



Saying no: a little girl demonstrates against dope and dealers at an anti-poverty rally in Jacksonville

**Take Back
Our Community
from
Drugs and Thugs**

values and attitudes make it unlikely that the problem will ever be erased by even the most concerted Government crusade. The freedom inherent in American society assures that people will always be able, and often willing, to pursue their desired indulgences, however illicit. A society filled with wealth and the ability to consume, along with failure and despair, provides a ripe market for the world's drug supply, which will always exist as long as there is the demand for it. Experts point to other deep-seated causes that produce a continued national craving for drugs: lack of community, disintegration of the family, moral laxity, the relentless pressure to perform in a fast-paced society. "The real remedies to the problem don't satisfy Americans' urge for a quick fix," says Ted Galen Carpenter of the CATO Institute, a Washington think

tank. "It's a long, laborious process." Merely preaching about the evils of dope is no more likely to purify the schoolyard than a Sunday sermon about fallen women is likely to make the congregation chaste. Actually, moralizing often makes decadence more alluring. While NBC vigorously protests that only the bad guys take dope on *Miami Vice* and they come to an unseemly end, public polls show that many people still feel such shows glamorize drug use. Fast clothes and cars may be the toys of villains, but they are seductive nonetheless. In Oakland two weeks ago, many were shocked when the body of a notorious local drug lord, Felix Mitchell, was carried by a gold-and-black hearse, drawn by two bay horses, followed by a long line of Rolls-Royces and luxury cars. Inside the Baptist church where Mitchell lay in his bronze coffin with glittering rings on his

fingers, a sound track played Sade's pop hit, *Smooth Operator*. Mitchell, 32, had been stabbed to death in Leavenworth penitentiary while serving a life sentence for drug-trafficking conspiracy. But in the faces of young people who lined the funeral route were expressions of awe.

In the wild swings of public attitudes toward drug use, it is useful to look to the way that alcohol abusers have learned to regard their addiction. They understand that the craving never really disappears; it is merely denied. An alcoholic can stay sober for years, yet he still says, because he knows it to be true, "I am an alcoholic." If the current revulsion against drug abuse does manage to banish dope back into the shadows, society could use a measure of the same honesty and self-awareness. "It seems we forget so easily," says NIDA's Schuster, "and so we have repetitions of these cycles of drug-abuse epidemics. It almost seems that every other generation has to re-establish the dangers of drugs."

Indeed, the flurry of activity and proposals in the past few months threatens to obscure the most basic fact about drug use in America: border patrols, police raids and even random urinalysis are unlikely to have a lasting impact as long as there remains a demand for drugs and a general social tolerance of their use. A true change can come only if Americans are willing to say clearly—to their workmates and schoolmates, to their neighbors and friends, to their communities and to themselves—that drug use is not acceptable. If that is, in fact, one result of the current frenzy over what has been a recurring crisis for successive generations of Americans, then even all the hype and excess may in retrospect be worthwhile. —By Evan Thomas. Reported by Jonathan Beaty/Los Angeles, John Moody/New York, Dick Thompson/Washington

The Next High

They are known as "designer drugs." Manufactured in clandestine laboratories from readily available chemicals, synthetic drugs can pack many times the wallop of cocaine and heroin, cost little to produce and are rarely detected in ordinary drug tests. Many experts fear that they may form the next drug epidemic.

A current favorite of college students is MDMA, better known simply as "Ecstasy." Described as the "LSD of the '80s," MDMA offers the euphoric rush of cocaine and some of the mind-expanding qualities of hallucinogens without the scary, visual distortions. It may also cause permanent brain damage. Last year, the Drug Enforcement Administration outlawed MDMA.

Heroin addicts on the West Coast are discovering slightly altered forms (known as analogs) of Fentanyl, an anesthetic widely used during prolonged surgery. One form, dubbed "China White," is 1,000 to 2,000 times as strong as heroin.

Since tiny quantities of synthetic drugs can supply a user's habit for days, "one clandestine lab can spit out as many drugs as a foreign country," says David Smith, director of the Haight-Ashbury Free Medical Clinic. Last year California lawmen raided 235 illegal drug factories, but they say that for every lab hit, three others were missed.

The underground labs do not have the most stringent quality controls. Four years ago a "botched batch" of a designer drug called MPTP circulated through Northern California and left scores suffering from a frightening side effect: Parkinson's disease. If drugs like MPTP become as popular as cocaine, warns Ian Irwin, a San Jose neurotoxicologist, "you would have the makings of a real national disaster. It would make Chernobyl look minor."



"Ecstasy": capsules of MDMA