

# The drug war on black america



**ASSIGN  
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## **Introduction**

The history of the United States government has implemented several policies that have in many ways affected our way of life. The subject I have chosen is " The War on Drugs " or the Drug War on Black America as my research shows. The policies in the " war on drugs " in America have led to social inequalities, mass incarceration and show how disturbingly the U. S. government has used this agenda as a policy-making tool to target and imprison African Americans. This " drug war " has broken up families, destroy Black neighborhoods and has created overcrowding in prisons.

It is important to inform the public about this subject. This is not a real war on drugs, but on a group of people. Drugs continue to enter this country and we have seen an increase in both heroin and opioid use, creating an overdose epidemic. I want to find out what issues does the " war on drugs" address and it is with even greater importance to show the disparity that exists between Blacks and Whites.

Decades later, the same propaganda here about the war on drugs resulted in billions of dollars spent, mass incarcerations and the Black communities that were too largely targeted by this drug war have been the most affected. Today the United States has the highest prison population. There are currently well over 2 million people incarcerated. Information provided by [www. pewresearch. org](http://www.pewresearch.org) shows that 33% of African Americans are in prison. They only make up 13% of the nation's population. Since this initiative was launched, Blacks have been disproportionately been arrested and convicted

of drug offense more than any other race. A breakdown of this agenda shows that it maintains a long-standing war against Blacks.

## Literature Review

### The War on Drugs: How President Nixon Tied Addiction to Crime

The United States government's initiative on the war on drugs began in June of 1971 when then-President Richard Nixon coined the term the "war on drugs." He claimed that drug abuse was America's public enemy number one. The agenda being promoting by Nixon's war on drugs was to reduce the illegal drug trade in the United States. The policy of this government initiative was to prevent the production, sale, and use of illegal drugs. Nixon started a drug war which labeled young hippies and African Americans, not as young people whose addiction was caused by a lack of resources in society or trauma from serving in Vietnam, yet as hoodlums attacking the morality of the country, depicting them as individuals who deserved incarceration and punishment. This criminalization of drug abusers pushed a pattern; Nixon's administration misinterpreted the numbers that linked drug addiction to crime. Nixon did so to create this tough on crime agenda. He didn't hold the white working class responsible for any drug-related violence in urban communities. He changed the public's general view of the drug abuser into one that is of danger to the American development. Nixon needed this to strengthen the need for the war on drugs. By changing the public's perception, which he did, he was able to strengthen the need of the drug war. Drug abusers were no longer regarded as sick victims of a society

that systematically excluded addicts, no one cared if they were simply locked up. Incarceration was for the country's best interest.

Nixon's federal policy in the war on drugs would continue to last decades after his presidency. Nixon, aside from being infamous for the Watergate Scandal, only legacy would be that of the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), which he created as a result of this initiative. Other presidents have used the "war on drugs" propaganda to maintain a tough stance on drugs and crime, basically to win elections. The motives behind Nixon's War on Drugs were later revealed by one of his former chief domestic advisers John Ehrlichman, in an interview with Dan Baum, in which he described that the purpose of this initiative was to target anti-war activists, better known as Hippies and African Americans for which Nixon had considered as enemies. Which considering President Nixon did have an enemies list. This should not be surprising the measures taken by this administration. The Nixon Administration knew that they couldn't just single out these two groups because that would be illegal so instead, they associated them with certain drugs to then criminalize both groups. He created a new agenda to mask his actual agenda. Nixon distracted the people to get an easier and aggressive way to target Hippies and African Americans.

### Race and the War on Drugs

Despite the false motives being pushed by the Nixon administration, his efforts in tackling this issue were very small compared to the efforts of President Ronald Reagan. President Reagan expanded his focus on criminal punishment rather than drug treatment and rehabilitation, creating a zero-

tolerance policy on drugs and its abusers. President Reagan used drug resources from healthcare agencies and sent those resources to the Department of Justice instead. He also had a hand in encouraging to passing the worst federal mandatory minimum drug laws. His initiative went on to create mass incarcerations for non-violent drug offenses in the United States. ([www. thedrugpolicy. org](http://www.thedrugpolicy.org)).

In 1986, Reagan signed the Anti-Drug Abuse Act, which, in addition to strengthening the mandatory minimum sentencing policies, using \$1. 7 billion to fund the war on drugs, by also shifting the federal supervised release program from a rehabilitative focus to a punitive one. The controlled release program refers to the measures which prisoners must take when released on probation. These programs consisted of regular drug tests and probation counselors' meetings. The 1986 Anti -Drug Abuse Act reinforced the mandatory minimum sentencing system and added provisions for other drug types. Minimum mandatory sentences were criticized for being inflexible and unfair and contributed to the overall trend of prison overcrowding in the United States. With the passing of the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986, possession of 28 grams of crack cocaine warrants a five-year mandatory minimum sentence for a first-time offender. In order to get the same sentence for possession of powder form cocaine, someone would have to have 500 grams. There are critics and experts who state the crack cocaine is more addictive and therefore should carry a higher sentence. The legal disparity between crack cocaine and powder is deeply rooted in racist beliefs, because crack cocaine had been the most common drug used by

African Americans, and cocaine being the common drug of use for White people.

## Discussion

I understand from the readings that the idea behind the war on drugs is a complete shim sham. It was never intended to get rid of the drugs in this country. As drugs are still very prominent in the United States. The government has continued to use this to cover a less acceptable reality. To make the general public believe that the purpose of it all is to reduce illegal drugs and make the streets of America safer. The reality is that drugs are continuing to come in, drug cartels are still making a lot of money, and it's a legal course of discrimination aimed to incarcerate African Americans. It can be minimally compared to how genocide is created. Gather a particular set of people; incarcerate them for a long of time. We've seen this before, where this discrimination leads to continued acceptance of combating drugs in the United States. There is no other group of people that have been largely affected by this. The whole tough on crime stance has been used to promote the idea that the government is taking matters into their hands by preventing drugs from entering the country and that drug abuse is a crime rather than a health issue. People who are addicted and/or dependent on drugs should not be deemed as criminals.

The War on Drugs should be that of its title. An attack on those people in cartels, and any other entities that look to profit from the distribution of illegal drugs. That is really the problem. Looking at the neighborhood that I am from which is Park Slope, Brooklyn. In the early 90's there was a lot of

crack cocaine use going on. I recall not being able to play at the local park because my Mother feared I'd get poked with a syringe. I do remember the police rounded up a bunch of users that were hiding in the park. The irony was that the drug dealers would watch from the corner as Police hauled off some local druggies. That is how I view the war on drugs. It targets the person using the drugs, not the person who is supplying the drugs. I am aware that there are plenty of drug laws aim to target people who get caught selling drugs. We know the existing laws have been successful. But what about the drug supplier. The person providing the drugs. It just a ploy to get someone to pay usually someone who really doesn't have anything instead of the top person on the drug food chain.

The United States spend millions of dollars in its " war on drugs" yet there have been more reported overdoses since 2016. The flow of drugs has only increased. More money is being spent housing people for non-violent drug offenses. The U. S. government refrain on spending money on imprisoning non-violent drug offenses and shift that money into schools, and school programs that would help the youth stay in a positive environment. This " war" has only put more people in prison, more drugs on the street, cartels even more rich. Creating mandatory minimum sentencing and the three strikes laws has only guarantee that the U. S. will continue to hold top spot on mass incarceration. I find it absurd, that our government can spend so much on keeping Blacks in prison, but I cannot afford to keep my child enrolled in Public School After School Program because the school wants too much money. What I have notice in the media in the past two years now that involve several cases of heroin or opioid overdose. Politicians want to have a

softer approach on handling the overdose epidemic. The reason why is because it's images of White people overdosing. I highly doubt that if it were the images of lack people, these politicians wouldn't feel so sympathy for them.

The racial bias that exists in the criminal justice system is very overwhelming. The criminal justice system framework actually protects racial order and it continues to keep Black people in what they believe in their place: confined, enslaved, incarcerated. Despite of the fact that drug use is moving at an equal rate between racial lines. Blacks are unquestionably bound to be pulled over, searched, arrested, prosecuted and subsequently convicted for drug offense that White people commit as well.

## Conclusion

Our country needs to seriously reformat its approach on our drug policies. They need to create a more humane and efficient strategies. Not target particular groups, increase the prison population all the while drugs are still making it into our neighborhoods. A key conclusion is that drug abusers should not be catergorized as criminal but should be provided with the assistance for treatment and prevention. Drug addiction should be viewed as exactly what it is, a disease. The governemnt needs to work more effectively with all communities but especially urban communities to be able to reall address the issues involving drugs. There are more Americans who recognize that the war on drugs is a failure. This war on drugs is ineffective at reducing illegal drugs but it is counterproductive in keeping minorities in prison. My



hope for the future is that policy makers make the necessary changes needed to actually reduced the illegal drugs being smuggled into this country but to also maintain that addiction is a disease that should be helped not punished. If there aren't alternatives to this, then a solution would be too far fetched.

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