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Clarence TC Ching Essay 2016

### **Correctly End the War on Drugs**

Over fifty percent of crime in Hawai'i is linked to drug abuse, most commonly marijuana and methamphetamine according to a Narconon State Fact Sheet. Drugs are a rampant problem in Hawai'i and, according to Khon2, the problem is only getting worse for middle and high school students. Drug abuse and the side effects are a national issue and deserves more and better attention. Not only is it getting out of hand, I also believe how we combat Drugs and Drug Abuse is wrong.

When you are caught with a "Controlled Substance" in Hawai'i, you can face prison time ranging from 30 days to 30 years, and a fine between \$1000 and \$50,000. In most cases, inmates aren't allowed chance of parole or a shortened sentence. We let drug abusers sit in prison with little counselling, and without prisoner initiative, most times drug abusers don't receive the help they need. Because Hawai'i has one of the highest abundances of drugs (enough where supply meets demand) this is a major problem. According to Narconon, Drug Abuse can be linked with numerous domestic crimes including child and spousal abuse, Property Damage and Vandalism, along with countless other public disturbances and civil cases.

How can we fix this? Isn't the harsh punishment and major social taboo on drugs enough? No, it's not. By enforcing strict laws and attempting to cripple supply of drugs while not lowering demand, consumers never suffer from the closure of major drug creating operations. Instead,

this leads to smuggling and the professionalization of smaller drug operations in rural areas. For example, when major Meth labs were seized in America, this may have toppled a huge operation, but led to thousands of smaller at-home Meth labs. This may have stopped supply, but because the demand was high enough, more and more people were encouraged to create and sell their own Meth. This didn't solve the problem, it just forced more people to know how to make it.

To fix this, we wouldn't need to create a new solution, rather reuse a system already in place. Sweden once suffered one of the worst Meth smuggling problems in the world. To combat it, instead of regulating harsh laws against addicts, they created safe spaces for them. They offered free and clean Meth, housing, food, and rehabilitation centers. Instead of shunning users from society they offered help, lowering demand of the drug and counselling addicts. Two thirds of meth users in Sweden were rehabilitated using this method. I believe we could use this same system for Hawai'i. We need to be understanding of addicts and offer rehabilitation and guidance, rather than incarcerating them and only creating a bigger homelessness problem after they are set free. This would be killing two birds with one stone.

How does Hawai'i benefit from this? We have a massive drug and homelessness problem. Instead of being released from prison and offered no help in finding a job, addicts and users can be given guidance and counselling in adapting to ordinary life. We can show them that they're not unfixable throw outs, but people who can change and get better. Nobody gains from shunning these people from society. In order to become better as a society, we need to learn to

help any and everyone in need instead of imprisoning them and forcing them to believe that they're bad people.

Helping the needy and respecting everyone's basic human rights were aspirations of Clarence T.C. Ching. Most people don't look at drug addicts as people who need help. Rather, they see criminals and juveniles who deserve to suffer. But if anyone could see the problem with how we treat these people, it would be him. We need to change as a society and help everyone, not profile and caste to determine which ones should be allowed help. Clarence T.C. Ching was entrepreneurial and would see the benefit to having millions of rehabilitated addicts who look to become part of the working class, versus millions of active and harmful users who only add to our already horrific poverty problem. He'd also have the initiative to start such an ambitious project to help correct the way we think about drugs and drug addicts. Not criminals. Not juveniles. But people.