

**IS THE POTENTIAL DECRIMINALIZATION
OF MARIJUANA
IN JAMAICA JUSTIFIED?**

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**TOPIC: IS THE POTENTIAL DECRIMINALIZATION OF MARIJUANA IN
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RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- i. To briefly outline the genesis of marijuana use in Jamaica.
- ii. To emphasize the cultural practices associated with marijuana use in Jamaica.
- iii. To assess the economic gain of decriminalization of marijuana to Jamaica.
- iv. To briefly examine the criminality and legal status of marijuana within the State and to determine whether it provides any justification for decriminalization and legalization.
- v. To discuss the benefits to Jamaica that can result peradventure marijuana is decriminalized.
- vi. To highlight the negative impact the present state of violence can have on the state combined with the decriminalization of marijuana.

Definitions:

The Drug Policy Forum of Texas defines:

Decriminalization: can be defined as a system that punishes offenses by means of alternative sentencing to imprisonment or incarceration. In the case of marijuana it is usually limited to possession and growth of small quantities, and the sale of small amounts to adults. There is also what is referred to as “de facto decriminalization”, this involves an administrative decision not to prosecute acts that are subject to arrest and imprisonment under the laws. (Drug Policy Forum of Texas May, 2011)

Definitions: According to the Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary:

Potential – Capable of developing into actuality, or developing possibility.

Cannabis -(also referred to as marijuana, “ganja”, “weed”, “pot”, “joint” or “spliff”)-The scientific name for marijuana derived from the Cannabis Sativa L, or hemp plant which produces psychoactive effects on the user. It can be grown anywhere in the world. It is usually smoked, or ingested; usually with food, and scientifically proven to have multiple medical benefits.

Economic gain- the effect(s) that a decision taken will have on the lucrative aspect of the economy.

Impact – to have a direct effect on something

Medicinal Marijuana is defined as cannabis/marijuana that is used to relieve pain and “improve the quality of life of individuals”. It is used to treat chronic illnesses like HIV/AIDS, cancers, especially chemotherapy, neurogenic pain, bipolar disorders, and sclerosis of the liver. The tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) which produces the psychoactive effects in cannabis is a mild analgesic and affects part of the brain that is responsible for relieving pain.

Justified- To prove to be just, right or reasonable; especially relating to an action or a request.

The controversial debate surrounding the legalization and decriminalization of marijuana has become a very topical issue throughout the Caribbean region and on the international front. These discussions have attracted significant attention especially during the last three decades. The war on drugs has plagued the Caribbean region from as early as the 1970’s and has resulted in an increase in the local trade and in the availability and use of it (Ishmael, 4 March, 1996) Inevitably, the situation has spiraled many associated problems such as increased violent crimes, drug addiction, economic

constraints and exorbitant health bills resulting from drug addiction (Ishmael, 4 March, 1996). This has placed an additional burden on the Member States' budget in order to curb the problems faced with drug use, trafficking, and production (Ishmael, 4 March, 1996). Proponents assert that decriminalization of marijuana has many beneficial consequences like savings on budget for countries, and the standard of living for the lower class of persons. Conversely, opponents affirm that the decriminalization of marijuana bears serious implications for the legalizing State(s) (Jacobs, 2010).

Though there are many prevalent circles within the region who have articulated their interest in marijuana decriminalization, not many have pursued their expressions. Jamaica, meanwhile, has made many strides in forging ahead and making final recommendations to the Political Directorate on the subject and their findings (Brady, 2002). The crucial question is therefore; Is Jamaica's decision to potentially decriminalize marijuana justified? This discourse will seek to examine decriminalization of marijuana in Jamaica in the context of its historical origin and cultural practices, the laws used in justifying the proposal, the economic and general benefits and the possible impact of marijuana that the present violent state comingled with decriminalization can have on Jamaica. It will not encompass in detail the cost to effect marijuana decriminalization nor the structures to be put in place to cushion the impact of legalization. The marijuana situation has demanded much response by the major affected states. Jamaica, in particular, has placed great emphasis and spent millions of dollars in the eradication and interdiction of marijuana throughout the years. (Gomez, A.P., 2006). Though varying perspectives have been advanced as to why it should or should not be decriminalized, the fact remains that it is indeed a very pertinent subject of our day and therefore demands serious attention since it can determine their future. In the last decade, we have seen the decriminalization of marijuana in Canada, Holland, parts of Europe and sixteen States within the USA

(Amerigian, 2011). Negative and positive examples can possibly be drawn to make a comparative analysis of what can surface in Jamaica peradventure marijuana is decriminalized.

The island of Jamaica is one of the largest in the Caribbean and sits about 200 meters south of Cuba (Boekhout, 1996). Jamaica with a population of approximately 2.5 million is also renowned for its reggae, rastas and “ganja (Boekhout, 1996). This island is recognized as producing and consuming the highest quantity of marijuana in the Caribbean, and during 1981-2000 was recorded as the number one producer in the world (Caribbean Drug Trends 2000- 2001). Additionally, Jamaica at the time occupied five times greater land space for marijuana cultivation than it does today (Caribbean Drug Trends, 2000-2001). The use of marijuana in Jamaica is dated back to one hundred and fifty (150) years, however the popularity for marijuana use in Jamaica started with the likes of the famous Marcus Garvey and Bob Marley in particular as he surged towards becoming one of the world’s famous reggae artists (Boekhout, 1996). Many of his songs promoted the legalization of marijuana and he represented a renowned icon for the populace of this unique nation (Brady, 2002).

The State is known for its fertile land and is recognized for having grown some of the best marijuana in the world (Boekhout, 1996). The island though primarily of Negro descent, was populated with approximately 33,000 Indians and 5, 000 Chinese when labourers were sought in the mid 19th century. subsequent to the abolition of slavery. History suggests that marijuana was first introduced to Jamaica by the Indians from where it got its name “ganja” from the Indian word “Hindi”. Traditionally, “ganja” which is generally smoked and used widely in tea as a medicinal herb is a big part of the Jamaican culture. A significant percent of the population as early as the reign of Marcus Garvey used marijuana alluding to its natural herbs and as part of their religious beliefs and practices (Boekhout, 1996).

Significant to the emergence of the Rastafarian culture and the association with major marijuana use is the impact that Marcus Garvey, one of the world's famous black power leaders had on Jamaicans in the early 20th century. History has credited his action to speak out against the subservient treatment of blacks in Jamaica in the 1920's, as a major influence in the movement of the Rastafarian religion in Jamaican cultural practices associated with marijuana use (Boekhout, 1996). The staging of the play "The coronation of the King and Queen of Africa" in Jamaica in the early 1900's left an indelible print on the minds of Jamaicans. Many believed and alluded that Garvey predicted the coming of a new King and as such, embraced Haile Selassie who was believed to be the one prophesied about (Boekhout, 1996). His teachings on the "holy herb" as mentioned in the Bible were believed by the Rastafarian clan to be that of "ganja" and as such the use of this herb pervaded the populace (Boekhout, 1996). Today, in the words of the writer "ganja to a Jamaican is like tea to an Englishman, or like alcohol consumption to the French" (Boekhout, 1996). The use of marijuana he said is quite frequent but is generally used in moderation and is integrated into social use (Boekhout, 1996). Though the Rastafarianism movement is very prevalent in Jamaica, only five percent of the population is recognized after that religion, however 60-70 % of the entire population has smoked marijuana at least occasionally, and a significantly high figure; 60% of men likewise, emanating from the influence of Marcus Garvey (Boekhout, 1996). The facts have outlined the cultural habits associated with marijuana use in Jamaica from as early as the 1920's. Are they right, are they justified in their quest to decriminalize marijuana? There is a strong correlation between ones values, habits and lifestyle and the way s/he learns; particularly during the formative years. Strong support to this argument is given by sociologists who believe in enculturation or societal continuity. They emphasized that lifestyles are shaped and determined by culture; which is passed on from one generation to the next. (Schunk, 2011).

Though considered an impoverished State, a particular sect of the society is recognized as being of the very rich upper class (Boekhout, 1996). In the 1970's Jamaica was known for its export of marijuana to the USA which was perpetuated by upper class families by use of small aircrafts. Today, there continues to be clamouring for the decriminalization and legalization of marijuana from all circles (Boekhout, 1996). Marijuana has contributed significantly to the Jamaican economy in the past and has the potential to contribute greater to the stabilization of the economy if it is decriminalized (Boekhout, 1996). Jamaica today is still recognized as the largest supplier of marijuana to the USA (International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, 2009). The proceeds from marijuana in the past have had significant impact on the GDP of Jamaica, contributing as much as one half to it annually (Boekhout, 1996). Since the criminalization of marijuana the flourishing economy has plummeted by half (Boekhout, 1996). At present, Jamaica can boast of the economy being bolstered by an additional 1-1.5 million dollars annually resulting from proceeds from marijuana (Boekhout, 1996). As a matter of fact, it is recognized as "the most important pillar of the Jamaican economy." (Boekhout, 1996). The proceeds from illicit drugs is said to contribute 7.5% to Jamaica's GDP (The Economist 2008, March 8). These facts have outlined what can be considered as the backbone of Jamaica's economy as being greatly hinged to the proceeds from marijuana even though as is, there is no decriminalization.

The Jamaican Government has made assiduous efforts in their pursuit to eradicate marijuana from the island (International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, 2009). With a new Police Commissioner in 2008, and the introduction of Operation Kingfish, international entities including the USA, Canada and the UK amalgamated forces with the Government of Jamaica in an attempt to take apart the organized criminals (International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, 2009). This proved to be very successful, especially which

resulted in 1,146 hectares of marijuana being eradicated during the period 2007-2008(International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, 2009).

Jamaica's quest to decriminalize marijuana has had much clout with the support of the Political Directorate. Sir Ronald Sanders, consultant and former Caribbean diplomat has fully expressed his views; "Marijuana should be brought into the legal system of regulation and control and education and taxation" (Sanders, 2010). Cannabisnews.com has highlighted the actions of Senator Trevor Munroe of Jamaica who encouraged parliament to conduct a study on the prevalent use of marijuana, its medical benefits and to recommend decriminalization for use. More importantly, was the support of the government at the time under the leadership of Hon. P.J. Patterson who authorized in 2001 a Commission headed by Dr. Barry Chevannes for extensive research to be conducted as to the feasibility of decriminalizing marijuana (Chevannes Committee Report, 2001). The will of the Political directorate reflected the will of the people to decriminalize marijuana. If laws are to be effected, if major changes are to occur in any State and succeed, the interest and "buy-in" of the masses is of utmost importance.

A brief examination of the marijuana laws in Jamaica and the rights and responsibilities of citizens in relation to those laws and its impact on the state must be considered. The laws of Jamaica categorically criminalize possession of marijuana. A person who is found guilty of possession of marijuana according to Chapter 7(C) of the Dangerous Drug Act is liable to face a jail term for a period of five years and/or a fine if brought guilty in a Supreme Court (Chevannes Committee Report, 2011). Within the Magistrate's Court however, someone brought guilty for having marijuana in his/her possession stands to face a penalty of three years jail term and/or a fine not in excess of one thousand five hundred dollars. The State laws also penalize smoking or

condoning its use on ones premises (Chevannes Committee Report, 2001). The main birch on which the Committee justified its argument was according to sec 36 1 (a) & (b) of the 1961 Single Narcotics Convention which prevents persons from possessing, cultivating, manufacturing, exporting and importing of marijuana, however it made no specific mention of consumption (Chevannes Committee Report, 2001). Dr. Stephen Vasciannie who is an expert in the field of law clarifies that this section of the convention “does not require states to prohibit use (consumption) per se:” He further outlined that the State has discretionary powers under the Convention in determining whether to award criminal penalties to someone brought before the court for abusing marijuana (Chevannes Committee Report, 2001). This is quite incongruous. How can use and consumption be legal when cultivation, production and possession remain illegal? Dr. Vasciannie’s explanations continued to suggest that it is a contradiction and indicated that “this seems unworkable”, because the processes involved in getting it to the required stage for use are illegal (Chevannes Committee Report, 2001).

Further, the Chevannes Committee examined many other laws that speak to the rights of the citizens. Jamaica is a member of the International Human Rights Convention Laws; the argument under this law is that it gives the citizens the right to privacy, and the right to freedom of religion; especially in the case of the Rastafarians who use marijuana for religious and sacrament purposes (Chevannes Committee Report, 2011). This law the Committee indicated, is a superior order to the Drug Convention, and as such greater merit must be given to it. This they argued was sufficiently justified to decriminalize marijuana in Jamaica. (National Commission on Ganja, 2001)

Further research exhumed that section 26(8) of the Jamaica Constitution outlines that any law which was in effect prior to the Constitution’s appointment will not be in breach of Chapter 3 of the constitution (National

Commission on Ganja, 2001). Chapter 3 outlines the rights and freedoms of Jamaican citizens. A case was brought to the Court by Dr. Denis Forsythe who challenged the court after being arrested for possession of marijuana and was found guilty. In his claim he articulated that his religious rights as a Rastafarian and rights to privacy of his home were violated according to Chapter 3 of the Constitution. In the final analysis his claim was dismissed under the conditions laid out in section 26(8), which acceded in this case that the Drug Act should take precedence over the Constitution (National Commission on Ganja, 2001).

Consequently, the Chevannes Committee recommended the following: To amend the Jamaica laws in particular the Drug Act to incorporate the decriminalization of marijuana for the following purposes: for private personal use, for religious purposes or as sacrament. Additionally, they recommended that the Jamaica constitution be amended to give constitutional protection allowing one to the rights of enjoyment of the privacy of his/her home. These they proposed on the premise that the interdiction efforts for cocaine and production of marijuana on a large scale basis will be intensified (National Commission on Ganja, 2001).

Similarly, examples can be drawn from justification brought forth in the USA where marijuana was decriminalized under the citizens' constitutional rights to freedom of religion. Canada as well can be used where the laws allowing medical use of marijuana does not contravene the UN Convention (National Commission on Ganja, 2001).

The conclusion of the Government Commission report was in agreement that marijuana does have harmful effects, however; it is not justified to criminalize thousands of Jamaicans on a yearly basis (Commission of Ganja, 2001). Additionally, the committee conducted a survey among an extremely detailed cross-section of the populace which indicated a "wide consensus" in

support of the decriminalization of marijuana. According to the report many shared the view that decriminalization will prevent persons from using cocaine. Conversely, others expressed that the high potency of Jamaica's marijuana will definitely serve as a "gate-way" to harder drugs (National Commission of Ganja, 2001). It maintains the stance that it in no way denounces its signature to the 1961 & 1968 UN Drug Convention, but rather the rights under the International Human Rights Convention gives the State authorities the leeway to decide on the grounds of public interest and the decision as to whether to prosecute for small amounts of cannabis (National Commission of Ganja, 2001).

Will the decriminalization of marijuana in Jamaica in the name of "public interest" generate economic benefit to Jamaicans and the state as a whole? Specifically, a report from the Jamaican Gleaner reported that the World Development report 2011 showed that Jamaica spent US\$400 million, which is equivalent to J\$34 billion in the crime fighting efforts in 2011 (Hall, 2011). A handsome portion of these funds were injected towards the "war on drugs" (Hall, 2011). Advocates of legalization believe that the monies spent on fighting drugs can be utilized to support production and to boost the Jamaican economy. The US Department of State has indicated in a report that Jamaica has a debt-to-GDP of approximately 130%, which is equivalent to 1.52 trillion J\$. Jamaica's domestic debts amount to sixty-eight percent of its GDP and 61 % for external debts (Jamaica Observer, 2011). This devastating situation has resulted in serious long term problems for Jamaica (Jamaica Observer, 2011) In addition to being "in the red" Jamaica's energy is quite costly and their structures are very frail resulting in extreme economic constraints for citizens (Jamaica Observer, 2011). In a report, Southe, n.d. strongly recommended that the Jamaican government instead should utilize these funds to fight crime and to support small marijuana farmers so as to generate revenues to enhance the economy. Further, she asserts, that similar to the oil in the Middle East, and

the rice in Belize, Jamaica's "pride and joy" is the marijuana; therefore it is in the best interest of the government to legalize it; exhuming the economy (Southe, n.d.).

In the Caribbean, and mainly in Jamaica, there are thousands of people who are criminals because they are in one way or another, involved in illegal cultivation, possession and use, trafficking, and distributing marijuana (cannabisnews.com). Many of those being farmers; would have lost markets for their products such as bananas or citrus because of the Caribbean Community and Common Market rate (cannabisnews.com). As a result, farmers are struggling to maintain a financial end as the government of Jamaica struggles to support the agricultural sector (cannabisnews.com). A popular visitor to the island in his writings on their everyday lifestyle indicated that their living conditions are very poor and a significant number of citizens grow and sell marijuana to the tourists to earn monies to maintain their homes (Brady, 2005).

Medicinal marijuana is said to be one of the largest revenue generating marijuana products in the world (Reuteman, 2010). Many have agreed that it has varying detrimental effects on one's health, however, scientific literature has confirmed that the Tetrahydrocannabinol compound (Delta-9 THC), contained in marijuana provides medical benefits for many patients (Deem, n.d.). Further, research has identified numerous chronic medical conditions for which this substance has been able to provide treatment (Deem, n.d.). Some of which include; chronic and life threatening illnesses like cancer, Bipolar disorders, autisms among others (Baltazar, n.d.). It is recorded as the most widely used illegal drug in most developed countries and is believed as indicated in research that this controversial drug provides clear medical benefits to HIV/AIDS patients (Deem, n.d.). Statistics from the Jamaica Ministry of Health reported twelve deaths each week from HIV/AIDS, a total of

576 deaths for the entire year, while various surveys done among pregnant women between 1994 and 1995 revealed that there was an increase in the HIV trends from 0.44%-0.6% (HIV/AIDS Jamaica Information Service, 1995). Further, in 2009 reports indicated that 1,200 patients succumbed to the deadly virus while there were yet 32,000 citizens living with the virus (Jamaica Demographics, 2009). Evidently, this will have ripple effect on Jamaica's already degenerated economy and the future of the workforce. However, the situation presents a great opportunity for the State to utilize its "natural herbs" (marijuana) for medicinal purposes to provide much needed treatment to these patients. The accumulated health cost to Jamaica within a five year period, 2007-2009 was fifteen hundred thousand dollars (J\$15,000,000) (HIV and AIDS in Jamaica, 2008). If marijuana is decriminalized for medicinal purposes Jamaica stands to save hundreds of thousands of dollars annually in treatment cost. In California for example medical experts used marijuana as a complimentary therapy to treat the HIV/AIDS virus in their patients (Vann, 2009). They found that the marinol (dronabinol) a pill containing synthetic THC which is the active ingredient in marijuana when used to treat HIV produced significant results in easing nausea, increasing appetite, preventing weight loss, controlling nerve pain and easing depression and apnea (Vann, 2009).

The decriminalization of marijuana for this purpose is widely supported by persons from every sphere (International Narcotics Control Strategy, 2009). Many expressed that while it is very harmful to the body, a level of control will be instituted since medical experts will possess the requisite knowledge to determine what quantity should be administered to persons (Gomez, A.P., 2006). Further research supports that legalization of the drug would reduce the cost and the state can impose quality control; which in turn would double the benefits to the region (Gomez, A.P, 2006). Proponents argue that this will encourage higher quality drugs production which will eliminate the health risks associated with marijuana use (Gomez, A.P., 2006). The State of Colorado, USA

which was one of the earliest to decriminalize marijuana for medical use in a report, indicated that over 100,000 citizens purchase medical marijuana (Reutman, 2010). The CNBC reported further highlighted that the number of buyers surged from 270 in August of 2009, to 1,000 in February of 2010; a significant increase of about 400% in eight months. Additionally, over US \$74,000 was generated to the State from sales-tax revenues for only half of 2009 from 105 pharmacies throughout the State (Baltazar, n.d.). Similarly, it is plausible that the Jamaican government peradventure the laws are amended to decriminalize marijuana; can realize similar benefits from revenues which can rekindle their economy.

Research has shown that there is a greater demand for medicinal marijuana within the US countries than their present ability to supply (Reuteman, 2010). Jamaica is known for producing some of the most potent marijuana in the world, with their major markets being USA, Canada and Europe (Reuteman, 2010). The choice to decriminalize marijuana can be seen as an opportunity provided to the impoverished farmers to cultivate marijuana on a small scale basis for the purpose of medicinal marijuana (Reuteman, 2010). This can result in a two-fold benefit; the State can generate revenues from taxation and the standard of living of those farmers can also be enhanced (Brady, 2002). According to Brady 2002, the cost of one pound of marijuana as sold to the tourist is US\$ 150.00, which when sold in the USA is valued at US \$ 3,500.00. This is an opportunity that the political directorate of Jamaica can capitalize on and seek audience with US States that have already decriminalized marijuana in an effort to establish a market to bring greater revenue to the economy.

In making decisions however, it is important that the consequences and impact also be examined and weighed against the benefits. Those against the decriminalization of marijuana argues that deciding to decriminalize would “wreak havoc” in the “land of reggae”. An Analytical brief by the UN on the

report from the Government's Commission has categorized Jamaica as one of the highest users of cannabis in the world which included users from all economic and intellectual and social strata (UN Analytical Brief, 2010). It further indicated that for 2009 alone, a total of six thousand (6,000) persons were arrested and charged on marijuana related offences; 0.3% of the population of 1.9 million people (UN Analytical Brief, 2010). Information from the Jamaica's Ministry of Health records twenty five percent (25%) of the Jamaican population ranging between the ages of 15-29 years tested positive for having used marijuana (UN Analytical Brief, 2010). Additionally, there is evidence to support that to decriminalize marijuana would be like "gambling the future of the country". It is widely believed that with decriminalization, addiction would increase. This is supported by evidence produced in research which sighted that the legalization of drugs in Alaska which allowed up to four ounces for personal use led to children between 11-14 years consuming up to three times more marijuana than children in other parts of the USA, forcing its abolition (Gomez, A.P., 2006). Similarly, if marijuana is decriminalized in Jamaica it is likely to conclude that it can have a very similar impact.

Marijuana in Jamaica is grown in hilly remote areas where unemployment and underemployment rates are high and the residents live in extremely deplorable conditions. Further, the poor infrastructural conditions have forced the residents to resort to cultivation of marijuana as a means of survival. These conditions if encouraged can as well become a recipe for disaster.

The deadly "ganja for guns" trade between Jamaica and Haiti is also of major concern for Jamaica's future (Davis, 2008). In recent years Haiti has been smuggling guns from the USA and bartering with Jamaicans in exchange for marijuana (Davis, 2008). Six hundred and fifty (650) guns were confiscated in 2007 and four hundred and fifty (450) in 2008 respectively in operational efforts by the Security Forces, and by October 2008 the island already recorded

1,300 violent murders of which about 90% were gun related (Davis, 2008). An eye witness related to Jamaica's BBC correspondent that fishermen who in the Hellshire Beach in Portmore, Kingston are only using the fishing profession as a cover for their drug deals. He expressed that they use small boats to travel to Haiti and trade marijuana for guns which is sold for a handsome amount of cash (Davis, 2008). In all of this the then Prime Minister, Bruce Golding in expressing the severity of the situation on the States' behalf, in an interview with the BBC representative said "It is a major threat to the security of the country" (Davis, 2008). If this is identified as a major threat to Jamaica's stability is it justified to decriminalize marijuana? Will there be any guarantees that the situation will not spiral out of control and create a worse situation. It is believed by many that drug barons will use the decriminalization of marijuana as a cover to fuel the illegal trade of guns, cocaine and marijuana (Davis, 2008).

Jamaica is known worldwide for having nurtured one of the most notorious drug kingpins Christopher "Dudus" Coke, who under the umbrella of "The Presidential Click" smuggled numerous guns, marijuana and cocaine between the USA and Jamaica in recent years (Reuteurs, 2011). Due to his powerful influence over the residents in the West area Kingston, slums efforts by security forces to nab him in 2010 led to a serious cross-fire between his supporters and the security forces resulting in the death of over seventy-five (75) people (Reuteurs, 2011). Coke was to be extradited to the USA to stand trial to answer racketeering charges; however his strong political support from the Jamaica Labour Party greatly impeded the process to which he later plead guilty and is awaiting sentencing (Reuteurs, 2011). Can this scenario categorize Jamaica's quest to decriminalize marijuana as reasonable? If when marijuana is criminalized the state of crime is overwhelming for the authorities can one begin to fathom the extent of chaos that will exist when it isn't? There is evidence to support that corruption of public officials, particularly within the

judiciary ranked second to violent crimes as the greatest concern in 2008 for Jamaicans (Jamaicasalt.com). When corruption is heightened and the public officials are all “sucked in” to the racketeering business of drugs and guns can any measure of justification to decriminalize marijuana be advanced in exchange for the security and stability of the State? (Jamaicasalt.com).

The decriminalization of marijuana also bears political implications for Jamaica and its relations with other Member States and in particular its relations with global support nations like the USA, Europe and Canada. It also holds much for their level of integrity as public officers. These developed nations have taken keen interest in providing the necessary financial aid, training and resources, having a major stake in supplying states. In this light they have committed to supporting the region on the war on drugs (Gomez, A.P., 2011). In April, 2006, at the Summit of the Americas, President Bush pledged the support of the American Government under the Third Border Initiative (TBI) to provide funds to eight (8) Caribbean countries to aid in the fight against illegal drug trafficking from which Jamaica was also a beneficiary. (Sullivan M.P., 2006) Matter of fact, in an interview with former Prime Minister Golding by the Jamaica Observer, he highlighted the enigmatic status of the recommendations by the Government’s Marijuana Review Commission (Douglas, 2010). Golding articulated that the choice to decriminalize marijuana by Jamaica can have severe foreign policy challenges. He articulated that Jamaica stands to face consequences of being black listed by the USA as failing to cooperate with laws governing the international Anti-Drug Policy (Douglas, 2010). If Jamaica accedes to the proposals, it will significantly impact their terms of trade with the USA and the support provided to them by the US on “the war on drugs”.

The facts outlined throughout this dissertation awakened our minds to the embedded cultural influence of “ganja” on the Jamaican people. It has also

highlighted their fundamental rights, the importance to their religious and sacramental beliefs particularly the Rastafarian clan and the vast range of the social strata throughout the length and breadth of Jamaica that use marijuana for recreational purposes. The deprived status of a significant portion of the populace and the infrastructural challenges faced by the Jamaican government has forced these sects to resort to growing marijuana as a means of survival which can be classified as “an evil necessity”. Despite relentless interdiction efforts by Jamaica, and with support from international donor countries Jamaica is still recognized as the largest grower of cannabis in the region and the largest supplier to the USA. The decriminalization of marijuana, particularly for medicinal purposes can exhume tremendous financial benefits to the state; and possibly Jamaica may be able to “bounce back” from a relapse economy. On the contrary, Jamaicans will awaken to the reality of a myriad of social ills; destroyed relations, health care and the cost to provide the infrastructure to cushion the impact of decriminalization of marijuana.

Ultimately, the political directorate finds itself between “a rock and a hard place” in deciding between the “lesser of two evils”. The state must decide whether to denunciate its signatory to the international laws on drugs and face the ramifications or whether to accede to the voice of the masses and amend the constitution and Drug Act in support of marijuana decriminalization. Jamaica must decide whether morals, values, stability of the state, are worth renouncing for the “ganja” dollar.

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