

Outline

- Introduction
 - What is the war on drugs?
 - Who was involved?
 - Minimized perspectives
 - Sources
- Background of the war on drugs
 - Historical events
 - Cocaine/Crack
 - Laws & Policies
 - Media narrative during/after events
 - Possible unseen perspectives
 - Secret war
 - Sociocultural historical factors
 - Private prisons
 - School to prison pipeline
 - Aids
 - Validity of historical perspectives
 - Opioid Crisis
 - Laws & Policies
 - Media narrative during/after events
 - Possible unseen perspectives
 - Sociocultural historical factors

- Validity of historical perspectives
- Deconstructing the historical narratives
 - Influencing power structure
 - Who had power
 - Who Benefits
 - Information gaps
 - Purpose & accountability
- Changing the Narrative of history
 - Impact of historical context
 - Importance of diverse perspectives
 - Role of bias
 - Cultural values and norms
 - Connection between the war on drugs and current events
 - Ethical duties
 - Personal experience

The War on Drugs and Mass Incarceration (1980-present)

The official war on drugs campaign began in 1971 to stop production, distribution and use of illegal drugs (Willis,2022). The war on drugs was racialized in aspects of the school to prison pipeline, the for profit prison system, campaign strategies, and involved racial profiling within minority groups. This war still contributes to social and criminal injustices including the policies for sentencing drug related crimes including the deinstitutionalization of individuals with mental illnesses (Fornili,2018). In 1985, Authorities had seized 1,085 tons of Marijuana, 18 tons of Cocaine and 447 kilos of Heroin(Hearing,1986). Many prominent figures such as politicians, presidents, agencies and countries played a part in the war on drugs. Ronald Reagan and George Bush continued Richard Nixon's war on drugs throughout the 1980s(Nixon,2006). Those against anti-drug laws argue that the policies have limited effectiveness, racial disparities and suppress public health.

The sources in this paper are both primary and secondary, including government documents, testimonies, media statements, and interviews on the war on drugs. These sources were found to be credible by professionals. I chose 11 sources to complete this paper to get a comprehensive outlook on the war on drugs and mass incarceration.

Coca leaves were used for thousands of years for medicines and originally used in coca-cola. It was later removed due to the addictive properties. Later, cocaine would be normalized for its stimulant properties in the wealthy communities and then changed into crack. This was the turning point for the low income community. Crack became available to inner rural city areas and was cheap enough for anyone to buy.

Speaker of the house Tip O’neill forced the1986 anti-drug abuse act through in less than 4 weeks. Normally it takes years for a bill to be passed through the house and the senate, then signed by the president. In that short month period, they write mandatory sentences that disproportionately sentence minorities. This was the most unjust law that was ever written with a ratio of 5gCrack:500gCocaine to get a sentence of 5-40 years. This gave advantages to wealthy cocaine users. Some would defend it because crack is more dangerous than coke, but that's not the reason. Representative Charlie Rangle of New York (1971-2016) stated “It was overkill. There was no justification and I guess the best answer to it is an off time phrase that you’ve heard.. Seemed like a good idea at the time” (Crack,2021). From 1985 to 1995 the number of black prisoners went from 16,600 to 134,000. That's a 707% increase in 10 years. The drug free schools act of 1986 prohibited drug or alcohol possession and served punitive punishments regardless of circumstance. Student arrests have increased 500% for non-serious offenders. Racism is shown by the school to jail pipeline because so many minority students go from school to jail(Fornili,2018). The Fair Sentencing Act of 2010 aimed to reduce the sentencing disparity between crack and cocaine related charges.

Considered a conspiracy at the time, the CIA funded the Contras with knowledge that they had ties to drug trafficking and were uncovered for the Iran-Contra affair (Willis,2022) These Contras, organized by the CIA to overthrow the Sandinista government in Nicaragua. A story in The Associated Press on December 20th, 1987 reported that the Government was participating in cocaine for weapons trade. David Richardson, former state representative of Pennsylvania is on record in 1986, asking the members of congress the following: “If we can give \$100 million to the Contras, who are the biggest dope pushers in the world, who can say it is okay to do so, and we sanction it as a government. I don't understand why we are not declaring war on drugs... I see our approach at this point is a band aid on cancer.” His question was left unanswered because “the people who could answer that question, largely have left”(Hearing,1986). This was proven in a 1,166 page report “Drugs, Law Enforcement and Foreign Policy” on April 13th 1989. This report states that the U.S had knowledge of and tolerated drug smuggling and covert operations in Nicaragua, Panama, Haiti, Bahamas and other countries involved in the drug trade. The media rarely touched this subject, and if it did, it was printed in the back pages(Kornbluh,1997).

For-profit prisons created massive growth in the incarcerated population over the past 40 years. The more inmates incarcerated results in more profit for those in power. People in private prisons tend to receive more violation write ups making it hard to get parole and keeping them there longer and the inmates endure worse living conditions because there is no government accountability(Fornili,2018). Children with a parent in prison are less likely to perform in school and are more likely to be in special ed. They are also more likely to have behavioral issues and get arrested leading to mass incarceration and poverty. 48% of schools have resource officers to crack down on disobedient behavior and drugs. The school to prison pipeline represents a shift from education and treatment to punitive punishment. A cycle that policy has allowed society to keep(Fornili,2018).About 25% of AIDS patients in the U.S are drug users. Drug use, especially injecting drugs through shared needles, can increase HIV, AIDS or other infectious diseases. Drug use can also lead to unprotected sex, further increasing the chance for STDs. For individuals who are undergoing AIDS treatment, continued use of drugs can hinder and reduce the effectiveness of the treatment. These factors together are associated with social factors like poverty which can impact the access to medical care.

“A drug so powerful it will empty money from your pockets, make you sell the watch from your wrist, the clothes off your back, or kill your mother.” This slogan was used after two basketball stars, Bias and Rogers, died from crack related deaths in 1986. These deaths were used to scare the population(Crack,2021).Major campaigns such as “Cocaine.The big lie” and “Just say no” aim to deter use and convince people to get help with addiction. In 1995 congress specifically targeted blacks and hispanics to control drug use. This has included using blacks and hispanics faces and putting them in urban areas, subways and other transportation areas(Hearing, 1986). The media

depicted black women as loving crack more than their children and were targeted by healthcare and police agents, often taking children away instead of offering supportive services. The statistic of crack babies was based solely on a study with only 23 babies and yet there were hyperventilating reports saying nearly 100,000 babies are born crack addicted. The media vilified drug users giving society the idea that they were out of control and they could be discarded. This led to neglect in the healthcare field(Crack,2021).

The media displayed the narrative of the normal drug user as being black and low income. However, it is statistically proven that only 14% of regular drug users are black(Fornili,2018). Also, it's always been socially acceptable for upper class white individuals to use drugs. The idea that drug use is only prominent in the minority lower class is media propaganda. Teachers, Lawyers, Doctors and Police Officers are involved in the use of drugs as well(Hearing,1986).

“We talk about the program “just say no” as a White House program but the lady who started “just say no” is a black female, Ms. Jane Brant, and I want to throw that out to the audience... so I hope to correct history.” This testimony by Karst Besteman, the executive director of Alcohol and Drug Problems Association pointed out that the widely known campaign “just say no” was not originally Nancy Reagan’s (Hearing,1986).

The war on drugs purpose is to stop drug trafficking, yet most of the drugs are smuggled into official government ports. The government allowed \$1.3 billion for prevention and treatment but only 19.3% of that budget was provided. Likewise, the department of education was only given \$3 million of its \$18 billion budget(Hearing,1986). The government cares less about cocaine coming into this country than they did waging an illegal paramilitary war on a country that posed no threat to national security(Crack2021).

In the late 1990s, Oxycontin addiction skyrocketed. Responsible for this epidemic was Purdue Pharma, which advertised oxy as being an everyday pain reliever(barkin,2020). In 2001, the media finally started talking about oxycontin deaths. Representatives tell the doctors to prescribe more and it's virtually non addictive(barkin,2020).

Although oxycontin was promoted through the media as a safer and more effective pain medication, hospitals were full of overdoses and were not able to treat other conditions. Doctors and pharmacists were pushed by Purdue Pharma and their sales reps to write scripts with higher doses. The result was doctors, pharmacies and Purdue Pharma getting rich while patients suffered from addiction. Chris Davis, a sales rep for Purdue in 1998 stated “management would have access to the date. They would see physicians that were high targets. We really need to convert this person. Let's go see them. We would call them wales, monsters, huge and it was almost a bit of a bragging point. It was told to me that we spend more money compiling this data to give to representatives than any other company in the business.” He also stated that they were pushed and coached to tell the doctors about the medication and since oxycontin had no reputation, it was easy to push(barkin,2020).

George Papale, an attorney on the Louisiana medical board and complaint council gave an interview about Dr. Jacqueline Claggitt. In this he states that she was charged with over 100 counts of prescription fraud. When arrested they found boxes of prescriptions that had been filled out and signed with the name and date spot left blank. A few days before her trial she was admitted into a behavioral hospital where her oxycontin addiction was well documented. She then got into a car accident before sentencing. Due to this car accident she was not imprisoned but placed on parole. Nearly every state in the United States sued Purdue Pharma after it was proven that they were only in it for the money. This is seen when the company announces it will be going into addiction treatment. The idea was making money off people's pain, then when they are addicted making more. Purdue Pharma filed for bankruptcy, but pharmaceutical companies

Aimed at people in pain, the opioid crisis is influenced by a combination of stigma, lack of education, evolving prescribing practices and highlighting the need for comprehensive strategies to address public health.

In 2010, the federal government and pharmaceutical companies developed crush-proof oxycontin in the hopes that users would stop snorting them. However, some users found a way to boil and inject the drug spreading STDs. Although a majority of states have set up a prescription drug monitoring program, opioid deaths continue to rise(singer,2017). Laws now regulate the production, distribution and prescription of opioids to prevent misuse and addiction. States have begun implementing Prescription monitoring programs to track prescriptions and to prevent “doctor shopping”. The DEA enforces federal laws to combat illegal distribution. In 2018, The Opioid Crisis Response Act aimed to address prevention, treatment, and recovery for opioid addicts.

The critical race theory insists that American laws are structured to maintain white privilege. The war on drugs and mass incarceration shows many examples of how the government allows and promotes the destruction of minority communities. Race would not be an issue if it was not the baseline for power and respect. There is little incentive to eradicate race when it benefits the white working class and elite. Instead, the government invents, manipulates and retires race when convenient by propagating the media and creating stereotypes(Fornili,2018). Corey Pegues, a former drug dealer gave an interview stating he was caught by the police with over 300 vials of crack on his person. He said that he was let go because the cops were on his dealer's payroll(Barkin,2020).

John Walters, an assistant in the department of education stated in a testimony on 10/3/86. His statement reads as follows: “Some of our police feel like they are not getting their share of the seizures, and the law is not working. In fact, the chief of Baltimore, I think, mentioned in that session that he only received one seizure, a maserati, and he is driving that, but he has not received enough of the money that Sterling Johnson has talked about today” (Hearing,1986). This statement clearly shows that the police benefited personally from the drug war. The war on drugs funded the police back then and continue to do so today(Crack,2021)

Information gaps stem from limited data, incomplete market understanding, assessment challenges and lack of research on alternative approaches. There is little data on drug production, distribution, and consumption that hinders effective policy making. Insufficient knowledge of data creates difficulty measuring the effectiveness of drug control strategies for treatment plans.

The war on drugs has led to counterfeit opioids sold on the street, laced with fentanyl or other opioids that cause death. Meanwhile, pressure is forced on healthcare to restrict opioids, often making genuine chronic pain patients suffer (Singer,2017).Drug users chase the euphoria from their first dose/hit for the rest of their life leading to the separation of families and losing themselves (Crack,2021). Despite popular belief incarceration does not save money, rehabilitate offenders or decrease crime. However, long term unemployment, health problems and discrimination often follow incarceration. Having a family member incarcerated affects adults and children both mentally, physically and financially. Children with incarcerated parents are more likely to encounter law enforcement and become involved in the system. The flaws in school programs impact children and adolescents. Instead of the intended effect of deterrence, these policies have increased bad behavior, suspensions and drop outs continuing the school to prison pipeline. (Fornili,2018).

Racial attitudes and biases reach into every part of American life(Rangland,2019). Karst Besteman testified the following in 1986: “When we act on the basis of bad data, we make bad public policy, and I think that has been one of our problems” (Hearing,1986). Bankers are more likely to provide loans to whites, rather than minorities. Racism framed the economic structure in the early U.S economy making it look like a powerhouse country(Rangland,2019)

Drugs got blamed for all the poor conditions the government has allowed to foster. From 1980 to the present we see that people are willing to do anything to escape poverty. Drug users are addicted to the drugs and the dealers, healthcare and government are addicted to the wealth(Crack,2021). Today we see the continued discrimination with policies and police brutality against minorities with no accountability. The war on drugs campaign ended in 2010, but the war has continued to target minorities and their communities. The trauma is generational and systematic. It has always been our ethical duty to advocate for justice and healthy environments for everybody regardless of race or class. The war on drugs and mass incarceration incentivizes incarceration by for profit prisons and is unethical because wealth prioritizes wellbeing (Fornili,2018).

I have seen the war on drugs in my life as well. I have seen mothers get their children taken away without need. I have had relatives overdose, and I've had some die. The war is not on drugs, but

on poverty and mental illness. If we spent half of what we spent on prison, on treatment, we could have a chance to win the war.

Sources

(2020, February 5). The Pharmacist (L. Barkin, Ed.) [Review of The Pharmacist]. The Cinemart. Interviews and testimonies

(2021, January 11). Crack: cocaine, corruption & conspiracy [Review of Crack: cocaine, corruption & conspiracy]. Netflix. Testimony provided by: Historians, Journalists, Law enforcement, neuroscientists, dealers/users, and activists.

U.S Government. (1986). Hearing before the select committee on narcotics abuse and control house of representatives [Review of Hearing before the select committee on narcotics abuse and control house of representatives]. The Federal War on Drugs: Past, Present and Future, second session, 16–20, 27–33, 39, 46–51, 58, 60, 103–106.

Singer, J. A. (2017, Aug 02). Government is the problem, not the solution: Federal 'War on Drugs' fueled a dangerous counterfeit opioid market. Daily Times

Kornbluh, P. (1997, Jan). Crack, the Contras, and the CIA: The storm over "Dark Alliance". Columbia Journalism Review, 35, 33-39.

Wallace, B. C. (2012). Controversies in Knowledge Translation for Community-Based Drug Treatment: The Need to the End Policies of the War on Drugs and Mass Incarceration of Drug Offenders to Achieve Health Equity. Journal of Urban Health, 89(6), 894-904. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11524-012-9697-3>

Cox, R., & Cunningham, J. P. (2021). Financing the War on Drugs: The Impact of Law Enforcement Grants on Racial Disparities in Drug Arrests. Journal of Policy Analysis & Management, 40(1), 191–224. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.snhu.edu/10.1002/pam.22277>

President Nixon Declares "War" on Drugs. (2006). In K. L. Lerner & B. W. Lerner (Eds.), Medicine, Health, and Bioethics: Essential Primary Sources (pp. 297-300). Gale.

Fornili, K. S. (2018). Racialized mass incarceration and the war on drugs: A critical race theory appraisal. Journal of Addictions Nursing, 29(1), 65–72

Willis, S. M. . M. M. (2022). War on Drugs. Salem Press Encyclopedia of Health.

Ragland, D. (2019, 18). Redlining and the Many Effects of Slavery: Are You Willing to Act to Heal This Moral Injury? *Fellowship*, 82, 16-18.