

Reason 3

Teen Gangs Are a Deadly Growth Industry

“Indicative of an unintended consequence in the U.S. government’s marijuana policy-making: *Over one million teenagers in the U.S. sell marijuana*” (emphasis added). (1)

One million teens selling marijuana is equivalent to five percent of all American teenagers from 15 to 19 years old and the drug war has made them criminals, even if they don’t get caught. But too many do get caught. Twenty-five percent of marijuana arrests are under 18, so many of their lives are permanently scarred by a criminal record.

If we just calculate our minority teenagers from 15 to 19, the statistics are even worse; up to 13 percent have become criminals. Since teens of all races are selling drugs, any interpretation results in a minimum of five percent of our kids becoming criminals due to our drug policy. Many are selling drugs that are much more dangerous and addictive than marijuana, and these hard drugs are a major tragedy for all our kids. What other policy in any country in the world creates so many teenage dealer/criminals?

If this isn’t bad enough, teen drug gangs have a 25 percent death rate, five times deadlier than death row, where inmates have just a five percent chance of dying.

And still we’re told we wage this war to safeguard our children.

Our High Schools Are Drop-out Factories

In many of our biggest cities, including Baltimore, Cleveland, Dallas, Denver, Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, Milwaukee, and New York, less than 50 percent graduate from high school. Even more appalling and disappointing, in three of these cities, Detroit (21.7%), Baltimore (38.5%) and New York City (38.9%), less than 40 percent graduate! (2)

It’s no surprise that the highest drop-out rates are in cities with the biggest drug problems. If teens feel they can do better by selling drugs, why bother with school? And without at least a high school diploma they have little choice but a life of poverty, welfare or crime.

However, the Netherlands, with legalized drugs, has a 92 percent high school graduation rate. That’s No Child Left Behind!

Obviously, they have the answers. If we really want to accomplish something, we will end this absurd war that is leaving behind more than half our children in big cities and more than 75% in Detroit. Consider the millions of teenagers’ lives that have been lessened or ruined because they didn’t even get a high school diploma. And how many ended up in gangs, in prison, or on welfare because of our drug war? Where drugs are legally available, the teenagers stay in school.

The rest of this chapter reveals the litany of devastating and deadly tragedies that befall teenagers in gangs in this country, where drugs are illegal.

A Deadly Epidemic of Teen Gangs

“What is a gang? A gang is a group of teens and young adults that hang out together and are involved in joint violent, illegal, or criminal activity. ...

Although once thought to be an inner-city problem, gang violence has spread to communities throughout the United States. At last count, there were more than 24,500 different youth gangs around the country, and more than 772,500 teens and young adults were members of gangs. Youth gangs are responsible for

much of the serious violence in the United States. In schools and neighborhoods where they are active, they create a climate of fear and increase the violence and criminal behavior.” (3)