

War on Drugs and Chemical Dependency?

Paulo Silveira

Observatory Of Addiction Bruce K. Alexander

www.observatoriodasadicoes.com.br

We are at the end of the 1960's and the beginning of the 1970's; in this period, began an intense cultural revolution in the habits and customs of the bourgeois, capitalist, Western, patriarchal society that prevailed until then.

Its leaders are young people with “long” hair wearing baggy, faded pants, playing rock on their frenetic electric guitars, using slang and gestures to communicate, and loving each other on street corners. Their idols were the Beatles, Rolling Stones, Led Zeppelin, Pink Floyd, and countless other rock groups. In Brazil, our “bossa nova” had songs that spoke of love, but also protested everything that had been put in place up to that point.

They brought a new time of grandiose events such as May 1968 when youngsters began a series of strikes and protests in Paris demanding “peace and love” and pointing to a future quite different from the past of wars, atomic bombs, Nazi, fascist, racist, warmonger regimes in which, as said by our poet Caetano Veloso, “Narcissus finds it ugly whatever is not a mirror”.



In Brazil, amid a military dictatorship, the “100,000 march” drew 100,000 citizens to the streets of the city of Rio de Janeiro (the vast majority of them being young students, but also artists and intellectuals) who longed for a brotherly and supportive social life. The highest values of society would be complicity and acceptance of differences as an enriching factor that would make it easier for everyone to live together in peace and love.



Three years later, Woodstock - an unpretentious music festival, organized by a small group of youngsters - occurs, surprisingly, gathering 500 thousand people for three consecutive days on a farm in the USA. To the dismay of some, peace, love, and rock and roll prevail <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=II-wxfV11Fg> .

The photo below, taken during the event, becomes emblematic and spreads all over the world, as it faithfully portrays the spirit of the festival, as well as the desire of all those youngsters who yearned for new patterns of relationships.



Quickly, “Peace and Love” became the central motto of an entire generation, expressed by the symbol



that followers of the movement wore in leather cords hanging around their necks. A defining gesture in communication among them was that:



© CartoonPhoto.com - 000229455

Their ambition was simple: enjoy a simple life governed by solidarity among everyone, lots of peace, lots of love, “sex, drugs & rock and roll”!

Until then, everything seemed to be very well; however, it was the culture of violence, supported by conservatives, that was considered the great hero of all humanity, as it had saved us from Nazism/Fascism.

At the same time, the communist regime was spreading itself throughout the world, extending its tentacles over Eastern Europe, in addition to Central America - with the victory in Cuba. It also threatened South America with its greatest symbol, Ernesto Che Guevara, who translated revolutionary spirit in phrases like:



To make matters worse, the USA suffered a series of defeats in the wars fought in Asia against totalitarian communist regimes.

First, in Korea, then in Cambodia, and, finally, the most shameful of all, in Vietnam!



Capitalist, bourgeois, self-centered, narcissistic, and selfish society ran serious risks, and the only “argument” known to those who remained in power until then - unmeasured violence - was not justified against a “revolution” that sought peace, love, solidarity, ...

It was necessary to find some justification for the “owners of power” to continue killing, robbing, fleecing, torturing, and imprisoning anyone who acted against their interests.

Ignoring the experience lived by North Americans themselves when the Dry Law - which prohibited the production and consumption of alcoholic beverages, in force from 1920 to 1933, and that only contributed to the increase in consumption and crime in the USA - was implemented in 1971, the President of the United States, Richard Nixon, launched the “War on Drugs” with the only justification that half a dozen psychoactive substances - which gain the official name of “drugs” - had the power to addict their users from the first time they were used; so much so that their users would be able to do anything to obtain them.

This statement was proven through experiments carried out with mice trapped in cages - Skinner cages - where they were offered food, water, and some drug, preferably heroin. The mice chose to consume the drug up to death.

As the behavior of drug users resembled that of rats (some users are unable to stop using such substances even if they undergo treatments in “specialized” spaces), it was (and continues to be) easy to convince everyone that substances addict their users, especially because the “science” started to affirm the same thing.

Parallel to all this, a group of 26 young Canadian scientists, led by a recently graduated psychologist named Bruce K. Alexander, decided to deepen their studies regarding the link between users and psychoactive substances.

Taking into account that everything we knew about this was through experiments carried out with mice isolated in cages, where they were offered psychoactive substances, food, and water, and that the mice consumed only the drug up to death, they then decided to innovate and, with permission from the Simon Fraser University, in Canada, built a 20 m² mice-friendly environment, where they placed 16 of these animals. They had different ages and were of both sexes. In the same room, they kept another sixteen mice of the same breed and with the same characteristics (original photos below) isolated in skinner cages.



This experience is known worldwide as “The Rat Park”.

For six months they conducted several experiments with those mice and, in the end, they found that social isolation is one of the main factors to induce abuse of psychoactive substances.

Vietnam War ended in 1975 and North American authorities began to panic as the North American armed forces were conniving with the use of heroin by their fighters. With the end of the war, 300 thousand heroin users were estimated to return to the USA. The North American healthcare system would not be able to care for them (as it did not know what to do). With the arrival of these heroin-user ex-combatants, heroin consumption was expected to grow a lot in the USA, as well as crime rates. As these users were war heroes, their arrest would become an unimaginable scandal.

But, as history records, none of this happened and life continued its normal course...

Intrigued, the US Government decided to research what was happening and contacted 100,000 ex-combatants who had declared themselves heroin users while still in Vietnam. Thus, each of them was contacted and it was found that 87.3% had abandoned heroin as soon as they arrived “home” and that, of the remaining 12.7%, approximately 4% had not stopped using heroin. The remaining 8.7% had needed help from professionals to stop using heroin.

Unfortunately for all humanity, the UN prohibits the dissemination of any piece of information contrary to the “war on drugs” and, as a result, both information regarding the Rat Park and the use of heroin by North American fighters are placed under secrecy.

The rat park has only recently gained international repercussions due to the Internet, which allows us all to exchange information. Some researchers and scientists, such as Karl Hart, are increasingly proving its legitimacy, whether in their day-to-day practice or in supplementary experiences. Karl Hart reported his findings in his book “A Very High Price”.

Repeating the model of the Second World War when the USA was responsible for the defeat of Nazism and organized the best-equipped armed forces on the planet, they

styled themselves as the defenders of a society threatened by drugs. Accordingly, the USA assumed the right to employ all necessary means to eliminate the danger of drugs anywhere in the world.

Of course, no one has ever commented that these “drugs” had been consumed for millennia and were part of the culture of regions of strategic interest to the USA, such as the countries of Latin America (cocaine and marijuana, mainly) and East Asia (heroin and Opium).