

27. The End of the War on Drugs

The War on Drugs in the U.S. ended in 2027. For decades, activists had been working to end marijuana prohibition, first for legitimate, if scientifically unverified medical purposes (because it was illegal to research and verify) and then for personal use, because there was no real reason for it to be illegal.

People increasingly accepted marijuana was less harmful than alcohol or tobacco, which were legal. Nobody ever died from marijuana use. Many died from alcohol and tobacco. Its primary effects were to relieve stress, inflammation and anxiety, to open, relax and expand our minds, and increase sensitivity. It really did help cancer patients with nausea and other disease and harsh treatment symptoms, like glaucoma patients, those with epilepsy, Lou Gehrig's disease and other nervous system problems, and people experiencing chronic pain. It made people mellow, not violent. It wasn't generally harmful.

By 2020, more than half of U.S. States had legalized personal marijuana use, and two-thirds medical use. Many were motivated by financial arguments. Governments could save lots on criminal justice and get lots of revenues taxing marijuana sales. Other arguments were less convincing in many legislatures. They had approved legalized gambling in state lotteries, to get at the money, not for ethical reasons, health reasons, because people wanted it, logic, science, or any other reasons. Marijuana and gambling legalization helped States balance budgets and get money for other stuff, like directing it to benefactors.

In 2023, marijuana was decriminalized at the national level, primarily because our wealthy people and big businesses wanted in on the money. In the long gray period when marijuana was illegal according to federal law, but legal according to state or local laws, they had been afraid to invest or participate in marijuana businesses, because the Federal Government might at any time decide to prosecute them and seize owner property and wealth. They wouldn't take that risk, because they had too much to lose.

Marijuana was a cottage industry. Small farmers, product makers, distributors and stores worked within local economies to grow, process and dispense weed, creating many thousands of good jobs for regular people alienated and disenfranchised from U.S. economies. Money stayed in local economies, creating multiplier effects that passed money around locally, benefitting communities and creating other jobs. People benefitted from marijuana, becoming healthier and more at peace, loving and compassionate.

Basically, marijuana became legal under federal law because of wealthy and influential individual and corporate greed. Big money wanted to be able to get into these businesses in a big way, drive the small players out of business, as they had in most other industries, and extract that money and wealth from local economies. So, they paid millions to get Congress to legalize it. They bought the law, as usual.

Within five years, people and businesses that had opposed marijuana legalization for decades were planting massive monoculture farms of thousands of acres of marijuana, genetically engineering it, so they could claim marijuana strains and attributes as intellectual property, using horrendous chemicals and toxins in its production, marketing it nationally with huge advertising budgets, making distribution deals and getting regulations and rules passed to shut out small farmers and distributors and lock the business up for them, pulling money out of local economies and destroying local livelihoods and wealth, so they could fly around in private jets, feel important, buy companies and buy influence in other ways.

That trend continued until it was overpowered by another, that of empowered Earth Citizens exerting our clout as consumers. As with movements to produce and consume good local organic foods and clean water, rather than Frankenstein industrial foods and liquids, people chose to honor our principles and values by buying local marijuana products, produced with sustainable permaculture methods, supporting workers fairly, with interesting local character, rather than cheap monoculture industrial exploitative weed, like choosing good local microbrew beer over corporatized swill. Consumers chose to grow our own, or support with our money what fit our values and principles, rather than just accept what was shoved into and down our compliant consumption holes by many-multi-millions of dollars of supply-side marketing and sales effort spending, or what was cheapest in local mega-box stores.

Over time, large scale operations were denied significant control or manipulation of marijuana markets by enlightened consumers exerting our values. Instead, big business was moved toward production of mass-market industrial hemp, the world's most efficient fiber producing plant. It grows like weed!

Hemp replaced wood pulp in paper production, saving millions of forest acres, keeping them in service as planetary lungs, breathing in carbon from the atmosphere and sequestering it in soils, helping reduce human impacts on atmospheric warming. That became patriotic. The U.S. Declaration of Independence is on hemp paper. Consumer market choices drove big agriculture businesses away from weed to hemp grown for oils, paper and packaging, and supported that, for positive environmental and health impacts. Hemp also became widely and cheaply used in fabrics and clothing, as a viable and cheaper alternative to cotton, petroleum and other forms of artificial fibers. Technical breakthroughs made that efficient and inexpensive. Consumers also supported that, for positive environmental and health impacts.

In 2017, Oregon made all "hard drugs" legal, including cocaine, methamphetamine, magic mushrooms, LSD, MDMA, heroin and opiates, arguing that it is the abuse of drugs, not their existence or healthy use that is the problem. It began to put resources and efforts into public education and treatment, instead. Drug abuse related problems plummeted, as in Portugal. Other States followed, with similar results.

By 2026, when President Sioux was in office, the writing was on the wall for the War on Drugs. We were sick of it and had been opposed to it for years. It was a failure by every measure, except private profit on prohibition or imprisonment, or voter alienation. In 2027, she worked to end it. The Government Takeback Amendment had passed, and legislators were less solidly in the pockets of their benefactors.

"Look," she said, "we've spent far more than a trillion dollars over decades trying to prevent drug abuse problems by stopping the supply of drugs and putting users and dealers in jail. Drug use and abuse have not changed at all. If anything, they are more prevalent. The War on Drugs quite simply does not work. It has never worked, and it will never work. Mostly, because it makes no sense.

An analogy. Say we like to play with rocks, and we have a problem with some angry, mean, desperate and resentful people throwing rocks and harming people, themselves and property. Should we declare a War on Rocks, spend a trillion dollars over decades trying to rid the world of rocks, put people who play with rocks in expensive prisons, even if they never harm anyone or anything, destroying their lives, or should we understand and do something about what makes some angry, mean, desperate and resentful enough to throw rocks and harm things? Even if we got rid of all rocks in the world, which we can't, those who want to throw something and do harm will pick up something else and throw it.

Human beings have a hard-wired instinct and desire to get high. It's part of our spiritual nature wanting to ascend in the dimension of consciousness, to experience new perspectives and feel higher states. We've gotten high, thousands of years, used alcohol, at least 8,000 years. Ancient Egyptians drank beer. Ancient Greeks got high in rituals and festivals. It's natural, and can be healthy and inspirational.

What's not healthy or acceptable is people feeling so depressed, degraded, hopeless, angry, resentful, sick, afraid, upset, unbalanced, lost or alienated that we find ourselves abusing drugs as what seems to be the only viable form of escape, or as self-medication to help us feel better. The problem is that we are making people feel bad with the ways we are running our society, providing no support or help, and letting people be swallowed down the dark maw of addiction and despair. That's what we gotta fix."

Six months later, the War on Drugs was over. Real medical research began on previously criminalized substances, finally allowing scientists and medical professionals to figure out what's going on with them, how they work, and how to best work with them. All research on Class 1 substances had been illegal. We figured out how to use these substances well in therapies and treatments, and for spiritual growth.

Half of prison inmates were released, there for drug related offenses. All kinds of problems related to criminal justice and prison systems went away overnight. U.S. taxpayers started saving billions of dollars per year on criminal justice and prison systems, generating lots of money from increased taxes, and benefitting from former drug abuser and criminal social and civic engagement, as these people engaged in economies, voting and government, and governments began using lots of that money for treatment, counseling and therapeutic supports for drug abusers and the emotionally and mentally ill.

They also used that money to work on social problems identified by abusers in therapies, things that led to the bad feelings that led to drug abuse, things like: racist, gender and other forms of discrimination, inadequate education and skills to participate meaningfully in the modern workforce, domestic violence, poverty, homelessness, outrage over unfairness, sexual abuse, hunger, relationship problems, bad luck, lack of social support, lack of community, loss of livelihood, lack of opportunity, nature deficit disorders, and other wicked problems half of U.S. people were barely 2 missed paychecks away from experiencing. Those were the real underlying problems that led to drug abuse and other social problems.

People started using psychedelic, psychoactive, therapeutic and entheogenic drugs in informed, safe and guided treatment, therapy and ritual, for emotional and therapeutic release and spirit illumination, creating positive inspiration, behavior and lifestyle changes, better health and relationships with death.

The War on Drugs was widely acknowledged as a colossal failure, so we stopped it, and we focused on addressing the real underlying problems, on bringing our beliefs, practices, behaviors and actions into alignment with Earth Citizen Principles and Values, and on creating the worlds we wanted to live in, feeling good about them, happy and fulfilled, and helping each other. That made common sense to us. That's the same way the gun violence epidemic was ultimately resolved, via a more meandering path.