

## Unclear and Poorly Presented Danger

This essay is neither for nor against the legalization of recreational marijuana. The point is conceded that marijuana is useful and oftentimes necessary for controlling pain. It is also conceded that marijuana could be healthier than opiate based pain killers, and deserves long term fully funded research. That said, this paper intends to show that the information provided by Mr. Franklin's organization to the Citizens of Midland lacks clear information and reasonable argument.

The first document, *Make Pot Legal Now!*, begins with an uncalled for attack on a straw woman, followed by a call to action. It then provides an unsupported statistic. Following this, we are treated to a *term*, "gateway drug," the intended interpretation of which is not clear. Any group, and the motives of the group, have as much influence on the individual as the purpose of the group itself. No attempt is made to express the difference between medical and recreational use, or the difference of intent and influence exerted on individuals by groups advocating for each purpose. It takes objectivity, caution, and experience to decide what constitutes a "gateway" drug or community, and whether or not any individual has a good reason in the first place to use drugs should *always* be approached on a case-by-case basis.

The flier continues with a red herring, another unsupported statistic, a valid if unsupported statement about taxes, an irrelevant fact about hemp in all its incarnations, and an appeal to desire, which, though valid *and* sound, should not be the strongest motivation for legalizing an under-studied substance for recreation.

Following the Flier; a quote from Centertown Gazette:

*"For instance, this organization's proposal does not permit public consumption [...] in the city. Just like public drinking is both legally and ethnically discouraged, public use of pot will not be permitted. However, just as there are retailers that sell beer, wine and liquor despite public consumption being restricted, there will, we can suppose, be retailers that will sell a variety of marijuana products despite the restriction of its use. Should the laws against drinking in public serve as the laws against smoking marijuana in public? What about the other means by which marijuana can be consumed? [...] What's to stop those who prefer consuming marijuana in edible form rather than via smoking? [...] Are people really going to start reporting anyone enjoying a lollipop?"* –Centertown gazette, Evening Edition, Aug. 19, 2013, Ursula Ellison

Clearly the laws against public drinking are ineffective. Smoking pot is acknowledged as on par with alcohol. The proposal doesn't have to permit public use for it to become common practice. The key to the flaws in the organization's position are unveiled in the last paragraph, in which appears Ursula Ellison's conversation with Mr. Franklin himself:

*"Ms. Harrison's obstructionist policies will only lead to greater dissatisfaction for the people [...] Furthermore, this is what the people want. Whether legislators, tied up in the pockets of lobbyists, or the governor, herself compromised by business interests, want to try to stop us, this law is going to pass, and the people of Midland are going to have what they want: legal access to a safe, widely-accepted adult drug."* –Centertown Gazette, Aug. 19, 2013, Ursula Ellison

Perhaps Mr. Franklin realizes that his first statement, 'obstructionist [...] people,' does not inherently imply that removing the obstructionist policies will make them more satisfied. But what he says next makes one question the intended meaning of two words; 'want' and 'the people.' Whoever he means by 'the people' can, will, and by implication, *should*, have what they want, and *what* they want is 'legal access to (yet another) 'safe' and 'widely accepted' 'adult' drug.' The implied argument that 'the people' *should* have what they want is not addressed by

any direct premise. The argument that they *will* is based solely off some private definition of ‘the people’—presumably everyone. And what is meant by all the evaluative adjectives—safe, widely-accepted, adult—remains to be certain. Caffeine has yet to be proven safe, and there is much less stigma around caffeine than pot. As for widely accepted, whatever ‘wide’ means to Mr. Franklin, it is difficult to see anything being ‘widely accepted’ until it reaches the same prevalence as coffee, red bull, and sleeping tablets. Pot is on about the same level as birth control: there are groups who support it, groups vehemently against it, and groups just as prevalent and diverse who have better things to do and don’t give a damn.

The only interesting part of the rest occurs when Mr. Franklin mentions lobbyists and business interests. Had he continued to openly state what he meant—presumably, that drug companies might be suppressing use of marijuana in order to maintain control of the pain killer market—his intent would have been clear, and his argument could have been said to be reasonable, valid, and even sound. By not touching it, he admits either to ignorance or lack of concern for this aspect of his subject *du jour*, right after having used to attack his opponent.

Then the reader finds the table... and the graph. They were obtained from a questionnaire. It is well known and common knowledge that no one *lies* on questionnaires. Furthermore, the data on drug arrests is not specific to pot. This makes one column, at least, all but irrelevant. Supposing the data *were* legitimate and relevant, one could get the total percentage of pot users for each zip code. If there was a correlation between using pot and less arrests—not between *legalizing* pot and less arrests, mind you, because this table doesn’t say which areas were legalized—then the crime rate should go down as the pot-use rate goes up. Upon collection of percentages, one *does* find that the graph matches the table. There *does* appear to be a correlation between pot use and lowered drug related arrests. This follows the organization’s claim. But again, ignoring for the moment any variables left uncontrolled, there is still no indication of which areas are legalized. Assumptions can be based off expectation—49108 and 49123 make good guesses for legalization. But assumptions, sadly, have never made for a well informed voting populace.

Following this, the organization gives *another* table, with stats for the unemployed, college graduates, and residents with multiple arrests. Using idealistic and stereotypical reasoning, the unemployed could be expected to use more drugs; college grads could be expected, perhaps, to be smarter and have less need for them, and residents with multiple arrests could have been thrown in with the intent of doing anything from accounting for outliers (dealers of more dangerous, ‘unsafe’ drugs such as cocaine, heroin, meth, etc...presumably what the organization wouldn’t condone) to accounting for those “*retailers that will sell a variety of marijuana products despite the restriction of its use.*” So that stat is worthless, no information existing on how to use it. If such information had been present, and these variables were factored in, they might presumably help create a clearer picture of pot-usage’s actual effect on drug-related arrests. And the problem remains when, lacking the skill and the T84 calculator to do this, the common voter cannot create any accurate mathematical picture.

The final piece of information is the article *The [...] West*. Its flaws repeat all those before it, begging the question of long term respiratory effects, the increase or decrease in car accidents, memory damage, and a thousand other results that have been perpetuated, by factual study or urban legend, as consequences of marijuana. The article has descent points to make in support of positions 1 and 2, but feels one sided in a manner that, after everything else, just makes it off-putting.

All of these documents support Mr. Franklin's position. None of them address or acknowledge the vast array of arguments that can and have been brought against them. The only reasonable arguments given for legalization are about increased revenue and less wasted tax money; essentially, that there will be Profit. Profit for someone other than the pharmaceutical companies might be, for some, a worthwhile consolation prize. But the fact that Profit is the only well supported argument remains distressing. Position 1 is unsupported by any evidence, and position 2, while supported by data, is shaken by the flaws in the collection and presentation of the data. All this amounts to strain the limits of my patience, and should imbue in the patriotic citizen a desire for leaders who treat the literate public with a greater display of the same desired charity, and with intelligent respect.

**Word Count: 1199 (not including quotes)**