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# OPINION

## This Boondoggle Won't Die Quickly or Quietly

### Just say no to the Drug War



BY EMILY SCHWARTZ GRECO AND WILLIAM A. COLLINS

Old habits die hard. Take the War on Drugs. Please.

Yes, its momentum has sagged a bit now, what with the Pew Research Center finding that a majority of Americans believe marijuana should be legal. But don't hold your breath waiting for new national laws

There's way too much money and political posturing riding on our outmoded crusade.

Some individual states are starting to say no to the Drug War. Twenty of them, including Oregon, plus the District of Columbia, have already legalized pot for medical needs. Colorado's and Washington State's voters have cast their ballots in favor of legalizing it for recreational use, too.

These are smart states that will save a ton of money on police enforcement, court trials, and prisons. And they can tap a new revenue source, too. In Colorado, voters recently approved a measure that will let their state tax pot sales.

On the other hand, legalization is bad news for defense lawyers, corporate prisons, guard unions, and

drug cartels. As criminality is reduced by legal definition, the number of criminals decreases with it. This in turn cuts the number of jobs needed to catch, try, defend, and incarcerate fewer people.

Like all boondoggles, the Drug War won't die quickly or quietly. And not everyone is suffering the brunt of its injustice equally.

Stop-and-frisk laws and racially biased searches, arrests, prosecutions, and incarcerations are tools long-abused by authorities out to keep people of color "in their place."

Likewise, plenty of entrenched federal prosecutors remain eager to keep up strict federal drug enforcement even in states which have softened their own laws. Attorney General Eric Holder has

told them publicly to lay off, but changing the direction of the bureaucracy can be like changing the direction of a battleship.

Congress, of course, isn't turning a corner just yet. Lots of lawmakers have built careers on being "tough on drugs." Before he was busted for cocaine, pleaded guilty, and was sentenced to a predictably lenient one year's probation, Rep. Trey Radel voted in favor of drug-testing food stamp recipients. The Florida Republican is now on leave. He hasn't resigned yet, but plenty of politicians lacking his street cred are openly coveting his House seat.

Wouldn't it help end all this madness if Radel were to stay in Congress? He "could be a leader in backing legislative proposals

that would change not just policies but the broader debate about how to end a failed 'drug war,'" John Nichols suggests in the Madison, Wisc., Capital Times.

Nearly 40 percent of the electorate has smoked pot. That's a huge voting bloc, but it's hard for pols and cops to change their spots. The moral ground supporting their diatribes is now shifting beneath their feet and one of their own has fallen into the ditch they dug for him.

Emily Schwartz Greco is the managing editor of *OtherWords*, a non-profit national editorial service run by the Institute for Policy Studies. *OtherWords* columnist William A. Collins is a former state representative and a former mayor of Norwalk, Conn.

## Extraordinary Life and Legacy of Nelson Mandela

### Remember, honor and celebrate



BY MARC H. MORIAL

There are few men or women who leave such an indelible imprint and impact on the world that they are remembered, honored and celebrated by nations near and far for centuries after they depart. There are few people for whom even all the words in every language fail to convey the magnitude and meaning of their lives. Without a doubt in mind or heart, I know that Nelson Mandela is one among a very select few.

His dedication, perseverance, forgiveness, and purpose – his life – sparked an inextinguishable fire in the souls of freedom fighters not only in South Africa, but everywhere. The light that he shared will forever serve as an international beacon for fairness, justice and hope for all disadvantaged, impoverished and oppressed people from every corner of the world.

Nelson Mandela gave new meaning to the word "inspiration." After spending 27 years of a life sentence as an apartheid regime political prisoner, he emerged, not with bitterness – but instead with a steadfast resolve to complete his life's work. His remarkable journey serves as an indisputable example of forgiveness in the face of persecution and triumph through tribulation.

I consider myself at once fortunate, humbled and proud to have been a part of the great work of Nelson Mandela's life during the

1980s here in the United States. While attending Georgetown University Law Center in 1981, I co-lead an effort to boycott the cafeteria operator because of its investments in South Africa.

During this same period, I was a member of the leadership team of the National Black Law Students Association that pushed for divestment of South African investments by U.S. companies. Early in my career, I was arrested at the South African Embassy as part of a mass, peaceful organized protest led by Walter Fauntroy, Mary Frances

sequent generations of freedom activists and advocates around the world – even in the world's greatest democracy – helping to continue the work he started.

After the election of President Mandela, as mayor of New Orleans I signed an economic and friendship agreement in 1994 between Johannesburg and New Orleans, one of the first U.S. cities to do so. It was an indescribable honor.

Nelson Mandela's efforts to create a new, multi-racial democracy weren't just an example of unwavering leadership, humanity and com-

equality and economic despair and seeks to disrupt an institutionalized system of oppression and discrimination. It is the kind that motivates all of us in the Urban League Movement to continue to fight for opportunity parity and economic equality every day in hundreds of communities across America.

Nelson Mandela gave a voice to those who had been silenced. He brought hope to those who had been stripped of their dreams. He

awakened a nation – and ultimately a world – to the boundless possibilities of following one's purpose.

Today, we stand with the people of South Africa and with the international community in mourning the loss of Nelson Mandela. We remember, honor, and celebrate his extraordinary life and legacy. The world could use a few more "Rolihlahlas."

Marc H. Morial is president and chief executive officer of the National Urban League.

*Nelson Mandela gave new meaning to the word "inspiration." After spending 27 years of a life sentence as an apartheid regime political prisoner, he emerged, not with bitterness – but instead with a steadfast resolve to complete his life's work.*

Berry and Randall Robinson in support of U.S. economic sanctions against South Africa.

As co-leader of the New Orleans Anti-Apartheid Coalition, I helped to successfully advocate for the New Orleans Public Employee Pension Board's divestment in U.S. companies who had holdings in South Africa. When the U.S. Congress ultimately passed sanctions against South Africa, I could only hope that Nelson Mandela knew that his army now extended beyond the borders of South Africa to sub-

passion for me, but also for the countless millions who will follow and study him as one of the world's great leaders for centuries to come.

I often wonder if his parents knew when they named him Rolihlahla (common translation: "troublemaker") how prophetic that was or how ironic it would be that he would grow up to be an international symbol of peacemaking. But the "troublemaking" that Nelson Mandela undertook was of a different kind. It was the kind that sees legislated injustice, race-based in-

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