The War on Drugs

*A War that Cannot be Won*

Social Movements - Fall 2018

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**Introduction**

Statistics prove that even though America has 5% of the world’s population, we have 25% of the world’s prisoners (13th). The War on Drugs is a monumental movement that has contributed to the exponential increase in prison populations in the United States. Even with a seemingly benevolent premise, it has waged war on colored and impoverished communities across America since the Nixon administration. Nixon’s movement began with the idea of “law and order”: implementing less tolerance for crime. His viewpoint can be summarized in the quote “no one is above the law, no one is below the law,” and stating that criminals would be prosecuted by the fullest extent of the law in a war on crime (13th). This led to a movement that treated “drug addiction and drug dependency as a crime issue rather than a health issue” (13th). Having coined the term “War on Drugs,” Richard Nixon officially declared the war in 1971. The government backlash to drug usage was primarily in response to the counterculture hippie movement of the late sixties in opposition to the Vietnam War. People were being arrested and incarcerated for possession of marijuana - a low-level offense. Nixon used what is now called the Southern Strategy to appeal to the previously conservative Democrats of the south to vote Republican (13th). “If we cannot destroy the drug menace in America,” said Nixon, “then it will surely in time destroy us” (Vox). As a consequence of the movement, the Drug Enforcement Administration was created in 1973 with 1,470 agents and a budget of 75 million dollars. Today, the DEA has 5,000 agents with a budget of over $2.03 billion. Nixon has been quoted saying that the War on Drugs “was all about throwing black people in jail” (13th). Nixon used interdiction tactics to regulate marijuana exports from Mexico to America, but Colombia ended up replacing Mexico in marijuana exports to the US. Nixon strongly opposed the leftist anti-war effort and blacks. John Ehrlichman, Nixon’s advisor, said their strategy was to encourage the public “to associate hippies with marijuana and blacks with heroin” because they couldn’t make it “illegal to be anti-war or black.” Ehrlichman went on to say “did we know we were lying about the drugs? Of course, we did” (13th). President Jimmy Carter had a different approach to tackling the drug epidemic in America: in 1977, he encouraged the decriminalization of marijuana. He has been quoted saying “penalties against possession… should not be more damaging than the drug itself” (Stanford). Regardless of his views on decriminalization, he still didn’t support the legalization of marijuana. During Carter’s presidency, there was a sharp increase in cocaine usage. Since marijuana was connected to cocaine as a feeder drug, the government did not encourage decriminalization.

After the War on Drugs was introduced by Nixon, the next president who encouraged Nixon’s rhetoric was Ronald Reagan, and he publicized it on a much larger scale. Instead of funding education, prevention, and rehabilitation programs, Reagan funded eradication and interdiction programs. As a response to the crack epidemic wreaking havoc in colored, impoverished neighborhoods, Ronald and Nancy Reagan crafted anti-drug campaigns that aired on television which led to the popular “just say no” rhetoric. The Anti-Drug Abuse Act was put in place in 1983, which allocated $1.7 billion to the War on Drugs. A fairly new drug, crack cocaine, was then introduced in the middle of the eighties. Congress administered mandatory sentencing for crack cocaine, while crack was a impoverished, black issue - cocaine was a white, suburban issue. The sentencing for crack cocaine was much harsher than that of regular cocaine: this can be seen as a racial bias in prosecution. Reagan’s administration implemented a “zero-tolerance” policy where drug abusers were prosecuted for the charge of possession. The rehabilitation efforts associated with the drug prosecutions didn’t match the need for drug rehabilitation: Reagan’s main focus was prosecution and incarceration of drug users. President Bill Clinton made huge strides in the War on Drugs buy doubling expenditures for rehabilitation programs for drug abuse, but also increased expenditures for law enforcement and and eradication programs. On the other hand, Congress rejected motions to improve improve drug policy to cater to prevention and rehabilitation. Yet again, we see the pattern of treating drug abuse as a crime issue rather than a health issue. However, President Bill Clinton implemented mandatory minimums and the three strikes law. Mandatory minimum sentences made it so that criminals must serve an automatic time in prison for specific crimes - often without even going to trial (FAMM). The three strikes initiative was signed off on by Bill Clinton and pushed forward by Congress in which after 3 “strikes,” a criminal must serve life in prison. These criminals must have committed “serious violent felonies,” some of which include kidnapping, manslaughter, robbery, and sex offenses (FindLaw). This made it so that judges couldn’t “consider the circumstances of a crime”(13th). This led to a momentous increase in prison populations and incarceration rates. Millions of inmates sit in prison because of mandatory minimum sentencing and the three strikes law, often without trial. After Clinton signed the 1994 Crime Bill, prison population went from 1,179,200 inmates to a staggering 2,015,300 (13th). Many years later, after his presidency, he states at an NAACP conference that he in fact made the problem worse. Harsher sentencing, longer sentences, and enormous increase in prison populations were the aftermath of the crime bill.

**Literature Review**

Introduction

America’s first issue with drug use began in the 1800s, when opium use became popularized following the American Civil War (Stanford). In addition to opium, morphine, heroin, and cocaine were regularly prescribed by physicians and pharmacists to treat pain. Once Americans began to realize these drugs’ potential for addiction, America’s first drug policy was implemented: the Harrison Narcotics Act in 1914. The policy punished physicians and pharmacists who prescribed these dangerously addictive drugs. The next influential act, the Narcotics Control Act of 1956, criminalized narcotics very heavily and made it incredibly difficult for those involved to integrate back into society because of refusal of parole and extremely harsh sentencing. They even implemented the death penalty on dealers who sold heroin to minors. In the 1940s and 50s, the Federal Bureau of Narcotics used scare tactics to discourage Americans from drug abuse. They fabricated horror stories about marijuana causing hysteria and violent crimes, so much so that the public disregarded the anti-drug narrative entirely. The popularization of drug use became especially prevalent in the 1960s, where marijuana use was popular on college campuses and “hippies” were enthralled by the hallucinogenic properties of LSD. In addition to this, veterans from the Vietnam War self-medicated with marijuana and heroin to deal with the effects the war had on their psyche. In response to the high demand and use of narcotics in the 1960s, the Narcotics Addict Rehabilitation Act of 1966 regarded drug abuse as a mental illness for the first time. However, the actual use of drugs was still regarded as a crime. The Rehabilitation Act had very little effect because of the lack of funding from the government.

Beginning in the 1960s, the War on Drugs was pioneered by Nixon’s administration as a call to action in response to widespread illicit drug use in the United States. During the next term, Reagan's administration took Nixon’s War on Drugs and utilized it on a much broader scale. His anti-drug campaigns with the First Lady, Nancy Reagan, popularized the phrase “just say no.” A seemingly harmless message of refusing drugs morphed into an over-militarized, overbearing harassment of people of Black and Latino origin. Not only this, but the government proceeded to spend huge sums of money on this militarization of police in America’s neighborhoods. Rather than funding rehabilitation programs for drug users and making it easier to get support, Reagan’s administration made it harder to quit illicit drug use than to participate in it. Drug policy experts have analyzed the effects of the War on Drugs and examine cost and benefit of over-militarization of the police. Some believe that the legalization of all drugs should be explored, while other believe that the restriction of illicit drug use is more beneficial for the United States.

Body

A 1988 copy of the New York Times “reported than an ABC news poll found that more than 90% of the American public reject decriminalizing all illicit drugs” (Koch). The poll also revealed that the public believes that “the legalization of drugs would lead to an increase in crime”. Koch believes that the defeatist attitude of legalizing all drugs is not in America’s best interest. “There are over 500,000 heroin abusers in this country and 6,000,000 people who have a serious cocaine or crack abuse problem” (Koch). Koch’s statement was issued in 1988, which would now be over 30 years ago. Since then, numbers in drug abuse have likely gone higher. Koch believes that illicit drug abuse in the United States was a pressing issue at the time, and it is even more so today. On the contrary, Wade argues that “legalization may be necessary” (Wade). He recalls that during his time at Columbia University in 1954, a doctor by the name of Robert Loeb spread the news that the police were instructed to “crack down on illicit drug dealing in Harlem, New York. Loeb had witnessed the prohibition of alcohol instigated alcohol dependence and gangsterism in America. After prohibition was overturned, alcohol dependence remained the same while said gangsterism around the alcohol industry diminished. Loeb’s prediction was that the more the police crack down on illicit drug trade, “the more profitable the trade would become and the more vicious and rapacious” the gangsters would be. Wade believes that this pattern that Loeb predicted proved more than true in the United States.

During a press conference in 1989, President George H.W. Bush issued a statement describing drugs as the “gravest domestic threat facing our nation today” (Blachman). Bush reiterated the message of his predecessor, Reagan, in 1982 - where he formally declared the War on Drugs. Bush went on to say that he would implement a “national line of attack” through law-enforcement. His “National Drug Control Strategy” caused millions of illicit drug users and dealers to be inmates in the enlarged prison system in the United States. Due to the mass incarceration of Blacks and Latinos for small drug charges, the ACLU states that even though the United States makes up 5% of the world’s population, it makes up 25% of the world’s prison population. Their research also confirmed that “since 1970, the prison population has increased 700%” which accounts for the 2.3 million people in prisons in America; most of which are Black and Latino males. Therefore, the United States would have the highest rate of incarceration in the world (13th). The consequences of mass incarceration as a product of the War on Drugs has consumed 80 billion taxpayer dollars each year.

Academic Steven Wisotsky claims that the War on Drugs cannot be won and the framework from which we view the drug issue needs to be changed (Voharas). In addition to changes in drug policy, Voharas expands on Wisotsky’s views by stating that education is a significant element in the War on Drugs. Education has reduced the use of cocaine because citizens are becoming more aware of the harsh consequences of engaging in use of the drug. Stephen Rolles argues that prohibition on production of drugs has not only proven ineffective but has made the problem of drug abuse worse (Rolles). With the rise of adulterated drugs and spread of HIV and Hepatitis B and C through sharing of infected needles, there is an increase in crime-related violence and corruption in law enforcement.

Discussion

The War on Drugs is used an instrument of imprisonment of Blacks and Latinos in America, according to sociologist Deborah Small. She quotes political economist John Flateau in saying that the criminal system can be metaphorically seen as a slave ship: transporting Black and Brown folk through “police precincts… detention centers and courtrooms, to… jails...and prisons… [and] back to communities as unrehabilitated escapees” and back through the prison system in a vicious cycle (Small). According to activist and UC Davis professor Angela Davis, the war on drugs was a war on colored communities, “a war on black communities, [and] a war on Latino communities” (13th). Lee Atwater, Ronald Reagan’s campaign strategist discussed how Americans went from outright racism towards African-Americans in the 1950s, to economic stratification like tax cuts in the 1960s, and “the byproduct of them is blacks get hurt worse than whites” (13th). Instead of using overtly racist terms to describe drug dealers in impoverished, colored communities, they became “super predators” in the eyes of the media. According to Mauer, research done by the Department of Justice states that one out of three black children are likely to be incarcerated in correlation with current trends of mass incarceration (Mauer). In addition to incarceration, drug offenders are denied participation in social welfare programs like public housing and eligibility for loans. This makes it increasingly difficult for drug offenders to reintegrate into society after serving time in prison. Penalties as such are characteristics of drug offenses and can make any attempt at rehabilitation and reintegration extremely difficult: these individuals are not only socially considered social pariahs, but institutionally as well. Mauer proposes that instead of emphasizing the punishment of substance abuse, we should view drug abuse as a public health issue. He proposes a drug abuse model that focuses on prevention and rehabilitation; this approach, he argues, is more compassionate and effective.

**Compare and Contrast**

The War on Drugs is closely related to the Black Lives Matter movement and Criminal Justice Reform movement because of the way the War on Drugs had racially biased motivations. John Ehrlichman, the domestic policy chief for Richard Nixon, stated: “We knew we couldn’t make it illegal to be either against the war on or black, but by getting the public to associate the hippies with marijuana and the blacks with heroin, and then criminalizing both heavily, we could disrupt those communities. We could arrest their leaders, raid their homes, break up their meetings, and vilify them at night after night on the evening news. Did we know we were lying about the drugs? Of course, we did.” (Baum, 2016). The Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986 established minimum prison sentences for certain drug offenses. As a result longer prison sentences were put in place for the same amount of crack cocaine which is used by more Blacks than powder cocaine, which is used more by whites (history.com, 2018). These motivations led to an increase in arrests in black communities for minor drug offenses that still apply today.

A report conducted by the American Civil Liberty Union (ACLU) titled “The War on Marijuana in Black and White: Billions of Dollars Wasted on Racially Biased Arrests” examines the marijuana arrest rates by race in all 50 states using the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Uniform Crime Reporting Program and the United States Census. This report found that the use of marijuana between blacks and whites is very similar: “In 2010, 14% of Blacks and 12% of whites reported using marijuana in the past year; in 2001, the figure was 10% of whites and 9% of Blacks. In every year from 2001 to 2010, more whites than Blacks between the ages 18 and 25 reported using marijuana in the previous year” (ACLU, 21). Although the use of marijuana between Blacks and whites is roughly the same, “A black person was 3.73 times more likely to be arrested for marijuana possession than a white person--a disparity that increased 32.7% between 2001 and 2010” (ACLU). The War on Drugs used race as a motivating factor in promoting stricter laws and as a scare tactic against the American people away from drugs. As a result, more Blacks and Latinos are incarcerated than whites because of the scheduling of drugs and racial profiling by police officers.

In a journal published by John Hopkins University Press titled *The War on Drugs is a War on Racial Justice* by Deborah Small, she states: “In New York, over 94 percent of inmates incarcerated for drug offenses are Black or Latino. In at least 15 states, Black men are sent to prison for drug offenses at rates that are from 20 to 57 times greater than for White men” (Small, 2001). These statistics provide one example of the vast difference of incarceration for Blacks and Latinos compared to Whites. Black Lives Matter’s mission is “to build local power and intervene in violence inflicted on Black community by the state and vigilantes” (blacklivesmatter.com). The Black Lives Matter Movement aims to end racial profiling by police which can hopefully reduce the amount of unjust incarcerations or potential police brutality. Black Lives Matter and the War on Drugs then are connected to Criminal Justice Reform because of the excessive amount of people incarcerated for drug use: “Drug offenders in prisons and jails have increased 1100% since 1980. Nearly a half million (493,000) persons are in state or federal prison or local jail for a drug offense, compared to an estimated 41,100 in 1980” (Mauer, King; 2007).

In addition to the effect on the Criminal Justice system, the War on Drugs also has an impact on women and the Women’s Rights movement. Women are more likely to have been convicted of a drug offense than men: “As of 2005, 29% of women in prison had been convicted of a drug offense, compared to 19% of men, and two thirds had children under 18. Women were also more likely to have used drugs during the time of their offense, been a victim of physical or sexual abuse prior to incarceration, or suffered from a mental health problem” (Mauer, King; 2007). The War on Drugs has had adverse effects on the Black Lives Matter, Criminal Justice Reform, and Women’s Rights social movements. The War on Drugs contrasts these movements because of the federal laws such as minimal sentences for drug related crimes that cause more people to be incarcerated than necessary. The intent of these laws were directed towards “major traffickers” and “serious traffickers” instead, “Among crack cocaine defendants, more than 60% were either street-level dealers, couriers, or low-level assistants. This prevalence of low level defendants in the federal system is inconsistent with a criminal justice system that was designed to harness the resources of the national government and combat the most serious interstate and international crimes” (Mauer, King; 2007). The War on Drugs counters Black Lives Matter because of the disproportionate amount of Black people incarcerated for drug related crimes compared to White people.

The War on Drugs exposes the issues with the Criminal Justice System: instead of attempting to help people with drug addictions the government puts people in jail. Roughly one in five people in state prison for drug related offenses stated that their motivation for their offense was to help fund a drug habit and slightly more than half suffering from substance abuse have not had adequate services to help their problem (Mauer, King; 2007). Instead of throwing those in jail who have substance abuse issues, it is more cost effective to fund drug treatment rather than mandatory sentencing (Mauer, King; 2007). The figure below shows the number of drug users that partook in drug treatment programs in prison from 1997 and 2004. 

**Application of Theories**

The narrative of the War on Drugs has greatly influenced the direction of the social movement and ultimately who the targets are. The War on Drugs was emphasized as a national issue but ultimately punished and targeted racial minorities. The media’s portrayal of drugs in America can be perceived as a continuously spreading and hazardous epidemic. The theories of political mediation and political process are umbrella terms in regards to this social movement. The most relevant theories applied to the War on Drugs can be simplified to collective identity and framing.

Within the context of the War on Drugs, political mediation is an umbrella term. However, it aids in understanding how the War on Drugs was greatly influenced by political forces. The theory of political mediation examines the way in which the social and political context that participants are situated in, intersects with the strategic choices that social movement actors make, and recognizes that opportunities are situational, fluid, and volatile. (Carty, 12). In this case, the actors of the War on Drugs are the political figures. These factors depend on the way actors perceive and define the situation and then decide what action should be taken. (Carty, 12). The term “mediation” of the theory is identified as a means of reaching peaceful and agreed solutions on certain controversial issues. Essentially, the political mediation model is a theory explaining the influence of movements in relation to politics. This is greatly prevalent in the social movement regarding the War on Drugs; identifying and analyzing the forms of mobilization, strategies, and the political conditions that can potentially impact the outcome and message of a particular movement. This political influence and phenomena fundamentally lead to potential political opportunity.

Political process model presupposes that all factors of social movements are determined by macrostructural relations. Again, this an umbrella term in relation to the War on Drugs. The dynamics, the reasoning behind the emergence, and the participants along with their susceptibility to take part in a political protest determine the outcome of the social movement. In the case of the War on Drugs, political figures greatly influence other external resources such as political opportunity/structures. (Carty, 10). Essentially, the social forces determine the interpretation and outcome of the social movement.

 Collective identity can be simplified to a shared sense of belonging to a group. It is an interactive, shared process that links individuals or groups to a social movement through their shared interaction. The process of collective identity focuses on how individuals decide how to share their values and beliefs in a collective manner. This unity helps to bridge the gap between the structural foundations for action in the collective action itself. (Carty 24). In relation to the war on drugs, political activists create in-group cohesion. These social movement actors re-appropriated the identity of those under drug use as a form of stigmatizing. This stigmatization led to the presumed labeling of status. Many drug users were identified as thugs, criminals, and eventually African Americans and Latinos. There was a collective identity that minorities were the culprits of drug use and needed to be incarcerated. This interpretation ignores the cultural elements and societal structures of those in question.

 The collective identity greatly articulates shared meanings in ways the actors frame their motives in regards to a social movement. Framing is aimed to build solidarity by linking social movement participants’ grievances to mainstream beliefs and values. (Carty 24). The framing of a situation aims to control the interpretation of an ideological basis; this selectively omits and emphasizes various aspects of value or belief. Essentially, the actors of the social movement articulate individual interests, values, and beliefs that align with their motives. For framing to be influential, organizers must persuade large numbers of people that the issues they care about are urgent and that alternatives are possible. (Carty 25). In regards to the War on Drugs, the framing of the social movement direct targets the marginalized in society; minorities.

 The theories of collective identity and framing have greatly influenced the direction of the War on Drugs. The origins of the war against drugs lie in the ideological conception. A modern day example would the current Opioid Epidemic. An opioid is a term for drugs that bind to opioid receptors in the body. This includes heroin and fentanyl as well as prescription pills such as OxyContin, Vicodin, Codeine and Morphine. (Orsini). Opioids consist of illegal substances along with drugs can that be prescribed by doctors or can be used for medical reasons. The modern-day issue focuses on the use of prescription pills; regular use of opioid drugs prescribed by a doctor can lead to dependence. The use of opioids, specifically heroin, had an influx in use in the 1970s. (Orsini). However, it the framing of the issue is vastly different than it is currently. There was a collective identity instigated by political forces to target and ban any form of drug use; predominantly affecting individuals of color. Now, it is deemed a crisis situation and an epidemic through an influx of abusing prescription pills in the 1990s. (Orsini). America’s current opioid epidemic calls for “treatment not punishment.” (Tiger). The media reports move away from criminalization and lean towards the narrative of white, middle-class drug users as victims, rather than criminals. This is another example of a racist drug policy; white people get treatment and poor people of color get punishment. It is also interesting to note that the percentage of people who abused their opioid prescription was almost double in states prohibiting medical marijuana, compared to states that permitted marijuana for medical purposes.

 An instance of a drastic change in framing drug use in America can be seen in the New York Times’ article, “In Heroin Crisis, White Families Seek Gentler War on Drugs.” Written in 2015, the article focuses on the coverage of suburban drug users that invites sympathy and empathy towards the individuals and their stories. The article encourages the reader to see themselves or someone they know in the stories that they can easily relate to. (Seelye). The way the article is written implies the obvious fact that individuals who become addicted to opioids can be apart of loving middle-class families. The article is displayed along with white individuals featured in embraces and distraught faces, as well as put-together parents solemnly looking at a picture of their deceased children from the use of opioids. The title of the article even emphasizes the reprisal of a drug panic through the use of “white families” who want “gentler” approaches to drugs since it is now affecting middle-class white families. (Seelye). The article promotes different methods of dealing with drug users, such as police departments not punishing opioid users, but rather diverted them to treatment facilities. Efforts are also made to de-stigmatize addiction, such as not identifying users as “junkies” or “addicts” and replacing that with “substance use disorder.” (Seelye). The individuals interviewed for this article also put the blame on the dealers rather than the drug users. One mother who lost her son to an overdose stated, “These dealers aren’t just selling, they’re murdering people.” (Seelye). The access to naloxone (Narcan), a medication used to reserve the side of opioid overdoses, has also become more readily available in most states. (Tiger). The nation’s War on Drugs was defined by the crack epidemic that was based in low-income, poor, black urban communities; the response of the public was met with a zero tolerance policy and stiff prison sentences even if they were non-violent drug offenses. (Tiger). The article states that “today’s heroin crisis is different.” (Seelye). Opioid use has actually increased in various demographic groups: it has skyrocketed among whites. Nearly 90% of those who have tried opioids for the first time in the last decade were white. (Tiger).

 The media’s coverage of drug use and their users can be exclusively different based on racial inferences; fundamentally highlighting that racial inequality on drug policy. The crack epidemic of the 1980s is an example of how the fear of drugs was used to justify increased criminalization of people of color. (Orsini). This was further enforced as crack cocaine being identified as a black drug and powder cocaine being identified as a white drug; With the different classifications of drugs based on race use, sentencing disparities have emerged and remained one of the most controversial factors of the War on Drugs. The efforts of drug prohibition often rely on the misconstrued image that people of color are more commonly drug users and this ultimately threatens social stability. The ambitions of targeting race are unethically encouraged through classifications of certain drugs, sentencing disparities, and the collective identity that frames the purpose of the social movement.

**Conclusion**

The War on Drugs is not only a problem in America, but also in other areas of the world. Countries that experience issues with drug use and trafficking include the Philippines and the United Kingdom. Their drug wars are often intertwined with drug-related crime and corrupt law enforcement. The War on Drugs has had negative consequences like “mass incarceration in the United States, political destabilization, and violence in Latin America, Asia, and Africa” (Kurzgesagt). This morphes the drug war into a huge human rights issue as well as a public health issue. Having spent billions of taxpayer dollars every year, drug cartels and trafficking ensue. The federal effort to eradicate the transport, sale, and use of illicit drugs has proved unsuccessful because of supply and demand: there will always be a demand for illicit drugs, because a drug-free world is impossible to achieve. By reducing the supply and failing to reduce the demand, prices for sales and transport go up, but the cost of the drug remains stagnant because drugs will be consumed regardless of the price. For example, the United States tried to reduce the prominence of crystal meth by harshly regulating the manufacturing of the ingredients needed to make it. While the big producers went out of business, small meth labs popped up to supply the demand. These trailers where the crystal meth was being made provided thousands of meth users with the drugs they desired, so the the regulation and prohibition of crystal meth didn’t succeed but made the issue worse. The use of unregulated chemicals to make crystal meth made it more dangerous for users. So, the federal government regulated the chemicals in the small meth labs, causing the Mexican drug cartel to step in and supply the demand for crystal meth. These factors not only made the drug more potent and easier to smuggle, but didn’t reduce demand or supply of the drug. Not only does prohibition make drugs stronger, because traffickers and sellers pack more potency into smaller volumes of the drug, which creates more profit. For example, during the prohibition of alcohol, Americans drank more hard liquor than beer during the era. This pattern is one of many that proves prohibition hasn’t worked and doesn’t work. If there is a will for illicit drug usage, there is always a means to acquire it. The United States Drug Enforcement Agency has a less than 1% efficiency rate at prevent drug trafficking to the country as well as within the it. In addition, drug prohibition has contributed to more crime-related violence all across the globe because drug organizations don’t have the legal system to settle disputes within the organizations. Consequently, the homicide rate in the United States is 25 - 75% higher because of the War on Drugs. This brutality is especially apparent in the frontrunner in the War on Drugs: Mexico. They have counted over 164,000 deaths between 2007 and 2014 alone. The greatest consequence of the War on Drugs in America is mass incarceration. Because of mandatory minimums signed into legislation by Bill Clinton and harsher sentencing for Black and Brown folk, prison populations in the country are monumentous. 40% of prisoners in the United States are Black because they are ten times as likely to get arrested for a drug offense than their white counterparts, regardless of the fact that white adolescents are more likely to abuse drugs. The War on Drugs, as literature and history has suggested, is a war on people of color and war than cannot be won.

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