

THE WAR ON DRUGS NEGATIVELY IMPACTS YOUTH IN THE U.S.

THE "WAR ON DRUGS" IS A PHRASE USED TO REFER TO A GOVERNMENT-LED INITIATIVE THAT AIMS TO STOP ILLEGAL DRUG USE AND DISTRIBUTION BY INCREASING THE CRIMINALIZATION OF BOTH DRUG USERS AND DRUG DEALERS.

THE WAR ON DRUGS HARMS YOUTH IN MANY WAYS

Removing youth from school (e.g. expulsion)

Incarceration of family members, increasing youth risk for mental illness + substance misuse

Increased police presence and brutality toward youth and their communities

Increased stress and anxiety related to experiences with substance use

Continuous economic injustice for communities affected by substance use

The school-to-prison pipeline and higher rates of juvenile incarceration

Increased barriers to care lead to more overdose deaths and the loss of family and friends

Increased stigma toward substance use makes it harder to seek treatment

Lack of investment in proper research and rehabilitation for substance misuse

For youth who are a part of marginalized communities such as racial/ethnic minority youth, LGBTQ youth, low-income youth, and youth with disabilities, these effects are heightened, resulting in a disastrous casualties on mental and physical health.

DRUGS HAVEN'T ALWAYS BEEN SO HEAVILY CRIMINALIZED...

(CHECK OUT PAGE 2 TO LEARN MORE)

Understanding History:

The WAR ON DRUGS

1900s - 1960s

Many substances that are now criminalized in the United States were used in common products, and most substances were taxed and regulated. It wasn't until the association of recreational substance use with counterculture (e.g. the civil rights & antiwar movements) that most drugs became stigmatized, illegal, and criminalized.

Nixon - 1970s

Nixon officially declares the "War on Drugs" starting the federal criminalization of illegal substance use. Under an executive order, the Special Action Office for Drug Abuse Prevention (a federal police agency) is created.

Clinton - 1990s

The largest crime bill: the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act is passed. Amongst many inequitable laws, the newly established Three Strikes provision institutes life imprisonment without the possibility of parole for those with three or more convictions for either violent felonies or drug-related crimes.

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the War
on Drugs!**



Reagan - 1980s

Reagan signs into law the Anti Drug Abuse Act establishing minimum sentences for drug possession. A few years earlier, in collaboration with police, D.A.R.E., is created, often coercing children into reporting substances in their home to arrest their parents. Arrests related to drug possession increase under and following Reagan (50k arrests in 1980 to 400k arrests in 1997).

Bush - 2000s

President Bush increases funding for the War on Drugs while his administration specifically targets marijuana. They encouraged tens of thousands of SWAT raids by militarizing police.

2010s - Present

Our nation's history made substance use a priority for the US police. As of 2015, one-fifth of the prison population was incarcerated for substance use. Racial disparities in drug arrests are also a major element to this day with Black individuals being six times more likely than White individuals to be arrested for substances of similar usage rates.