



Taking sides:

Should marijuana be legalized?



ANTHONY C. LOBAIDO
Columnist

The marijuana bogeyman continues to haunt the warriors enlisted in America's "war on drugs," trumpeting a message devoid of good sense.

Let's wake up to the fact that drug prohibition is not working in this country.

Marijuana has already been legalized for personal use in the state of Alaska. In most states, possession of under one ounce of marijuana is a misdemeanor which carries only a minor penalty.

Marijuana is not like the deadly drugs that crack and cocaine are. There is no recorded incident of any person dying from an overdose of marijuana.

Since over 500,000 Americans die each year from lung cancer, one wonders why the Drug Enforcement Agency isn't busy burning tobacco fields instead of sending Green Beret units to take down marijuana plants.

Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), marijuana's active ingredient, is not physically addictive, making it the easiest drug to kick.

Alcohol, on the other hand, is a dangerously addictive drug which has produced wide-spread societal problems. Marijuana has been known to aid people with poor appetites and is said to promote "great sex."

The worst side effects of marijuana documented by the medical community are sterility in males and a loss of short term memory.

DEA task force chief Earl McKigney calls marijuana "the healthiest recreational drug in the world."

The religious right spearheads the ideology of the drug war with an anti-marijuana mantra which claims that drug legalization is tantamount to admitting the loss of the drug war and would contribute to destroying America's "Christian foundation."

This is laughable on its face.

No one would argue that the distribution of marijuana to minors should continue to be a crime. But as a naturally occurring agricultural product, it should come as no surprise that marijuana has been used in the treatment of glaucoma and to counteract the effects of radiation on cancer patients.

Why should people stricken with such suffering be forced to break the existing marijuana laws to find relief from their agony?

There are valid questions addressing the problems of legalized marijuana distribution. An underground multi-billion dollar drug economy has existed for many years.

Legalizing marijuana would help to cut into the crime and corruption associated with the drug trade.

With the experience the federal government gained by financing wars in Southeast Asia and Central America with the drug trade, organizing a safe and profitable distribution plan should present only a minor problem.

The time has come to exorcise the marijuana bogeyman and say, "This bud's for you!"

People who advocate the legalization of marijuana must be on drugs. I'm speaking figuratively, of course. I realize there are many sound arguments which advocate the legalization of marijuana, just as there are many which advocate euthanasia and suicide.

Arguably the most important point made by pro-pot people is that the threat to our civil liberties would be greatly reduced. People ask, "Does the government have a right to tell us what to do in our own homes?" Why should some bureaucrat ban something that affects only the user and infringes on nobody else's rights? Like alcohol, which was finally legalized after a failed attempt at prohibition, marijuana affects only those who use it. Right?

Wrong. The fact is people under the influence of alcohol often violate more than the rights of others.

A recent study confirmed the long-held suspicion that alcohol consumption and crime are related. The study reported that at least three-quarters of American women have experienced some form of sexual aggression before early adulthood.

One quarter of those have experienced rape or attempted rape, a majority of which have been acquaintance rapes. Three quarters of the acquaintance rapes involved consumption of alcohol.

This means that you, your sister, daughter or mother is a potential victim of molestation by an acquaintance whose judgment was skewed by a legal mind-altering substance. The possibility seems preposterous, if not outrageous, but most women refuse to report sexual molestations, silenced by shame and social stigma.

Legalizing marijuana would make one more substance available for a mind altering experience, fondly referred to as a "trip."

I used to take trips at school. It was my first semester at Trinity University. I was 17 and ready to experience the world. The guys in the dorm room next to me came from Houston and St. Louis. They had lots of money, lots of free time and lots of pot. Coming from 12 years in a private school, I knew nothing about smoking cigarettes, let alone pot.

I learned quickly. My first semester was a blur, but I must say my classes were most fascinating. I didn't rape anyone, except maybe my parents who paid for a very expensive lesson in the form of tuition. Why did I do it? I wasn't addicted. Pot isn't physically addictive, only psychologically habit forming. I did it because it was available and convenient, almost as if it were legal.

For people who are dumb enough to want pot and sly enough to get it, marijuana seems all but legal already. If given the opportunity to try it, take a cue from a national leader and go for it. Just don't inhale.



ROBERT VASQUEZ
Columnist

MAIL CALL

Gov. Clinton loves country; hated war

This letter is in response to Karl Krueger's letter that appeared in the Oct. 12 Battalion. Karl - I'm afraid you just don't get it. I'm not surprised however. Your letter is the perfect example of the brain-dead Republican ideology I have seen at this university this semester. Karl - where are your priorities? We are in the midst of the worst economic record for any President since Hoover, and you are looking back to 1967.

Let me explain to you what really happened in 1967. Bill Clinton, a self-made man who put himself through Oxford, paid his own way on a sight-seeing tour through Scandinavia. Like thousands of other Americans that year, he visited Moscow. Remember Karl, you go to college to open your mind - not to close it. Karl, are you suggesting that the 50,000 other Americans who visited Russia that year are traitors? Do you understand that it is possible to love your country and oppose a war it is engaged in? For the record, Bill Clinton organized no rallies and he only attended one. How pathetic can your President's record be when you have to sink this low and this far back to get votes?

Karl - look at the real issue. Under George Bush we've seen the worst economic record since World War II. Last week, President Bush said he did not think we were in a recession. How can Bush get our country out of his rut if he does not admit we are in trouble?

Karl - get used to the idea of shining shoes because with four more years of the same failed economic policy, that is the highest paying job you will get - even with a college degree. Don't worry though. If you do a good job on my shoes, I might give you a good tip - because Aggies take care of Aggies.

Mike Brannon
Class of '94

America shouldn't trust draft dodger

After listening to the Presidential debates, I was once again reminded why they call Bill Clinton "Slick Willie." When President Bush said that he thought it was wrong to demonstrate against the United States on foreign soil during Vietnam, Slick Willie responded that Bush was "attacking his patriotism," and he equated it to the McCarthy Red Hunt for communists.

This allowed Slick Willie to avoid the question of the protests on foreign soil. However, I think this served to highlight the way that Slick Willie manipulates events to avoid the hard truth and tough questions.

It is a fact that Slick Willie protested against the United States on foreign soil and thus the accusations are not equatable to the McCarthy hearing and Red Hunt.

By manipulating the truth, Bill Clinton tried to slide out from another one of his "youthful mistakes." But it leaves me and many other Americans wondering what credibility he would

have as commander in chief.

It is a question of Bill Clinton's patriotism, but George Bush isn't responsible for the acts that call it into question. Bill Clinton is responsible for his own actions, and thus for a lack of patriotism. Slick Willie needs to grow up and admit his "youthful indiscretions." And the American people need to wake up and see who has the character to guide the United States: A conservative veteran of World War II with foreign affairs experience; or a liberal tax-and-spend hippie draft dodger and anti-American war protester.

John Gillespie
Class of '96

We must bring God back into our schools

As an American and a Christian I believe in free speech and the freedom of the press, but I cannot imagine that an A&M professor would invite my son or daughter to meet with him preferably late at night over "appropriate drinks" to discuss his "meaning of life." This is totally inappropriate for a professor and sounds very unprofessional.

Jesus Christ said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life, no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." The Bible is our road map and if we lived by it our world would not be in such a mess as it is today. We kicked God out of our schools and our schools have become laden with drugs, guns, violence, and serve as a distribution source for condoms. At least the Supreme Court has realized that maybe by allowing prayer again there will be some hope for our nation. New Age methods of living are not new, they are just revived from Babylon.

Marilyn Smith
Longview, Texas

No more excuses; abortion is murder

If a tree fell in the forest and no one was there to hear it, would it make a sound?

If an individual sprang into existence and we could not discern this fact, would it make abortion something other than the taking of an innocent life?

There is only one central question of the abortion debate - is there human life? It's time to stop fooling ourselves with all sorts of rationalizations, the sole intent and purpose of which is to relieve our own guilt.

If you cannot answer this question definitively, protection of that life dictates what action we should take, since it is always best to err on the safe side. Once a life is taken, it can't be given back.

If you can answer this question definitively, then please refrain from playing God with others' lives.

Paul Deignan
Class of '93

Pro-choice is not always pro-abortion

Just to clear up a misconception, pro-choice does not mean pro-abortion. I am pro-choice - that means I don't believe anyone has the right to tell a woman she has to have her baby. It's her body, and her right to choose.

However, I would not ever suggest a woman have an abortion. In fact, I suggest they get lots of counseling and find out all the facts about all the options there are. I realize that some women will still choose abortion even after counseling and this is a very sad fact. But, saying a woman has no right to choice is saying a woman's body is more important than the woman. They are both equal.

Timi R. LeCroy
Class of '94

Everybody has a place in Aggieland

In regard to Tiffany McEachern's letter on Oct. 12, I would like to apologize for the unfortunate act which occurred at the Texas Tech game, and applaud you for standing up for your rights. To the Aggie who did this act, I would like to say that that is very bad bull. McEachern chose to wear green Doc Marten boots. To hinder this right goes totally against what we boast so highly of - diversity.

Diversity and multiculturalism are two highly regarded assets of the Aggie Orientation Leader Program. Being a member of this program, I would just like to say that everything told to you at your New Student Conference was true. Please do not let one bad apple speak for the other 40,000 students and faculty members at Texas A&M. Tiffany, do what you know is best for you, not what everyone else thinks is best for you. Be yourself. I invite you to contact me through the Aggie Orientation Leader Program anytime so you can meet some Aggies who do appreciate diversity.

Brian Hicks
Class of '95

Aggie spirit alive despite negativism

I have spent the last few weeks reading the increasing number of negative letters printed in Mail Call. Be it for our football team, a particular group, or other Aggies in general, it seems all I have read has been derogatory in nature. I want to relate an act I witnessed last week that contradicts this trend.

While driving on Wellborn to a meeting for a group project I got stuck behind a truck that had stalled and was holding up traffic. The truck was an old Ford with a paint job my grandfather used to call "custom by collision." It was being driven by a bearded man, probably in his late 30s, wearing an old pair of jeans and a tattered T-shirt.

When they saw his predicament one of the guys leaned into the cab, and after talking briefly to the man, the three pushed the truck approximately 100 yards off of Wellborn and onto the road by Albritton Tower. The feeling that really made this simple act of caring and compassion stand out to me was that it truly exemplified the spirit of Texas A&M.

Helping out a friend, acquaintance, or even Aggies helping Aggies is too narrow a definition of Aggie spirit. Being an Aggie is about Aggies helping others, period. Not because you have to, but because you have a feeling inside that makes you want to. I want to thank those three for reminding me why this University is so much more than buildings, brains, and books. Gig 'em.

Bill Bodnar
Class of '94

LoBaido is a doctoral student in educational technology

Vasquez is a senior journalism major

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The Battalion - Mail Call
013 Reed McDonald /Campus mail stop 1111
Texas A&M University
College Station, TX 77843

