

# Voices From the Crowd: Marijuana Under the Microscope

By Miles Wickstrom

The article on marijuana in the April 4 edition of Vernonia's Voice contains so much false information that it is difficult to know where to start, so let's begin with the headline. "Science of Drugs: Marijuana" implies that marijuana is a drug. It is not a drug. It's a plant - and a relatively innocuous one at that.

The article rightly states that the plant is illegal under Federal law. A little history lesson is appropriate to understand how that came to be. Prohibition of alcohol ended in 1933 with the repeal of the 21st Amendment. One of the immediate effects of repeal was that several thousand Federal law enforcement officials were no longer needed since there were insufficient illegal intoxicants to justify their continued employment. Enter one Harry J. Anslinger, who relentlessly spread propaganda about a powerful new threat among us - a mysterious "drug" known as marijuana. Among the claims he made are, "Marijuana is an addictive drug which produces in its users insanity, criminality, and death." And, "...the primary reason to outlaw marijuana is its effect on the degenerate races. Reefer makes darkies think they're as good as white men."

That was the justification used to make marijuana illegal.

Despite what the published article claims, marijuana use by

pregnant females has not been linked to any physical or mental defects in the unborn, or to any "...increased risk of neurobehavioral problems in babies". The most in-depth studies on this question have been done in Jamaica among the Rastafarian sect. The annual volume of marijuana consumed by Rastafarians is legendary (think Bob Marley), making it an ideal target group to study for adverse health effects. There is no evidence of ill effects among the unborn or the children of these heavy marijuana users.

The article claims, "Associations have also been found between marijuana use and other mental health problems, such as depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts among adolescents, and personality disturbances...." Really? Does that mean there would be no such thing as teen angst if marijuana didn't exist? Which of the above list is not associated with hormonal changes experienced during puberty? Which peer-reviewed scientific paper shows a causation / correlation relationship?

As the article states, marijuana grown today can be more than five times stronger than the pot our parents smoked. However, listen to the weasel words in this one paragraph: "For a new user, this may mean...." "Increases in potency may account for...." "For experienced users, this may mean...." Critical thinkers who read this article would be correct to wonder why we seem

to know so little with certainty about a plant that has been illegal in this country for three quarters of a century and has been used extensively worldwide for at least four millennia.

The word "addiction" is thrown around rather loosely throughout the article with no peer-reviewed data to support the claim. Nor are there comparative norms for reference. "...withdrawal symptoms including irritability, sleeplessness, decreased appetite, anxiety..." could just as easily describe empty nest syndrome or the aftereffects of divorce. The claim of addiction was refuted as early as 1944 by the La Guardia Commission ("...the practice of smoking marijuana does not lead to addiction in the medical sense of the word.") and again in 1972 by the Shafer Commission, presented to Congress in a paper titled "Marijuana, A Signal of Misunderstanding".

In closing, the Scientific Method is wholly lacking from this article. The writers have an obvious bias against the plant and have cherry-picked only those studies which cast the darkest light on the subject. There is a wealth of scientific articles that paint a far less dire picture, yet they are nowhere to be found. In 1936, a propaganda film called Reefer Madness was released to exploit the artificial hysteria created by Anslinger and his ilk. The article in the Voice is simply an extension of that meme.

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## An Opinion: Vote Costley for School Board

On the May 21, 2013 election ballot there is an open position for Vernonia School District Board of Directors. Camrin Eyrrick has decided not to run for re-election for Position 6 and no other candidate filed to run.

Vernonia resident Brett Costley has said he would serve in the position if elected by write-in vote.

There is hardly anyone more qualified than Costley to serve in this position. He has served for the last few years on the School District Budget Committee and is familiar with the current financial situation of the District. Costley also has two children

in the Vernonia school system.

Costley served as a Vernonia City Councilor from 2002 to 2010 and knows how to work in a committee setting. He is a graduate of The Ford Family Foundation, Community Leadership Training Program and has also acted as a Community Trainer for additional Ford Family Foundation classes in Vernonia. Costley also just graduated from the American Leadership Forum of Oregon.

If you have not already returned your ballot, please consider writing in Brett Costley for Position 6 for the Vernonia School Board.

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