

## Billion Dollar Drug Business Finds Profits in Children

Last year, 365 children between the ages of 11 and 14 were arrested on narcotics charges in the city of Los Angeles. The same year, nearly three thousand Los Angeles juveniles between 15 and 17 were arrested on the same charges.

Those figures, however, are not limited only to the city of Los Angeles. Incidence of drug use and drug abuse among minors continues to rise at an alarming rate around the country.

According to one expert, rising drug abuse among children is being fueled not only by the easy availability of substances such as crack—a cheap, highly concentrated, smokable form of cocaine that can be purchased on the streets for less than the cost of a new compact disc recording—but by peer pressure that makes taking drugs not only acceptable but even attractive.

"Only half of all high school seniors say they find any risk in trying heroin or LSD once or twice," says John Duff, author of the book "The Truth About Drugs". "The idea these kids have is that drugs are something you can just 'try' and then somehow remain unaffected. That's crazy."

"We have become very conditioned to the idea that drug use and drug abuse is something that is somehow socially acceptable says Duff, who is also President of Narconon International, one of the most successful drug education and rehabilitation programs in the country.

"Drugs are an \$800 billion-a-year business worldwide," he notes. "That is a business that is larger than the gross national product of any single country in the world. There is obviously a very large vested interest that wants people on drugs."

"What is happening now is that the drug market is being expanded by selling more and more drugs to progressively younger and younger users," he says. "At the same time, those drugs are not only being made more available but also more cheaply attainable, as with crack. That's why we are now faced with 11 and 12 year olds addicted to street drugs."

The difficulty in getting juveniles off drugs is compounded by the fact that parents are often either unable to recognize their children's drug problems or are themselves abusing drugs.


"Seventy to eighty percent of all Americans have tried some form of illegal drug by the time they reach their mid-twenties," says Duff. "Parents often have to handle their own drug problem before they can handle their children's."

Though users usually consider it difficult, if not impossible, to kick a drug habit, there are effective rehab programs available according to Duff, who successfully freed himself from heroin addiction.

"The Narconon program not only gets a person off drugs, but keeps them off," says Duff. "Narconon also provides drug education seminars for parents, teachers and anyone else who feels they may not be able to really recognize the symptoms of drug abuse."

"If you know what the warning signs are, you can take steps to get your children off drugs before they become addicts," says Duff.

"Of course, the best way to deal with the problem is to teach children to say no to drugs in the first place."



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## Meli'sa Morgan: Burgeoning Talent Has Big Voice, Big Plans



With the release of only her first album since her successful debut in 1985, sultry songstress Meli'sa Morgan is getting rave reviews for her impressive follow-up effort, "Good Love," reports the April EBONY.

Morgan, the 24-year-old Queens, N.Y., native, says she

considers herself the quintessential "romantic realist". Although much of the lyrics in her music involve romantic themes, she readily admits that "not every song is about me."

"My songs don't have happy, happy endings," Meli'sa says. "They tell of the struggle to get through a relationship. Struggle is the meat of a relationship," she adds. "And, consequently, is good material for songs."

Like many top female vocalists, Morgan's musical foundations can be traced back to the church. Although her distinctive style, and her new album are winning her a host of rhythm & blues fans, Meli'sa seeks to broaden her acceptance to gospel audiences. "There are so many messages in gospel music and so many things people need to hear," she says. "I want to be a good singer whom everyone enjoys."



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