

## **Parents, Peers and Pot: The Rise of the Drug Culture and the Birth of the Parent Movement, 1976-1980**

**Emily Dufton**\*

On November 6, 2012, voters in Colorado and Washington State legalized recreational marijuana use as a way to bring their states back to financial security, ridding themselves of the expenses of prosecuting cases of drug possession while working to curb the widely disproportionate rates of arrests for African Americans and Latinos. In both states, the laws passed with resounding popularity: in Washington, the ballot was approved by a ten-point margin, and in Colorado, fifty-two percent of voters supported the act. Though the federal government still considers marijuana illegal, adults over the age of 21 in both states will now legally be allowed to purchase and possess up to one ounce of the drug, which they can procure from state-licensed stores that are estimated to raise \$1.9 billion in tax revenues over the next five years (Martin). Ending decades of marijuana prohibition was, to activists who supported the measures, an act of bravery and common sense. To Mason Tvert, a local organizer in Colorado, the act's passage "demonstrates that the people of Colorado are just as smart as we thought they were. They were fed up with prohibition and decided they want a more sensible approach" (Gurman).

The legislation passed in Washington and Colorado is extraordinary, but historically it is hardly unprecedented. Beginning forty years ago in Oregon, American voters who also desired a more sensible approach overwhelmingly approved decriminalization of the drug. From 1973 to 1978, marijuana was decriminalized or legalized across the country in twelve states that together contained a third of the nation's population. From Oregon (where marijuana was decriminalized in 1973), to Colorado (1975), Ohio (1975), Alaska (1975), California (1976), Maine (1976), Minnesota (1976), South Dakota (1977), Mississippi (1977), New York (1977), North Carolina (1977), and Nebraska (1978), voters challenged marijuana's federal criminality and voted to allow personal possession of up to one

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\* Emily Dufton is a PhD Candidate in American Studies at George Washington University. Her research interests include the history of drug use and anti-drug activism in the United States; political, social and cultural history; the history of American social movements and their political and social effects; and cultural and political conservatism.

ounce of the drug. During this time, if a citizen of a decriminalized state was caught smoking marijuana in public, the perpetrator would usually receive a civil fine, similar to a parking ticket, rather than face criminal charges.

Similar to today, decriminalization was seen as a means to end the prosecution of otherwise law-abiding young adults as well as, through taxes levied on the booming paraphernalia industry, a business-friendly solution to America's weakening economy. Given the growing ubiquity of the drug along with public approval of its seemingly innocuous effects, prosecuting marijuana cases in the 1970s seemed less vital than fighting heroin addiction, which was experiencing an epidemic of abuse at the time, or battling the growing national abuse of drugs like amphetamines and cocaine. In light of this growing social tolerance, government publications, doctors and public schools preached the doctrine of "responsible use," arguing that marijuana, when used in moderation, was no more dangerous than alcohol or tobacco. Politically, marijuana was also reaching a state of détente: in May of 1975, lengthy congressional hearings debated the merits of decriminalization on a federal level, and in 1976, both Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford addressed the potential of federal decriminalization on the presidential campaign trail, with Carter supporting full decriminalization and Ford maintaining that simple possession should not be a crime. By the late 1970s, it seemed reasonable to expect that marijuana decriminalization would become a national reality, a conclusion celebrated by pro-marijuana lobbying groups like the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML), which was founded in 1970 to achieve such ends.

What makes the period of decriminalization in the 1970s unique, however, was that the nation's growing acceptance of recreational marijuana use also birthed a counterrevolution of concerned parents. These grassroots groups of committed activists became so powerful and influential in just four years that they were able to change the direction of the national drug debate. What became a groundswell of national grassroots activism began in one family's home in Atlanta, Georgia, in the summer of 1976, before it spread across the country with groups blossoming in every state by 1980. The "parent movement," as these activists became known, consisted of groups of generally white, suburban, middle-class mothers and fathers who were horrified that their nation was legalizing pot and fearful that their children would become a generation of zombies, utterly incapacitated by the drug's surging use. Less concerned about the rising rate of narcotics abuse by adults than they were about the growing potential for adolescent experimentation with marijuana, parent activists launched a war on drugs of their own, using education and "parent peer groups" to mobilize against the "drug culture" they saw surrounding pot use. Spread by sympathetic media coverage, national conferences, and activist-written guidebooks and manuals, by 1983 there were over 4,000 parent groups in the United

States alone, and groups had formed abroad in countries like England, Finland, Mexico, and Jamaica (Lindblad 41).

Less than a decade after formation, the movement celebrated remarkable success. By the time Ronald Reagan was reelected in 1984, the tens of thousands of parent activists who joined the movement had, through a series of incredibly effective grassroots campaigns, brought the rate of adolescent marijuana use to an all-time low. Additionally, activists had recriminalized marijuana in almost every decriminalized state, passed broad anti-paraphernalia laws across the country, and spurred prominent celebrities, politicians and sports stars to join their cause. Most importantly, they influenced the manner in which the Reagan administration executed its war on drugs, reversing over a decade of established policy to place the defense of children – not the rehabilitation of addicted adults – at the drug war’s core. Because of the influence and potency of the parents’ message, the movement was able to change the nation’s mind about marijuana: in the span of just a few years, marijuana was transformed from a seemingly benign middle-class high into the most dangerous drug in the United States, a gateway drug that had the potential to endanger the future of the entire nation.

How and why the parent movement became one of the most influential grassroots movements of the late twentieth century is the focus of this article. The “how” is a story of effective grassroots activism: the parent movement gained in popularity and reach by inheriting, combining and refining the work of earlier liberal and conservative campaigns. The movement was as inspired by the work of the women’s rights, gay rights, and civil rights movements as it was by the anti-feminist campaigns of Phyllis Schlafly and the “suburban warriors” of Orange County, California (Critchlow; McGirr). In combining the most effective aspects of both political styles, the parent movement was able to integrate the consciousness-raising efforts and calls for empowerment of the left with the demands for sobriety and the importance of the nuclear family of the right. This paper will explore how the formation of the parent movement was an evolutionary product of earlier grassroots campaigns, particularly as the parent movement emphasized anti-drug education and anti-paraphernalia legislation, and mobilized to exert political pressure to achieve their aims. This article will explore how they achieved such remarkable success on all three fronts.

The “why” is a story of historical kismet, of the parent movement’s ability to align its anti-marijuana crusade with the larger social concerns of the time. The dangerous effects of adolescent drug abuse fit perfectly alongside the era’s larger fears of national decline. Pot-smoking adolescents, lethargic and failing in school, encapsulated two of the nation’s most nagging anxieties: fears about the effects of

the leftover culture of moral permissiveness of the 1960s, and panic about children's roles in the uncertain economic future of the early 1980s. By painting marijuana as a singular scourge to both the American economy and the American family, the movement's apolitical, nondenominational campaign gained support from politicians on both sides of the aisle, who latched onto the parents' popular platform as insurance against being seen as "soft" on drugs. In response to the crisis of drug use (like the response to scores of other issues that fueled the culture wars of the 1980s), the parent movement supported strong family values, the promotion of children's safety, and calls for the increased need for individual self-reliance to solve problems, rather than dependence on governmental solutions. Because of this, activists were able to align their anti-drug platform with the larger, and increasingly conservative, political and social trends of the time, which ultimately endeared the movement to an even larger base.

While the focus of this article is the years between 1976 and 1980, it will also detail two important events that occurred before and after the four-year period in which the parent movement arose and grew. It will explore the rise of the drug culture in the United States in the 1960s and early 1970s, detailing how marijuana use became so ubiquitous that it prompted the birth of the parent movement in 1976. Additionally, it will discuss how the movement aligned itself with the Reagan Revolution of 1980, exploring the movement's close relationship with the Reagans throughout their two administrations. But it is the four years between the movement's birth and Ronald Reagan's presidential election that are the most critical in adding to our understanding of how America reacted to decriminalization efforts. It was during these four years that the parent movement rose organically across the country, with no national oversight or celebrity affiliation, and this initial period of spontaneous growth is an essential, if understudied, component of American anti-drug social history, as well as a potentially rich source of historical precedent. As we once again face a national push for marijuana legalization, understanding the parent movement's early years – how the movement arose, why marijuana caused such a national reaction, and the way in which parents transformed the drug's popular appeal – can show how Americans reacted to decriminalization in the past, and may indicate how we will react to the process again.

### **Passing the Grass: The Growth of the Drug Culture in Suburban America**

More than any other intoxicant commonly used in the United States, marijuana has a long and storied history, swinging repeatedly between the poles of public approval and rebuke. First introduced to the country at the turn of the twentieth century by Mexican émigrés fleeing the dictatorship of General Porfirio Díaz, pot was seen as the drug of choice of a dangerous, often racialized underclass. A 1917 report from the Treasury Department noted that in Texas, only "Mexicans and sometimes

Negroes and lower class whites” smoked marijuana for pleasure, and warned that “drug-crazed” minorities might harm or assault upper-class white women (Jonnes 128). At the beginning of the twentieth century, even as marijuana’s popularity grew, the forces of Progressivism rallied behind ideals of American sobriety; that, combined with the tide of Prohibition, prompted Treasury Department officials to lobby to have marijuana added to the drugs covered by the Harrison Narcotics Tax Act of 1914 (though smokable marijuana ultimately didn’t qualify as a narcotic). Later, possession of the drug was penalized but not criminalized by the Marijuana Tax Act of 1937, which allowed each state to enforce its own marijuana laws. During the 1930s, when Harry Anslinger took control of the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, “reefer madness” took hold: as marijuana use exploded in urban enclaves and buoyed the jazz age in the absence of alcohol, fears about the degenerative properties of the drug and its insidious ability to destroy young minds were rampant, if also ludicrously sensationalized and mocked.

World War II halted the drug’s growing popularity, but only for a short while. Though little used in the 1950s, by the early 1960s marijuana was the drug of choice in urban bohemia and college campuses where it fueled the counterculture and the artistic avant-garde. Yet even as marijuana became synonymous with Haight-Ashbury and the Summer of Love, it was spreading into suburbia as well, finding a new home with adult consumers whose lives were far outside the hippie mainstream. By October of 1969, when marijuana graced the cover of *Life* magazine, the drug was celebrated for essentially becoming banal: “Marijuana, until recently a conspicuous liturgy of the rebellious young, is spreading into the middle class and fast becoming an institution,” the editors wrote, before noting that the drug was becoming the norm as doctors and lawyers enjoyed joints alongside their usual martinis at night (*Life*). As pot moved up in respectability and esteem, it lost much of its formerly rebellious edge. No longer the sole terrain of Beatniks and “heads,” by 1975 marijuana was the primary recreational illicit drug used across the United States, enjoyed by both aging hippies and in respectable suburban homes (Booth 290).

Naturally, marijuana’s popularity boom incited a federal response, particularly from President Richard Nixon, who launched the nation’s first war on drugs. Nixon despised marijuana and everything it represented to the counterculture and the rebellious youth movements that protested the Vietnam War. Nonetheless, after he was elected in 1968, it was the nation’s prolonged heroin epidemic that absorbed the attention of the early drug war. Heroin was experiencing an epidemic of abuse from 1967 to 1976, killing over 1,000 young New Yorkers in 1971 alone (Courtwright 165-170). Because of the need to address narcotic addiction, anti-marijuana initiatives, though of personal interest to the president, made only peripheral appearances in his official statements. In the message that launched the modern war on drugs, Nixon

announced that he was “transmitting legislation to the Congress to consolidate at the highest level a full-scale attack on the problem of drug abuse in America” (Nixon). Given the need to address the heroin epidemic, the message focused at length on the problem of narcotics abuse and the need for rehabilitating adult addicts. It mentioned marijuana only once, in relation to its schedule in the Controlled Substances Act of 1970. And yet, under the guise of popular anti-narcotics legislation, the Controlled Substances Act cemented Nixon’s anti-marijuana biases into law.

Prior to 1970, each state delineated its own anti-drug laws and there was no single federal ban on marijuana, placing the drug in legal limbo for nearly four decades. This changed on October 27, 1970, when Nixon signed the Controlled Substances Act into law. For the first time in American history, the act gave the power to determine a drug’s potential risk to the government – specifically to the attorney general of the United States – rather than to doctors or medical experts. The attorney general was now charged with investigating and outlawing any drug that was “found to have, and by regulation designed as having, a potential for abuse because of its depressant or stimulant effect on the central nervous system or its hallucinogenic effect” (*Legislative History* 4). Additionally, each substance was assigned a schedule from one to five, with Schedule I referring to drugs with a “high potential for abuse” and “no currently accepted medical use in treatment in the United States” while Schedule V drugs had “a low potential for abuse” and could be used for medical treatment (*Legislative History* 18). Nixon’s attorney general, John Mitchell, a strong anti-marijuana advocate himself, labeled marijuana a Schedule I drug. This meant that marijuana was now officially as illegal as heroin and more dangerous and less medically necessary than either morphine or cocaine. Superseding any individual state law, marijuana was now illegal on a national level, which meant that federal and state police could apprehend anyone caught using or possessing pot. This led to unprecedented rates of juvenile arrests, which rose from 292,170 in 1972 to 420,700 in 1974.

Prompted by the growing rates of punishment for young adults, voters began decriminalizing marijuana just three years after the Controlled Substances Act was signed into law. Oregon was first, easily passing a bill in its state chambers in the summer of 1973 that classified possession of up to one ounce of the drug as a noncriminal violation. Other states adopted a “wait and see” approach, and no decriminalization bills were passed for the rest of 1973 or for the entirety of 1974. But in 1975, the floodgates opened: five states, including two of the nation’s most populous, California and Ohio, passed decriminalization bills in quick succession, prompted by Oregon’s success with decreased juvenile arrests and rising rates of public approval for decriminalization. Seven more states would decriminalize

marijuana in the following three years, which together contained over a third of the nation's population.

It was not only growing public support for decriminalization that prompted more states to reconsider their marijuana laws, however. In the aftermath of Nixon's resignation on August 8, 1974, Congress felt compelled to reconsider its own position on the drug. In May of 1975, the Senate Committee of the Judiciary held hearings on federal decriminalization that sought to amend the 1970 Controlled Substances Act by allowing the possession of "not more than one ounce of marijuana within a private dwelling or other residence for [personal] use, or for the use of others." Chairman Birch Bayh of Indiana asserted that he hoped the Committee could "still the hysteria, and that we can pursue the truth, wherever it leads us. And if we make some people angry, that is the price we pay and the responsibility we have" (*Marijuana Decriminalization* 1, 5).

During the hearing, Bayh submitted a letter he had received from Robert P. Woodman of Willoughby, Ohio, who wrote to the senator the night his son Jimmy was arrested for a marijuana transaction on February 28, 1975:

I wrote my feelings as a father of a 20-year-old son who has fallen victim to an imperfect system of justice... This incredible punishment visited upon my son is wholly irrational and disproportionate to the imprudent, foolish, and victimless act of a 20-year-old boy. (Jimmy sold an ounce of reefer to an undercover narc.) While the court has called my son a criminal and has sentenced him to from one-to-five years in prison, he has the consolation of knowing that his parents, seven brothers and sisters, relatives, friends, and understanding neighbors in no way consider him to be a criminal. Immature and foolish? Yes! Criminal? No! (*Marijuana Decriminalization* 239).

What Bayh and others, especially parents like Woodman, argued in this hearing (the printed version of which is well over 1,500 pages long), was that marijuana use was simply too minor an infraction to warrant the massive expenditures in time, police work, and money spent to jail adolescents. Bayh noted that the costs of marijuana prosecution had increased exponentially over five years while the legal deterrents did little to stem actual usage rates of the drug. Ultimately, anti-marijuana legislation did the greatest damage to adolescents who were otherwise law-abiding citizens, saddling them with criminal records that could potentially restrict their employment opportunities for years to come. As Jimmy Carter would repeat back to Congress in his drug abuse message two years later, Bayh argued that the penalties against possession of marijuana "should not be more damaging to an individual than the use of the drug itself," especially if it put an otherwise law-abiding adolescent's future in jeopardy and created a criminal where none had existed before (Carter 1977).

Public support for Bayh's hearings was high, especially as additional states began considering decriminalization in their legislatures. In response, the marijuana paraphernalia industry boomed. Magazines like *High Times*, which debuted in the summer of 1974 and featured colorful ads for pipes and bongos, and marijuana-centered films like Cheech and Chong's *Up in Smoke* (1978) catered to this new marketplace. According to an editorial in the June 1976 issue of *Dealer*, a sister magazine of *High Times* that marketed itself to the marijuana business elite, "the marijuana subculture of the 1960s has established itself as the center of the new leisure market of the 1970s," initiating "a revolution in retailing on all fronts... [that] will continue as paraphernalia retailers try to capture the imagination of the dope consumer" (Peck 43). "Headshops" hawking items like "buzz bombs," "Power Hitters", and "a baby bottle fitted with both a nipple and a hash pipe" began popping up all over the country, where legal paraphernalia was sold to adolescents who patronized the stores "in large numbers" (Johnston). Once Jimmy Carter was elected to the White House, a December 1977 ad in *High Times* magazine exclaimed, "Carter Proposes Decriminalization! Paraphernalia Industry BOOM Expected!" ("How You Can Get Rich"). To eager paraphernalia suppliers, it seemed that national decriminalization was only months away, and distributors fought hard to establish themselves in an increasingly competitive market.

Given the drug's growing social acceptance and the increasing availability of marijuana paraphernalia in suburban shopping malls, it became clear that marijuana use would never remain relegated to legal adults. The burgeoning population of new pot smokers had shifted from college students and suburban professionals in the late 1960s to white, suburban, middle-class adolescents by the mid-1970s. According to a national poll, one out of nine high school seniors reported smoking marijuana daily in 1978, and three out of five students reported trying the drug at least once, many by the age of twelve (Manatt iii). Yet in spite of rising rates of drug use by adolescents, most reports continued to suggest that marijuana smoking was relatively harmless, making no distinction between the drug's effects on adults versus children. Anti-drug education was also limited at the time, focusing more heavily on warning children away from the dangers of narcotics. The Do It Now Foundation, which was started in San Francisco in 1968 and is one of the best-known drug education and prevention programs of the era, featured activists who entered classrooms in public schools across California to "stress statements by Allen Ginsberg, Timothy Leary, the Beatles, and other hip culture leaders against [the use of] hard drugs, such as heroin." But as far as pot was concerned, "the foundation [did] not take a position on the use of marijuana and other milder drugs except to point out that they are illegal" (AP).

While most social views of marijuana were overwhelmingly benign, the few negative reports from doctors about marijuana's potential effects were frightening admonitions against youthful drug abuse. Dr. Gabriel Nahas, an anesthesiologist at Columbia University who would become one of the parent movement's most trusted medical advisors, warned that marijuana use could result in children's stunted physical and mental growth. It could augment puberty, causing boys to grow breasts and rendering young girls infertile. It could destroy chromosomes and damage reproductive systems, resulting in multiple generations impaired by the drug. And it made young smokers "amotivational" – lethargic, disinterested, much less likely to pay attention in school, and much more prone to rebelling against their parents (Nahas 12).

A minority of politicians also supported this claim. In May and June of 1974 Senator James O. Eastland, a Republican from Mississippi, held six days of hearings on the "Marijuana-Hashish Epidemic and Its Impact on United States Security," in which the Congressman discussed "an array of frightening social consequences of the drug." "If the cannabis epidemic continues to spread at the rate of the post-Berkeley period," Eastland asserted, "we may find ourselves saddled with a large population of semi-zombies – of young people acutely afflicted by the amotivational syndrome." These adolescents could suffer from "irreversible brain damage" and could become "partial cripples," resulting in a generation of teenagers "who have never matured, either intellectually or physically." Most frighteningly, if the epidemic was not rolled back, Eastland warned that American society "may be largely taken over by a 'marijuana culture' – a culture motivated by a desire to escape from reality and by a consuming lust for self-gratification, and lacking any higher moral guidance. Such a society," Eastland warned, "could not long endure" (*Marijuana-Hashish Epidemic* 11, 20). Regardless of Eastland's apocalyptic warnings, however, decriminalization efforts at both the state and federal level marched on.

With waves of states decriminalizing possession and headshops popping up near schools, conditions were ripe for a countermovement to form. The spark for the parent movement's counterrevolution finally came in the form of a housewife and mother of three. A quiet, erudite woman whose skills from acquiring a Ph.D. in British literature would later help her research her cause, Marsha "Keith" Schuchard recognized that her own family had a drug problem when she caught her thirteen-year-old daughter smoking pot. What is remarkable about Schuchard is that, rather than simply punishing her daughter and moving on, Schuchard mobilized: she launched into action against adolescent drug abuse and took aim at the burgeoning drug culture as its cause. What ultimately resulted from her work was a solution to American parents' growing drug fears. By organizing into groups and educating themselves and others, Schuchard argued that "parent power" could overcome peer

pressure and the drug culture itself to ultimately prevent adolescent drug abuse. No one had ever suggested such action before.

### **The Counterrevolution Begins: How the Parent Movement Challenged the Drug Culture and Brought “Parent Power” to America**

The parent movement began during the summer of America’s bicentennial. It was formed in a middle-class home in the suburbs of Atlanta, Georgia. Schuchard, who lived with her husband Ron and their three daughters, was worried about her eldest daughter Ashley. The girl had recently become lethargic and morose, disinterested in her former hobbies and sports. Other parents reassured Schuchard it was just a phase, and that Ashley was simply becoming a teenager; moodiness and attitude were unwelcome but common symptoms. Schuchard found that response incomplete: Ashley seemed to be a different person altogether, entirely disconnected from the bright and sunny girl she once was. So in August, when Ashley asked for a birthday party at their home, Schuchard was thrilled. As the night marched on, however, Schuchard grew concerned. Bleary-eyed, incoherent adolescents wandered into the house from the backyard while the hamburgers went uneaten and the games sat untouched. “Were these children impossibly rude or were they stoned?” she wondered in her 1979 guidebook on how to form a parent group, *Parents, Peers and Pot*. But that was impossible: “These children were mainly seventh and eighth graders – nice and attractive young people, too young for all of that” (Manatt 3).<sup>1</sup>

Later that night after Ashley’s guests had left, Schuchard and her husband went to their yard to search the grass for any clues. What they found scattered across the lawn shocked and frightened them both. In her guidebook Schuchard described the scene: “There were marijuana butts, plastic bags with dope remnants, homemade roach clips, cans of malt liquor, and pop wine bottles. [She and her husband] felt baffled and slightly sick” (Manatt 3). The Schuchards weren’t naïve about marijuana, either. A Democratic liberal who supported George McGovern in the 1972 presidential election, Schuchard had even tried marijuana once while in graduate school. Born in 1940 and slightly older than the baby boom generation whose rebellion she had witnessed throughout the 1960s, she had seen college students and adults smoking pot while she was a graduate student at the University of Texas at Austin, where she and her husband received literature Ph.D.s. Schuchard understood how pot was being used at the time: as a symbol of protest by legal adults to express their opposition to social norms. But she had never expected pre-pubescent children to be smoking as well, and especially not in her own backyard. By the summer of

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<sup>1</sup> Keith Schuchard published *Parents, Peers and Pot* (1979) and *Parents, Peers and Pot II: Parents in Action* (1983) under her maiden name, Marsha Manatt.

1976, the nation's growing marijuana problem had literally followed Schuchard home.

The following day she launched into action. Schuchard retrieved the party's invitation list from her daughter, who was being punished for what her parents had found the night before, and contacted the parents of all the children who had attended, asking them if they knew about their children's behavior. Schuchard remembered the parents' reactions running the gamut from "shock, confusion, indignation, concern, denial, and from a handful, hostility" (Manatt 3). Some told her to stop being so uptight, arguing that marijuana was no big deal. Others were offended by the accusation. But a few she found were eager to talk. These were parents who had also noticed a change in their child's behavior and were feeling worried and helpless about drug use. Schuchard and her husband hosted a meeting later that week to speak with other parents about their concerns. At the meeting Schuchard discussed the need to recognize drug use and paraphernalia in their homes. The parents discussed the power of peer pressure that made drug use seem normalized and cool. And they discussed the power the "drug culture" held, of the multi-million dollar marketing campaigns that promoted pot to kids, and of how difficult it was to block out pro-drug messages that seemed to pop up everywhere from movies to magazines to music lyrics to TV. They realized that their children inhabited an "alien world," a highly organized subculture that revolved around drug use, but that prior to that summer, the parents simply hadn't recognized (Manatt 12).

The parents also discussed the need to retake control. They decided to pool their resources, to share information and collectively enforce new community rules. Together, they could "shape and control their children's immediate environment" (by collectively banning access to magazines like *High Times* and implementing a zero-tolerance policy toward drug use) and "develop an 'extended family' with uniform rules and expectations" that parents could rely on for guidance and support (Manatt 66). In effect, like so many social movements before them, the parents mobilized, launching what their kids called the Nosey Parents Association, and worked together to retake control of their families and keep marijuana out of their children's lives. Though they were excited about the group's formation, the parents also recognized the inherent difficulty and risk of what they were about to do. Even for a group whose liberal members, like Schuchard and her husband, had some experience in supporting the civil rights movement in the South, these parents had never mobilized against their own children before. "Folks," Schuchard remembered a father saying at the end of their first meeting, "let's all be honest; it's going to hurt. But it's for the sake of all our kids" (Manatt 6).

Participation in Schuchard's group demanded sacrifices from children and parents alike. While children certainly had to obey stricter rules, more importantly the parents, and especially mothers, had to take increasingly active roles in their children's lives, including roles that might involve leaving part- or full-time jobs. "In thousands of homes, the continuing rise in the number of working mothers means that neither parent is present much of the day," Schuchard warned in *Parents, Peers and Pot*. Unsupervised children left home alone after school were much more likely to experiment with drugs, and parents who were away at work could not spend the necessary time battling the drug culture's grip on their homes. In an era of stagflation, when stagnant wages battled rising prices and women flocked to the workforce to close their families' income gaps, Schuchard warned that mothers' jobs were potentially causing more harm than good: "Parents who cannot be at home enough should honestly recognize that their children are especially vulnerable to unhealthy peer pressure, especially during the pivotal period of early adolescence" (Manatt 29, 70-71). Parents were also instructed to reconsider their own use of intoxicants. Provoking "painful soul searching," Schuchard asked parents to reexamine their use of alcohol or drugs and "make every effort to present responsible models to their children," whether this meant abandoning intoxicants entirely or largely curbing their own use (Manatt 9, 12).

By bringing concerned parents together in her living room that week, Schuchard mirrored the consciousness-raising efforts of many grassroots movements of the time. Schuchard initiated the three major mobilization efforts necessary to create a sustained activist practice: she raised the parents' awareness of the drug issue and the problems it posed; she brought neighbors together to work as a community to achieve their ends; and she preached the potential for "parent power," a coordinated effort so strong when enforced that it could outmaneuver "peer power" and overcome "dope power" (Manatt 11; Meyer 48). And, like other grassroots movements before her, Schuchard recognized that she was going against the grain. "We were the real counterculture," she explained in an interview from 1998 (Massing 148). After all, what she was suggesting these parents do was no less than total cultural rebellion: for the parent movement to work, parents had to counter not only their children's behavior and their own intoxicant use, but the entire popular culture that worked to entice children into drug use in the first place. It was a "tiresome, but necessary, task" of "constant supervision" and a "pure act of faith" that underwrote these parents' actions, as Schuchard explained (Manatt 17).

The idea seemed utterly radical at the time. Among the first movement participants were middle-class parents who had raised their children according to the advice of the era's experts – parents who had "lavishly loved and psychologically indulged" their kids, protecting them from all emotional pain and providing

“unconditional loving, without expectation.” But they had never expected such dangerous behavior or nihilistic hedonism from their children in return. It seemed indulging their children’s wants and needs had resulted in a “final permission to live only for self” (Westin 16). When parents gathered together in groups, Schuchard noted, they wondered how this could be. How, if they had followed experts’ childrearing advice, did their children end up in such scary circumstances? And was it the parents or the experts who were in the wrong?

Group meetings gave parents the opportunity to share their anger with others and find the strength in numbers necessary to respond to their grievances. Parents, who had for years been told that marijuana was harmless and their children’s use of it was “just a phase,” complained that they were tired of listening to “experts” who claimed they knew better how to steer children away from drug use. In her 1981 parent power manifesto, *The Coming Parent Revolution: Why Parents Must Toss Out the “Experts” and Start Believing in Themselves Again*, Jeanne Westin summed up the activists’ anger during that time. “The hallmark of all these expert answers was an almost complete lack of understanding about how parents really feel today, their hurt, frustration, and yes, even rage,” Westin wrote about the doctors, school counselors and psychologists who told parents that the changes they noticed in their children were not real issues and that marijuana use was no big deal (Westin 17). Prominent activists like Westin and Schuchard argued for parents to ignore the experts’ erroneous advice. Instead, they encouraged parents to trust their own instincts and to believe in their own power to halt their kids’ drug use. Though “some schools of psychology and education have stressed the negative aspects of parents as active instructors or authority figures,” Schuchard argued, integral to the movement was the affirmation to activists “that they are not helpless, and that other parents are not helpless either” (Manatt 29, 21). This populist message that reaffirmed parental rights became one of the most powerful motivators of the parents’ activism.

Still, the strongest source of the movement’s power lay in its emphasis on education. When Schuchard first started researching marijuana, she was appalled at the lack of scientific understanding of the drug’s effects. The governmental pamphlets and educational brochures she found “stated that marijuana seemed less harmful than alcohol and tobacco... That all three were commonly used together also was ignored.” Parents, whom Schuchard felt were “up against a wall of official complacency and ignorance,” “could not find materials that related to what they had observed and worried about in their children.” This frightened them because “they wanted to know the facts before they attempted to challenge the drug culture” (Manatt 8). Schuchard researched detailed information about marijuana’s harmful effects, finding material from sources like Dr. Gabriel Nahas. Schuchard copied and

shared this information with other parents in her group, who were thankful that sources existed that confirmed the parents' fears about marijuana use. In turn, the parents shared this information with their children, in the hopes that science, not hysteria, might stop their kids from smoking pot.

Looking for even more information, Schuchard contacted Dr. Robert DuPont, director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) in Washington, D.C. In a letter dated March 1977, Schuchard explained that she was part of a group of parents who were concerned about rising rates of marijuana use among adolescents. She was frustrated at being unable to find any material on the "serious behavioral changes" and "deterioration of values" that resulted from pot use, and she hoped DuPont could help (Massing 144). DuPont, a methadone researcher and supporter of decriminalization, was wary of what Schuchard was suggesting. A graduate of Emory University, he knew her Atlanta neighborhood, Druid Hills, well, and was surprised that marijuana had infiltrated such a middle-class area. He assumed the parents were overreacting. Nonetheless, DuPont agreed to meet with Schuchard's group when visiting Atlanta three months later. At their June 1977 meeting, DuPont was surprised at both the scope of the adolescent marijuana problem and the strength of the parents' anger and panic. Their fervent belief made a strong impression on DuPont, and he left Atlanta transformed, convinced that "the heart of the drug problem was not heroin addiction, which affected such a small, marginalized population, but pot smoking, which touched so many families" (Massing 145). Upon returning to Washington, DuPont changed his public stance on decriminalization and became an outspoken opponent of marijuana use, realigning NIDA's official stance to more thoroughly ally with his own.

DuPont also placed Schuchard in touch with other drug researchers who shared her concerns about adolescent drug use. Through DuPont, Schuchard met Thomas "Buddy" Gleaton, an associate professor of health and physical education at Georgia State University whose own teenage daughter had once struggled with marijuana use. Gleaton had long hosted an annual conference of drug-abuse specialists across the southeast, but by the mid-1970s, the meetings had grown dull. When he met Schuchard, Gleaton recognized a powerful spokeswoman for an incipient movement that was filled with national potential. At their first meeting, as Schuchard shared her concerns about adolescent drug abuse and the need for greater parent education and involvement, the two activists spoke for nearly five hours. When they finished, Gleaton invited Schuchard to be the keynote speaker at his next drug conference, to be held on May 25, 1978.

At what would later become known as the first parent movement conference in the United States, Schuchard presented her address, "The Family Versus the Drug

Culture,” to roughly one hundred attendees. In it, Schuchard presented her indictment of the adolescent drug lifestyle:

The youngster who is quietly stoned during school does not learn math or grammar or biology, or how to cope with boredom, pressure and discipline. He will not have much going for him when he leaves the protective nest – home and high school – as an 18 year old. The real world out there is tough and it does not make excuses for the supposed young adult who befuddled his adolescence with marijuana or any other drugs, for the youngster who messed up or opted out of his apprenticeship to adulthood (Schuchard 1978).

The drug lifestyle, Schuchard argued, was simply not an option for any parent who wanted to ensure that their child safely entered adulthood. To save their children and protect their futures, Schuchard advocated a remarkably simple yet infinitely empowering solution: “Trust your gut instincts as parents: you have every right to worry about the use of any psychoactive drugs, especially illegal drugs, by your child” (Schuchard 8).

The media response to the meeting was enormous: it launched Schuchard and Gleaton onto the national stage. While the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* ran a negative article that compared Schuchard’s child-surveillance tactics to the Gestapo, the Associated Press ran a positive story about the conference that featured Gleaton’s office phone number, and for days his phone would not stop ringing (Gleaton 280). Barraged with parent requests for information about the dangers of marijuana and encouraged by the positive responses to Schuchard’s claim, a month after the conference Gleaton and Schuchard assembled a new organization called the Parents’ Resource Institute for Drug Education, or PRIDE, to be housed at Georgia State. After its formation, things moved quickly for the first parent movement organization dedicated solely to educating parents about the harmful effects of marijuana and other drugs. PRIDE began collecting reports on drugs’ negative effects, as well as books, articles, audiotapes and movies, which they made available for rent or purchase. In addition, for five dollars apiece, PRIDE sold packets of Schuchard’s anti-marijuana research and guides on forming a parent group, which concerned parents ordered in droves. By June of 1979, PRIDE was publishing a newsletter that, by 1980, would reach national distribution. And Gleaton continued to host annual drug prevention conferences each spring, where hundreds of concerned parents, doctors, teachers and drug abuse professionals gathered in Atlanta to discuss the problem of adolescent drug abuse.

In 1979, DuPont contacted Schuchard again, requesting that she write a book about her experience to instruct other parents on forming their own groups.

Published by NIDA later that year, *Parents, Peers and Pot* was a one hundred-page book that outlined Schuchard's parent group model and suggested methods which parents could use to prevent or stop their children from using drugs. Intensely disliked by NIDA scientists who disapproved of Schuchard's purple prose and her often-unsubstantiated accusations against the drug, *Parents, Peers and Pot* became a surprising bestseller, with over a million copies requested by parents across the country. This made Schuchard's book the most widely distributed publication in NIDA's history (Massing 153). By 1980, there were hundreds of Schuchard-inspired groups across the country, calling themselves Parents Who Care, Parents Alert, United Parents of America and a host of other names, all of which implemented Gleaton and Schuchard's methods in primarily middle-class suburban communities across the United States (McLellan).

Schuchard's education model was hardly the only template for parent activism, however. Other parents, including Sue Rusche, a friend of Schuchard's from Atlanta, were also concerned about adolescent drug use, but activists like Rusche were interested less in educating parents than on influencing politicians to write anti-paraphernalia legislation. Rusche first became aware of the paraphernalia problem in the fall of 1977 when she went into a record store to purchase a *Star Wars* record for her two sons. She was shocked by the wide array of pipes, bongs, and other paraphernalia there that seemed to appeal specifically to children. Frisbees that doubled as hash pipes, fake soda cans that unscrewed to hide a marijuana stash, and joint-rolling instruction manuals printed for *Tots Who Toke* infuriated Rusche, who was concerned by how blatantly paraphernalia companies were marketing their products to children. In response, Rusche formed DeKalb (County) Families in Action, or FIA, in November of 1977, an activist group dedicated to proposing and passing anti-paraphernalia legislation. In her 1979 guidebook *How to Form a Families in Action Group In Your Community*, Rusche stated that she formed FIA "to collect information about [the paraphernalia] industry, to teach other parents what we were learning, to find ways to exert control over the industry's impact on youngsters, and, by working together, to stop drug use among children and teenagers" (Rusche 3-4).

Rusche pressured state legislators to pass anti-paraphernalia laws that would ban paraphernalia production and criminalize the sale of drug-related items to minors. She even alerted the Atlanta-based Coca-Cola company to let them know that paraphernalia companies were using models of their soda cans as "stash cans" to hide marijuana supplies. For two years, Rusche traveled across both Georgia and the country with her "bong show," a demonstration of paraphernalia shaped like toys, and warned parents about the drug culture's unapologetic marketing to children, ultimately instructing her audience on how to form FIA-style groups of their own. Including copies of model anti-paraphernalia laws and an example of a "typical" anti-

marijuana speech in her guidebook, Rusche encouraged parents to not only form consciousness-raising and educational groups in their communities, but also to mobilize politically around paraphernalia, which, largely because of Rusche's own efforts, was becoming both an easy legislative target and an emotionally-charged issue nationwide. Her methods worked: by 1979, FIA was responsible for the passage of three anti-paraphernalia laws in Georgia, and by 1984 FIA-affiliated parent activists had introduced similar legislation in all fifty states (Thomas 24).

Other parent activists pressured lawmakers even more directly, taking their cases to congressional courts. Joyce Nalepka, a mother of two sons in Silver Spring, Maryland, became aware of the adolescent drug problem after attending a KISS concert at the Capitol Centre in Landover, Maryland, in December 1977. She was horrified by what she saw at the show: young concert attendees, many of whom were twelve to seventeen years old, using drugs publicly and without hesitation. She noted that one of her sons "became sick from the fog of marijuana smoke" (Krucoff). As she researched the drug problem, Nalepka was surprised to find that the Carter administration still sought to relax or remove penalties for marijuana possession, even as rates of use among youth were climbing. She formed a group called the Coalition for Concern about Marijuana Use in Youth, and was soon asked to testify at congressional hearings about the dangers of the drug culture. Arguing that a single ounce of marijuana, the legal limit available for possession in decriminalized states, was enough to "make 40 to 60 joints, the perfect amount for playground dealers," Nalepka argued that "simple possession is what keeps the drug pushers in business" and warned against "making marijuana easier for our children to possess" (*Drug paraphernalia and youth* 112).

In her testimony before the Senate Subcommittee on Criminal Justice on November 16, 1979, Nalepka declared that the fault for having marijuana "in every junior and senior high school and even in many elementary schools" fell on all adults in the United States, "from President Carter down to me, the parent, [who] didn't take the problem seriously enough soon enough." Furious that Carter was still promoting decriminalization, Nalepka warned of the power of the growing "antimarijuana lobby" and threatened that she and parents like her would "never again vote for a candidate for any office who [supports decriminalization], and we will do everything in our power to remove those now in office who would support this type of legislation." In response to the growing crisis, Nalepka called on "the members of the House [and] Senate," as well as "businessmen in America, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the media to join [her] in a forceful educational effort to pull our country back from the drug culture," accepting nothing less than total commitment to the cause (*Drug paraphernalia and youth* 112).

The response Nalepka's testimony generated from Republican senator Charles Mathias and Democratic senator Joe Biden (who chaired the committee) was indicative of the political shift that was beginning to form around the issue of adolescent drug use. In a radical departure from Birch Bayh's call on the American people to "still the hysteria" and "pursue the truth" about marijuana just four years earlier at a 1975 Senate Committee hearing on federal decriminalization, Mathias and Biden recognized the nascent power of parent anti-drug activists as a voting bloc and catered to their increasingly vocal demands for anti-drug legislation that limited adolescents' access to marijuana. As Rusche earlier pointed out, Mathias and Biden adopted the argument that "if we abandon our kids to a culture that reinforces drug use, a culture that confuses the 'rights' of children to use drugs with their civil liberties, a culture that cares not one whit for their health and well-being but is after their dollars, we will lose them – and we may not get them back" (Rusche 10). This reversal of the question of access was the parent movement's greatest early success. Access to marijuana was no longer seen as a "right" for legal adults. Instead, children had a "right" to grow up drug-free. For making this distinction, Mathias praised Nalepka's patriotism: "You are like John Paul Jones," he said after she finished testifying, "not yet begun to fight." "I guess you are right," Nalepka responded, "and there is nothing that is going to stop us until this improves" (*Drug paraphernalia and youth* 114).

**"A Strong Family Doesn't Use Drugs":  
Why the Parent Movement Achieved Early Success**

These three styles of parent activism – Schuchard's parent education, Rusche's anti-paraphernalia legislation, and Nalepka's political pressure – spread swiftly across the United States as more parents aligned with PRIDE and FIA or coalesced into their own parent groups. By 1980, just four years after the first meeting of the Nosey Parents Association in Schuchard's living room, thousands of parent groups had been established across the entire United States. Both Schuchard and Rusche turned parent activism into full-time jobs, traveling across the country to help parent groups form and communicating with their members through newsletters and at national conferences. Schuchard and Rusche also became fixtures of the media scene, quoted in newspapers from Massachusetts to California and invited to appear on television shows like *Good Morning America* to bring their campaigns to ever-wider audiences. And although membership in the movement continued to grow, activists were continually reminded that adolescent marijuana use remained a serious threat. At the PRIDE Southeast Drug Conference held in April of 1980, Schuchard exhorted her fellow activists not to give up:

Remember, the basis of this whole national movement is you, talking over the back fence with your neighbor, talking with the parents in your carpool,

spreading the word at the soccer match. This is the critical ingredient upon which everything else is built, simply because it works... So, for all of you wonderful amateurs and do-it-yourselfers out there, I exhort you to educate yourselves, your children, your neighbors, PTA's, and friends. Let us all begin a personal effort of family, neighborhood, and community reconstruction, knitting back up our frayed and battered social fabric (Schuchard 75-6).

By 1980, pro-marijuana forces were on the run. In an effective reversal of previous decriminalization activism, parents worked to pass anti-paraphernalia laws in thirty-two states and halted all efforts to further decriminalize marijuana possession. *High Times* warned of "POThibition," alerting readers that "America is waging war on us." Pro-pot forces were "at the crossroads of history," the editorial warned. "We face defeat by the current attack on pot – the most violent assault ever made on marijuana and the people who smoke it" (Chance). After the passage of Rusche's anti-paraphernalia bills in Georgia, writers at *High Times* were apoplectic. By 1980 the magazine was calling Rusche "the Dragon Lady of DeKalb County," and warning readers that "a well-organized antiparaphernalia lobby now travels the country shaking fists and shouting about how roach clips corrupt minors and lead to the general decay of society" (Copetas).

Even though *High Times* made them sound like an organized army, the parent movement was still scattered in early 1980, consisting of individual autonomous units geared toward addressing local problems. Recognizing the need for a national organization, key parent activists like Schuchard, Rusche, Nalepka and Gleaton, along with other prominent figures like Bill Barton of Naples, Florida, and Otto Moulton of Danvers, Massachusetts, gathered at the annual PRIDE conference in April 1980 to discuss the potential for a single unifying umbrella organization. The National Federation of Parents for Drug-Free Youth (NFP) was born the following month. The group's purpose, as stated in the PRIDE newsletter from June of that year, was "to inform and educate parents, adolescents, children and others about the dangers of marijuana and other mind-altering drugs, and to promote, encourage, and assist in the formation of local parent groups throughout the country" (*National Federation* 1). The group settled in Silver Spring, a Maryland suburb outside of Washington, D.C. Gathering their first members from parents who had attended the PRIDE conference in Atlanta the month before, the NFP soon served as the head of a network of over 420 affiliated parent groups in 48 states, uniting the movement for the first time in an organized, singular entity with membership numbering in the thousands.

The movement couldn't have come to Washington at a better time. Keeping Nalepka's promise to cease voting for officials who supported decriminalization,

parent activists overwhelmingly supported Ronald Reagan and the scores of other anti-marijuana Republican congressional representatives who were swept into office during the Reagan Revolution that fall. Reagan, long an opponent of the drug, won over parent activists with his conservative, small-government, pro-family values platform, which aligned seamlessly with the movement's larger beliefs. His landslide election in 1980, along with dozens of other Republican victories, ushered in an era of stronger anti-drug attitudes in Washington, firmly defeating further decriminalization efforts and reaffirming political interest in the war on drugs. In the Republican wave, Birch Bayh lost his Illinois senate seat to a young Republican named Dan Quayle, who would go on to serve as vice president in George H.W. Bush's administration and aid in the enforcement of parent movement-inspired drug laws.

As the outgoing president, Carter also came to recognize the growing power of the parent movement during the later days of his administration. In his last State of the Union address on January 16, 1981, just four days before he would leave office, Carter affirmed that "we must look to citizens and parents across the country to help educate the increasing numbers of American youth who are experimenting with drugs" (Carter 1981). Nonetheless, after an administration of lax marijuana policies and increasing decriminalization efforts, Carter's late-term pandering to the parent movement was insufficient to get him elected to a second term, and the movement turned its sights toward Ronald Reagan, who seemed a more capable leader in drug abuse prevention.

By the fall of 1980, with a national lobbying organization formed and a conservative president elected to Washington, thousands of parent activists across the country were poised to take on the nation's drug problems with more power and influence than they had ever wielded before. Evolving from a small group of parents in an Atlanta living room to a national lobbying organization in just four years is a remarkable success story for any grassroots organization, but it is particularly noteworthy for parents who, prior to the late 1970s, had little to no previous activist experience. Rallying around a key emotional issue, parent activists formed tight-knit groups that, by 1980, were beginning to see adolescent marijuana use decline. In homes, schools, churches, and communities across the nation, the parent movement made marijuana menacing, transforming it from a benign middle-class high into a far more debilitating drug than heroin or cocaine. And they did so out of sincere concern, both for their own children as well as for the future of a country that they feared was teetering on the brink of social and economic collapse.

Yet the reason why the parent movement achieved so much power so quickly cannot be reduced to anti-marijuana activism alone. The activists' solution to

preventing adolescent drug abuse was both simple and thoroughly in line with the country's larger shift to the right. According to parent activists, marijuana abuse was a prominent symptom of the larger cultural crises wracking the American family in the 1970s. Other issues, including escalating rates of divorce and high numbers of mothers working outside the home, added to the nation's rising panic that the traditional American family was a thing of the past. As early as 1970 a report from the White House Conference on Children warned that "America's families are in trouble – trouble so deep and pervasive as to threaten the future of our nation" (Lassiter 16). Thus the panacea for adolescent drug abuse that the parent movement offered – one that promoted strengthening respect for parental authority, reasserting the fundamental importance of traditional values, and reversing the culture of moral permissiveness that had corrupted the nation in the 1960s – was perfectly in line with the larger "pro-family" movement that arose in the 1970s as well. Proponents of this conservative, and often deeply Christian, pro-family agenda scooped up the parent movement's platform and made it their own in the 1980s, bringing it to an even larger, and very enthusiastic, base.

By the time Ronald Reagan was elected to a second term, his wife Nancy had also taken the parent movement under her wing. From 1982 to the close of the Reagan administration in 1989, both the president and the first lady publicly promoted the parent movement's platform, giving increased visibility and strength to the activists' agenda. Nancy Reagan famously made the prevention of adolescent drug abuse and support for the "Just Say No" program her primary achievements during her husband's two administrations. Ronald Reagan's passage the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986 and his formation of the Presidential Drug Advisory Council allowed parent activists to play influential roles in the formation of social policy. For nearly a decade, public support from the Reagans was the final coup in cementing the parent movement's influence on the national drug debate. Had the movement started a few years earlier or a few years later, activists may never have had the serendipitous luck to align themselves with the Reagan Revolution just as it was taking shape. Thus, while the "how" of the parent movement involved the kind of effective social organizing necessary to get a movement off the ground, the "why" of the movement was a question of historical fate. Promoting an anti-drug agenda before it was popular and transforming the conversation to focus on kids, the parent movement was able to presciently forecast the nature of the culture wars of the 1980s and take control of the drug debate before anyone else. In doing so, parent activists established themselves early in their careers as the go-to advisors for the Reagans' evolving drug policy and demarcated for themselves an influential role in constructing the direction of the American drug debate.

### **Conclusion: A Parent Movement for the Twenty-First Century?**

The parent movement is distinctive among grassroots activist movements of the 1970s. In an era of awakening political power, as groups inspired by the civil rights movement fought for women's rights, gay rights, Chicano rights, and Red Power, only activists in the parent movement turned their focus inward, focusing first on enacting change within their own families before seeking to alter politics and popular culture. And while the parent movement was certainly an overwhelmingly white and middle-class movement, comprised almost exclusively of parents who could afford to dedicate large swaths of their time to preventing adolescent drug abuse, parent activists were nonetheless distinct. As Tom Adams, a major figure in the movement, argued, "This movement is unique because it began from within. Unlike movements that are born in response to outside forces, this movement started when a few brave parents not only confronted their own children's dangerous acts and their own role in it, but also took action... It was parents facing their kids, and the kids fighting back. No other grass roots movement in the history of America has had a similar origin" (Adams 39).

The most lasting contribution of the parent movement was that activists brought the war on drugs home, making it a priority of every household, community and school. Through their actions and effective mobilization techniques, parent activists transformed the war on drugs from a fight to rehabilitate addicted adults into a battle over the safety of America's children, permanently shifting the conflict's priorities and shaping how the drug war continues to be fought today. Schuchard, Gleaton, Rusche and Nalepka were the original "scholar activists," distrustful of the schools' and government's official word on marijuana and willing to spend the time, energy, and research necessary to provide their own alternative account. And the power of this scholarship – the "parent power" inherent in their message – was enough to reverse national trends on the drug, overturning decriminalization efforts in a dozen states and transforming marijuana into a dangerous threat to the future of America's children and the nation itself.

Currently we face another moment in which, as in the 1970s, marijuana's popularity is resurging both legally and socially. This makes it an opportune time to re-examine the history and lessons of the parent movement. Barely mentioned in either histories of America's drug war or the nation's archive of grassroots activism, the parent movement deserves renewed attention as the country's first response to decriminalization efforts in the 1970s. Yet, as with most reactionary social movements, without mass support for decriminalization, there could have been no equal and opposite force to culminate in the parent movement's powerful anti-drug stance. As historian David Musto argues in *The American Disease: Origins of Narcotics*

*Control*, Americans' attitudes about drugs have consistently followed a cyclical pattern of tolerance and restraint. While there is no current sense of crisis over legal access to marijuana for qualified adults in Washington and Colorado, it is important to remember, as Musto does, that this contemporary period of tolerance could well be followed by a period of heightened legislative and moral restraint. Understanding the influence of the parent movement in the past may unlock answers as to how our nation will understand marijuana today.

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