instill fear among law enforcement and the public. Instead, Kiki's

death created a martyr, and led to public outrage. To honor him his family, and friends wore red ribbons. As his story spread across our nation others also wore red ribbons. Now October 23rd- 31st is celebrated as Red Ribbon Week, to remember Kiki and as a way for all Americans to make a statement; that **we too are fed up with this plague !**

EDITORIAL

The Citizen for Social Responsibility is a grassroots organization which has been founded to address social, moral, and civil rights issues of concern in our society. It does not seek monetary profit. It is based in Newark, NJ. The editor of **The Citizen** is Victor Saraiva. Our editor has a Bachelor of Arts degree from Rutgers University, worked for several years in banking and effective 1995, as a result of his experiences of working and living in the city of Newark, he resolved to combat the growing menace of corruption tied to drug traffic. In that same year, he lodged a complaint with the FBI concerning a group active in the City of Newark. To date no action tied to that complaint has materialized. He has since, been subjected to various, often quite subtle, forms of harassment and intimidation. Articles which Mr. Saraiva has written and submitted for publication, have been censored by simply not being published. As a result, **The Citizen** was "born."

Although we will explore various issues, we are particularly concerned with the drug epidemic, whose effects are methodically destroying the very fabric of our society. Quite often drugs, have an impact similar to what can be described as a social weapon that is aimed at poor neighborhoods, the working poor, and at minorities. Its effects literally destroy families, and the cohesion (togetherness) of a neighborhood or social group. Therefore drugs truly can be seen as a social weapon.

What is perplexing in our day and age of extremely sophisticated technology and surveillance; is how our government is unable to bring to justice the main "drug lords" working in the U.S.A. ? It is almost without exception the street level "pusher" who is arrested. Or the odd man out, who is transporting small or mid level quantities across state lines. Those who import, distribute, and organize such nefarious affairs are rarely ever caught. Why is that ?

During the Senate hearings on the Iran-Contra Affair, it became public that members of our nation's intelligence community, the CIA, were directly involved in assisting in the trafficking of drugs (see sources; Cocaine Politics). It thus becomes logical to ask: How many other instances are there, that the public is ignorant of when members of our government's agencies or institutions are directly involved, assist or protect those who traffic in drugs and death?

We live in a great country, a superpower, the world's most powerful nation and the leading democracy of the planet. As members of a constitutional democracy we have a right, but more importantly--a duty, to participate and let our voice be heard, be it by voting, or by protest, when the need arises. Our constitutional right to free speech is unequivocal in that regard. Unfortunately all too often our sources of information, the media, distort, or censure what is factual (see sources; Deciding What's News), being sensitive instead to the almighty advertising dollar and those who yield it with prowess. Thus making it a necessity that we be more than ever tolerant of minorities, and the collective right of all citizens to voice their right of free speech.

To do otherwise, is to risk that "our" democracy will deteriorate into an oligarchy-- where money, raw power, and those who yield it, will dictate all our fates.

We welcome your comments, and hope that you join us in the fight to rid our city, our state and our nation of this nightmare and plague of drugs, and those who, for lack of a better definition, are no better than merchants of death. The first step in that battle, begins with prevention and with all our children.

To do nothing, is to risk everything.

More Information

on the drug issue can be found on the Internet concerning symptoms, treatment, referrals, research, and parenting at;

www.drughelp.org

www.casacolumbia.org

www.christians-in-recovery.org

www.redribbonworks.org

www.health.org/mediastudy/index.htm

www.pta.org/commonsense/

MISSION STATEMENT

The Citizen for Social Responsibility was created as an educational tool which seeks to examine critical issues in our society which are not being addressed, by motivating public debate and discussion. It is solely an enterprise which does not seek profit as its reason to exist.

We can be reached, currently by mail only, at;

SOURCES;

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New York, Vintage Books, 1980.

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Mills, James. *The Underground Empire: Where Crime and Governments Embrace*, New York, Dell, 1986.

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Our next issue

will examine the state of our schools particularly in the City of Newark. We will see how the Newark Public Schools and the Catholic Schools of the Archdiocese of Newark stand in the realm of preparing our children to defend themselves against illicit drugs, and how they are meeting standard 2.3 of the NJ Curriculum Framework; which seeks to educate children, from K- 12th grade, about substance abuse.

Till next time, we bid you well.