

EXCERPTS FROM PREVIOUS PANEL DISCUSSIONS

ALFRED MCCOY, Professor of Southeast Asian History, University of Wisconsin–Madison and author of *The Politics of Heroin*

This play focuses on the Contra War in 1979 when the Sandanistas took power in Nicaragua from the Somoza government. That same year, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan and there were two major CIA operations, two of the biggest CIA covert wars of the Cold War: the Contra War in Central America and the support for the Afghan resistance against Soviet occupation in Central Asia. Afghanistan's role in the global heroin trade started during the CIA's covert war in Afghanistan from 1979 right up to 1992. When the United States decided to fight the war after September 11th, the CIA went in, formed alliances with the same warlords cum drug lords who had been fighting Soviet occupation during the 1980s. They revived those alliances. Moreover, they formed an alliance with the Northern Alliance, which was already involved in drugs. So, as the U.S. Coalition forces advanced, those warlords were re-established in their localities and they revived the drug traffic. So, Afghanistan's production has gone up from about 180 tons in 2001, to around 2,000 tons in 2002. It's back up to where it was, and it's going to keep on going. The Karzai government, under pressure from the international community, has banned all opium production. But, the reality is that the Karzai Government doesn't have much control outside of Kabul. Moreover, faced with the reality of fighting the war against the Taliban, fighting the "War on Terror" and fighting the "Drug War", the United States, as we did during the Cold War, is privileging the "War on Terror" over the "Drug War". So, the United States places no emphasis whatsoever on drug eradication. They are happy to have the warlords in control of the localities because that gives them an operational capacity against the Taliban and Al Qaeda in those localities. And that's the same logic that took place in the Cold War.

Detroit Attorney Jeff Edison:

The Sentencing Project compiles statistics related to sentencing disparities, prison development and the prison population. There are now 6.6 million Americans incarcerated or on probation or parole. This is an increase of more than 258% since 1980. Now of course, the whole influx of particularly cocaine into our communities climaxed in the '80s and the early '90s. Heroin was the drug that was in our communities in the early or the late '60s, and early '70s. And now there's a kind of resurgence of heroin. Nearly one in seven Black males aged between 25-29 were in prison or in jail in 2001. That is 13.4% of Black males. For Hispanics the figure was 4.1%. And for White males 1.8%. So you see that huge disparity by race. Of course, the U.S. has the highest incarceration rate of individuals on this planet. Nowhere in this world are people incarcerated at as high a rate as in the U.S. In terms of the racial composition: 46% of prison inmates are black. 16% are Hispanic. Some other statistics: 68% of state prison inmates in 1997 had not completed high school. 36% of jailed inmates in 1996 were unemployed prior to entering jail. 64% of jailed inmates in 1996 had monthly incomes under \$1,000.00. 70% of those sentenced to state prisons in '98 were convicted of non-violent crimes, including 31% for drug offenses and 26% for property offenses. So, in essence, we're not dealing with violent crimes in terms of the largest population in the prisons. It's predominantly non-violent individuals and so speaks directly to drug policy.

Felix Sirls, HIV Treatment and Prevention Program, Detroit Department of Public Health:

The reality of what is happening—when I was born, we were 15% of the American population as African-Americans; now we represent 12%. HIV, STD's, and syphilis are the leading infection in

Detroit, with the city leading the nation in syphilis infection. African Americans are dying from eating the wrong foods, smoking. They are dying from a lot of things and it's based on self-esteem: the lack of self-esteem, the lack of self-control, and the lack of love for oneself. We need to attack Churches that attack other human beings through their religion rather than embracing them with their spirituality. We need to engage people in caring and knowing what a family is. Once we had communities, but then something called "integration" came along and we decided to give our money away. In the 1940's, a dollar stayed in the African American community for 2 years. Now it leaves the community in ten minutes. We need to look at the realities of what we can do now, not a euphoric afterlife. If we want to save our people we need to look at long-term recovery. We need to look at self-esteem programs, artistic and art programs. We need to become involved in the schools and stop using them as baby-sitting centers, and we need to start saving our children.

Regina Schwartz, Northwestern University and author, *The Curse of Cain: the Violent Legacy of Monotheism*:

I want to start with your interest in metaphor and the issue of the War on Drugs being a metaphor, because Susan Sontag, after September 11th wrote this really amazing article called *Real Battles, Empty Metaphors* in which she was talking about not only the War on Drugs, but the War on Poverty and the War on Terrorism and the way in which our government is so freely bandying about these terms. She made the important point that a war is something which has an end, and that these things don't end. Poverty unfortunately doesn't seem to be going away. The problem with drugs doesn't seem to be going away. Terrorism doesn't go away. So it's completely inappropriate in any way to call it a War. Why then is this rhetoric used, she asks? And the answer that she gives is that it's because the government wants to mobilize lots of resources. So, if it declares War, it can claim a lot of resources, just as they do for their military expeditions. In this case however, the War on Drugs is a War on our own citizens. Obviously it's not only a war on all citizens; it's a war on *some* citizens, and *not others*. And so, in a lot of ways, the War on Drugs is really a class war. And as many writers have said, it's a race war, an opportunity to incarcerate a hell of a lot of black youths who are behind bars now. So, I just want to point out how dangerous this rhetoric really is.

Chris Parks, director Neighborhood Recovery Organization and faculty, Clinical Psychology Department, University of Detroit:

I am an addiction counselor and in my view, drug use, drug abuse, and addiction are three separate things. Altering your consciousness is a common human experience; it's something that everybody does. Everybody raised their hand when I asked if when you were children you spun yourself around, until you fell down. It's a natural human drive. Drug use is an extension of that whether we think it's good or bad. It's a way to explore; it's a way to examine; it's a way to look for new ways to view things and new ways to feels things. Addiction is Pathology. Pathology by its very nature is a rigid structure that is resistant to change. And that's all we're talking about here. The reason why we won't seriously talk about the fact there are 2 million people behind bars, is because that is profitable for certain segments of the population and it vilifies other segments of the population. So, it remains a way of thinking that is resistant to change. In essence pathological. They are as addicted to locking people up as other people are to using drugs. Art and things such as this performance, what they do is, they push at the borders, and sometimes crack the boundaries that are so rigid, allowing things to flow through, allowing communication to move from one place to another. And that is the purpose of any type of good therapy. The whole idea of art and treatment is that art frees up and extends boundaries, because rigid boundaries keep people from finding that thing within them that has the most creative potential, which is the healing part of themselves.