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Why Marijuana should NOT be legalized

I am writing on behalf of those that are opposed to legalizing Cannabis/Marijuana. There are very compelling reasons many physicians, educators, law enforcement officials, and members of the general public are opposed to Proposition 19. It is a myth propagated by society that marijuana is harmless. For older adults it can be genuinely beneficial, but for those under 25 whose bodies and minds are still growing, it can cause neurological and psychological problems for life. Studies show that if marijuana was legalized, the demographic with the largest spike in use would be amongst adolescents who could readily obtain it from their 18-year-old friends, and young adults under 25. Also, contrary to popular belief, marijuana *is* addictive to some people. Marijuana is a mind altering drug. There are numerous drugs that are mind altering and can produce negative side effects; however there are drug trials and years of analysis and data that can provide warnings to them and give its users a valid and secure way to distribute medications to the public. The system is not perfect and is ever changing, but after my research I feel that because of the ill stigma that the use of *this* drug produces in social circles, I feel that there has not been enough study done to produce information that has been read by our law enforcement agencies, as well as our medical universities, to deem it safe to use.

The harmful consequences of smoking marijuana include, but are not limited to the following: premature cancer, addiction, coordination and perception impairment, a number of mental disorders including depression, hostility and increased aggressiveness, general apathy, memory loss, reproductive disabilities, and impairment to the immune system. Marijuana is one of the illegal drugs that are most commonly abused in the United States and also around the

world. The ones that support the legalization of marijuana for medical or for general use do not understand the gravity of the situation; the costs of marijuana are not related to its prohibition but; they are the costs resulting from marijuana use itself.

If the United States legalizes marijuana there is a great probability that the marijuana users would increase. Today there are 15.2 million current marijuana users in comparison to 129 million alcohol users and 70.9 million tobacco users. If we legalize marijuana the increase in users would be both large and rapid with subsequent increases in addiction. Research shows that marijuana use is associated with serious mental and physical problems. The public's lack of understanding on this matter is making it near impossible to prevent it. , I feel that it is a big problem that's affecting the nation's youth and their families leading to devastating and inevitable consequences that will last a lifetime. Tragedies happen that cannot be taken back.

Driving under the influence of drugs also will increase if marijuana is legalized. Marijuana already is a significant cause of accidents on the highway, resulting in some tragic injuries and deaths." National roadside weekend nighttime survey" shows that 8.6 percent of arrests have tested positive for marijuana or its metabolites, this is nearly four times the percentage of drivers arrested and tested showing a blood alcohol concentration. Reducing marijuana use is necessary so that we can improve the nation's health, education, and lower the risk of accidents on the highways, and violence in the homes that sometimes lead to tragic consequences.

Australian researches showed that the earlier people start their marijuana habits especially when the brain is still developing there is greater brain damage. Results suggest that long-term cannabis use is hazardous to the white matter in the developmental

parts of our brain. Scientists from Melbourne University and Wollongong University compared MRI scans of the brain of 59 people who had been using marijuana for an average of 15 years. Compared them to 33 healthy people with healthy brains from zero use of the drug. Researchers found that the ones who have been using cannabis had disruptions in their white matter fibers. The brain's white matter is responsible for the information passed between different areas of the brains; they studied the thinking areas of the brain at peak at age eight. The white matter continues to develop as people age. One of the most profound and ground breaking discoveries of their research in my opinion is that, they found that more than 80 percent of their brain scan of individuals that use cannabis have a substantial reduction of white matter in the brain of users. A very interesting is that they found that the average age of participants in the study started using the drugs as early as age 10 or 11. They had more significant and obvious brain damage. This study was intended to determine the severity of the brain damage in Cannabis users. (WEB search, Source Unknown.)

In order to really get into the depths of marijuana brain damage I decided to interview my cousin Brandy, I wanted a real life perspective on the causes and effect of her long term use. Brandy started using marijuana when she was 9 years old. She has been clean and happy for 6 years; however she still faces hardships and reaps the consequences of her life time use. Brandy is 36 years old and 28 of those years she was a very intense user of Marijuana. And today being 36 years old; she suffers the consequences of this illegal drug.

Brandy has great desires to go back to college and have a degree, but because the long term of using marijuana it has affected her ability to think reasonably. Math becomes a big problem to Brandy, as she told me she cannot solve any kind of math problems even something

very simple, became a nightmare and impossible for her to solve. Also she has trouble understanding people around because she loses focus quickly. She has severe short term memory loss. She became very slow and to this day she finds it difficult making decisions rationally and realistically. The severity of any situation is met with responses and solutions that are far from logical, and there are times she acts like she has the mentality of a 12 year old.

From my observations I believe that because she started smoking cannabis so early in life, her brain stopped development after the age of approximately 12 years old. Brandy used to be a very smart; she is very artistic, and driven. She has incredible ability's poetically speaking and all that knew her as she was growing up expected great things from her. She had amazing potential! Brandy is not mentally challenged; she is very sweet kind and genuinely serves all around her. She does not ever speak an ill word of anyone and has an immense amount of love that she openly shares. Growing up she spent a great deal of time learning sign language. There was even a point that she could read and write fluently in Sign. But because of her short term attention span due to the damage in her brain she no longer has the time patience and desire to spend time on any one project at a time. She does not multitask very well and when she gets angry she fights and argues she is unrealistic in any solution.

Sadly because it has been determined that she has the mind of a child, all of her behaviors and emotions are that of a 12 year old. When our grandpa passed away, she took the plate that he ate off of the night before he passed away and wrapped it and has kept it in her freezer for over 4 years now. Her animals that have passed away she has kept in her words "Some kind of their DNA" in her purse so they are with her all the time. But she has dead dogs toe nail clippings or hair from their cuts.

Everything I gathered from my experiences with Brandy, It has become incredibly obvious that due to her excessive use of Marijuana for so many years, she has suffered the consequences of the damage that has been is irreversible and permanent and something she will have to deal with for the rest of her life.

Brandy has 2 children and she struggle every day to educate and give her children the right directions on how to succeed in life. Brandy functions well in society, she gets around and is the very best mother she can be, even in spite of her personal challenges that she bravely fights and concurs every day. When I was speaking with her there were a few statements that she made that I felt would confirm the truth about the drug. Brandy said, “I smoked Marijuana, all day, every day. For 28 years. Because of the company around me I was eventually led to trying other drugs, it’s just what they do. A lot of my friends even sold a great deal of products. I cannot say that there was ever a time that I was truly happy during those years, all I thought about was when and where I could get my next bowl. I am not proud of my life style then but I have happily and successfully been clean for 6 years. I know that I will never touch it again but I have to say that those people that say that Marijuana is not addictive, they are wrong. It controlled my life and I still think about it and have desires every single day. I know that slowly as I go through this I can redeem my hope, faith, self-respect, and ambition.” (Brandy Warner)

In conclusion Marijuana is a mind altering drug that should never be legalized in this country or even the world. We already have too much pain, damage and suffering caused by others facts in this world. Legalizing marijuana will just add more to it. Let’s fight for beautiful and smart people, giving a better future for our next generation. We are the people and we all have in our hands the decisions to make a better tomorrow.

Euclides Cruz Works Cited

Medical Daily- Marijuana uses causes Brain Damage- Web

CNBC- Why we should not legalize Marijuana- Web

Interview- Brandy Warner