

Marijuana 'facts' misleading

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Contributing Writer

In the April 19, 2006 *Print* article, "A few facts about marijuana," Sam Krause listed six bits of information (one curiously repeated) that combined to give a positive impression of cannabis (pot) smoking. Mr. Krause noted only the very few articles not finding cannabis's deleterious effects on mental abilities. While printed on the "Commentary" page, his article offered no commentary, and its title purported to offer facts, not opinion, to readers. This biased submission of "facts" would be laughable, if the possible consequences weren't so grave.

So they can make the best choices possible, Clackamas students should be presented the whole truth regarding important topics. For some, choices will involve drug use, including

marijuana. Knowing the facts is crucial in making wise decisions. For the good of our students, the following are some facts Mr. Krause neglected to mention.

For decades, it has been known that large doses of cannabis produce confusion, amnesia, delusions, hallucinations, anxiety and agitation (Chopra & Smith, 1974, *Archive of General Psychiatry*). Chronic cannabis smoking is associated with increased bronchitis; with more phlegm production, coughing and wheezing than seen in tobacco users or non-smokers (Bloom et al., 1987, *British Medical Journal*).

[Noted marijuana researcher Nadia] Solowij compared mental abilities of long-term users (average term of use 24 years), short-term users (average term of use 10 years) and non-users. She concluded cannabis impairs learning, retention, retrieval and time estimation. These losses in

abilities endure after subjects were no longer intoxicated, and worsened with increasing years of regular use (2002, *Journal of the American Medical Association*). Smoking cannabis more than 50 times by the age of 18 increases the risk of premature death (Andreasson & Allebeck, 1990, *Scandinavian Journal of Social Medicine*).

Cannabis can also impact reproduction. Burkman found men using marijuana frequently (on average 15 times per week) experienced lowered sperm count, lowered seminal fluid production and abnormal sperm behavior – extreme initial locomotion, followed by reduced speed and failure to reach the ova (2003, American Society for Reproductive Medicine presentation). Mothers smoking pot risk the following cancers for their infants: nonlymphoblastic leukemia, rhabdomyosarcoma and astrocytoma

(Robinson, Buckley, & Daigle, 1989, *Cancer*).

Underscoring Mr. Krause's selective fact-finding, the *Lancet* article he cited is where many references of harmful effects of cannabis are outlined. While Mr. Krause noted cannabis' regulatory effects of dopamine, he neglected to mention the article's very next sentence: "Recent evidence suggests cannabinoids enhance dopamine release in reward centers and that teenagers and young adults who smoke cannabis have a slightly higher than normal risk of developing psychosis" (Baker et al., 2003).

Other recent work has advanced science's understanding of the relationship between smoking marijuana and psychosis. A longitudinal study spanning 1994 to 1999 found that cannabis users who experience a marijuana-induced psychotic episode are more likely to

suffer subsequent psychotic episodes and be diagnosed with schizophrenia-spectrum disorder. Furthermore, those who developed psychosis did so at an earlier age than would be expected, particularly in the area of paranoid schizophrenia (Arendt et al., 2005, *British Journal of Psychiatry*).

The consequences of presenting less than the whole truth can be dire. Only highlighting positive aspects of an important issue can ultimately harm the readers who *The Print* is designed to serve. It is a disservice to Clackamas students for our school-sponsored newspaper to provide a one-sided presentation of the "facts" about marijuana.

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Shut up and turn off the bloody cell phone before class

Laura Cameron

Commentary Editor

Shut up.

That's all I ask. When I am in class, I want to actually hear the lecture. Unfortunately, this has been getting harder for me lately, because more and more of my classmates are leaving their cell phones on during class.

This would not be so bad if they had the decency to set their phones to vibrate, or even to hit the "mute" button when they do receive a call. However, they are not doing this. They are, instead, *taking* the calls. At least most of the time they exit the room for this, but I have witnessed a growing number of Clackamas students who seem to have no qualms about sitting there and answering their phone in the middle of a lecture.

I have had my phone go off in the middle of class before, and it has never failed to make me feel like a total ass. I cannot comprehend how these clods can answer their phones

during a lecture without apparently feeling any remorse for interrupting the lecture. At least I apologize when my phone rings in class.

I suppose this is a natural extension of the mindset that allows people to leave their cell phones on in churches and movie theaters, but that doesn't excuse the behavior. Answering a phone call during a lecture, even just to say "I'm in class right now, I'll call you back later," is boorish. It shows a complete lack of respect for the rest of the class and especially for the instructor. Silence the phone and let the caller go over to voice mail. If the caller is offended by this, that's their problem.

This is all part of my theory that cell phones are the spawn of Satan. They have shorn many people of any sense of decency or decorum. At the movies, in church, at plays and ballets – there is no escaping their cacophony of ringtones. Not even the lecture hall is sacred anymore.

A character on a TV show – sadly cancelled – once referred

to "a special level of hell. A hell reserved for child molesters, and people who talk at the theater." It is my firm belief that those lecture-halting cell users are slated for that same special hell. I hope my readers will keep that in mind the next time their phone goes off during class.

A special hell.



Illustration by E. E. West Clackamas Print

Students chafe at 'guilty by association' punishment

Adam J. Manley

The Clackamas Print

Anyone passing through the cafeteria has probably noticed, and possibly complained about, a certain collection of students who can be found there every day. Over the last two years, this conglomeration of barely acquainted individuals – friends of friends and so forth – has received complaints of being loud, lewd, and disruptive.

Imagine that a man is standing on a street corner with his friend. A friend of his friend, whom the first man has only seen briefly, walks up and talks to them. Then this third man shoots a passerby. All three men are convicted of the same murder and are punished equally.

Hardly sounds fair, does it? The first man was barely

acquainted with the shooter, yet he found himself being punished as if he had pulled the trigger himself.

An extreme hypothetical situation, I'll grant, but it demonstrates the absurdity of something more subtly disturbing: guilt by association.

There are problems. Nobody is denying that. But from my perspective, the counseling department's guilt-by-association plan is more a tyrannical power trip than a solution.

The threat is this: if any more complaints are made, anyone in the vicinity of the problem-causers is automatically suspended. The counseling department's suggestion to avoid suspension? As soon as anyone starts getting out of hand, just leave. Simple enough on paper, yes, but a great deal trickier in execution.

To begin with, this assortment of acquaintances is spread

out over multiple tables. I can often be found sitting at one of these tables myself. If someone is engaging in lewd or disruptive behavior, a person sitting two tables away shouldn't be expected to pay any attention. If they're bothered by it, of course they'll notice. But when certain behavior doesn't bother someone, they're not likely to notice it. It doesn't matter if, consciously, they know the person shouldn't be engaging in such activity – their conscious mind is simply unaware that it's happening. It's been tuned out. It's background noise, hardly noticeable.

Another point is that not all of these people know each other. Earlier, I referred to these people as a "collection" and a "conglomeration." Not a group. A swarming mass of connections. A group implies coherence, solidarity. This is different people, in and out throughout the day.

Different people there or not with each year, each term, each hour and minute.

The reason this mass of bodies gets complaints is because it's large, and the very reason it's large is because it is not a group. Two friends sit down, they're joined by other friends, who are joined by their friends, who are joined by their friends, and it continues ad infinitum. Not everyone knows each other, so not everyone can be expected to feel responsible – or even remotely connected – to the problems caused by others.

Moreover, because of how this mishmash of people comes together, simply getting up and moving away to avoid suspension doesn't work. If someone moves, their friends are likely to follow. Then the friends of those people follow. Soon, you have the friends of friends of friends following the original person to

a new location – including the very people that person was trying to move away from.

So have there been disruptions? Yes. Has the counseling department's threat worked to lessen the disruption? Possibly. Does the end justify the means? No.

In trying to create a safe and comfortable learning environment, the counseling department has used methods of fear and paranoia. How can one feel safe and comfortable while at the same time worrying about sitting too close to the wrong people? The method prevents the goal.

Editors note: Adam J. Manley is a staff writer for The Clackamas Print, and also a member of the targeted group in question. In order to avoid bias or conflict of interest his involvement in the reporting of the issue was limited to this opinion piece alone.