

Weed: Been There. Done That.

David Brooks
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For a little while in my teenage years, my friends and I smoked marijuana. It was fun. I have some fond memories of us all being silly together. I think those moments of uninhibited frolic deepened our friendships.

But then we all sort of moved away from it. I don't remember any big group decision that we should give up weed. It just sort of petered out, and, before long, we were scarcely using it.

We didn't give it up for the obvious health reasons: that it is addictive in about one in six teenagers; that smoking and driving is a good way to get yourself killed; that young people who smoke go on to suffer I.Q. loss and perform worse on other cognitive tests.

I think we gave it up, first, because we each had had a few embarrassing incidents. Stoned people do stupid things (that's basically the point). I smoked one day during lunch and then had to give a presentation in English class. I stumbled through it, incapable of putting together simple phrases, feeling like a total loser. It is still one of those embarrassing memories that pop up unbidden at 4 in the morning.

We gave it up, second, I think, because one member of our clique became a full-on stoner. He may have been the smartest of us, but something sad happened to him as he sunk deeper into pothead life.

Third, most of us developed higher pleasures. Smoking was fun, for a bit, but it was kind of repetitive. Most of us figured out early on that smoking weed doesn't really make you funnier or more creative (academic studies more or less confirm this). We graduated to more satisfying pleasures. The deeper sources of happiness usually involve a state of going somewhere, becoming better at something, learning more about something, overcoming difficulty and experiencing a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment.

One close friend devoted himself to track. Others fell deeply in love and got thrills from the enlargements of the heart. A few developed passions for science or literature.

Finally, I think we had a vague sense that smoking weed was not exactly something you were proud of yourself for. It's not something people admire. We were in the stage, which I guess all of us are still in, of trying to become more integrated, coherent and responsible people. This process usually involves using the powers of reason, temperance and self-control — not qualities one associates with being high.

I think we had a sense, which all people have, or should have, that the actions you take change you inside, making you a little more or a little less coherent. Not smoking, or only smoking sporadically, gave you a better shot at becoming a little more integrated and interesting. Smoking all the time seemed likely to cumulatively fragment a person's deep center, or at

least not do much to enhance it.

So, like the vast majority of people who try drugs, we aged out. We left marijuana behind. I don't have any problem with somebody who gets high from time to time, but I guess, on the whole, I think being stoned is not a particularly uplifting form of pleasure and should be discouraged more than encouraged.

We now have a couple states — Colorado and Washington — that have gone into the business of effectively encouraging drug use. By making weed legal, they are creating a situation in which the price will drop substantially. One RAND study suggests that prices could plummet by up to 90 percent, before taxes and such. As prices drop and legal fears go away, usage is bound to increase. This is simple economics, and it is confirmed by much research. Colorado and Washington, in other words, are producing more users.

The people who debate these policy changes usually cite the health risks users would face or the tax revenues the state might realize. Many people these days shy away from talk about the moral status of drug use because that would imply that one sort of life you might choose is better than another sort of life.

But, of course, these are the core questions: Laws profoundly mold culture, so what sort of community do we want our laws to nurture? What sort of individuals and behaviors do our governments want to encourage? I'd say that in healthy societies government wants to subtly tip the scale to favor temperate, prudent, self-governing citizenship. In those societies, government subtly encourages the highest pleasures, like enjoying the arts or being in nature, and discourages lesser pleasures, like being stoned.

In legalizing weed, citizens of Colorado are, indeed, enhancing individual freedom. But they are also nurturing a moral ecology in which it is a bit harder to be the sort of person most of us want to be.

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The New Jim Crow

Michelle Alexander
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The first time I encountered the idea that our criminal-justice system functions much like a racial caste system, I dismissed the notion. It was more than 10 years ago in Oakland when I was rushing to catch the bus and spotted a bright orange sign stapled to a telephone pole. It screamed in large, bold print: "The Drug War is the New Jim Crow." I scanned the text of the flyer and then muttered something like, "Yeah, the criminal-justice system is racist in many ways, but making such an absurd comparison doesn't help. People will just think you're crazy." I then hopped on the bus and headed to my new job as director of the Racial Justice Project for the American Civil Liberties Union of Northern California.

What a difference a decade makes. After years of working on issues of racial profiling, police brutality, and drug-law enforcement in poor communities of color as well as working with former inmates struggling to "re-enter" a society that never seemed to have much use for them, I began to suspect that I was wrong about the criminal-justice system. It was not just another institution infected with racial bias but a different beast entirely. The activists who posted the sign on the telephone pole were not crazy, nor were the smattering of lawyers and advocates around the country who were beginning to connect the dots between our current system of mass incarceration and earlier forms of racial control. Quite belatedly, I came to see that mass incarceration in the United States has, in fact, emerged as a comprehensive and well-disguised system of racialized social control that functions in a manner strikingly similar to Jim Crow.

What has changed since the collapse of Jim Crow has less to do with the basic structure of our society than with the language we use to justify severe inequality. In the era of colorblindness, it is no longer socially permissible to use race, explicitly, as justification for discrimination, exclusion, or social contempt. Rather, we use our criminal-justice system to associate criminality with people of color and then engage in the prejudiced practices we supposedly left behind. Today, it is legal to discriminate against ex-offenders in ways it was once legal to discriminate against African Americans. Once you're labeled a felon, depending on the state you're in, the old forms of discrimination -- employment discrimination, housing discrimination, denial of the right to vote, and exclusion from jury service -- are suddenly legal. As a criminal, you have scarcely more rights and arguably less respect than a black man living in Alabama at the height of Jim Crow. We have not ended racial caste in America; we have merely redesigned it.

More than two million African Americans are currently under the control of the criminal-justice system -- in prison or jail, on probation or parole. During the past few decades, millions more have cycled in and out of the system; indeed, nearly 70 percent of people released from prison are re-arrested within three years. Most people appreciate that millions of African Americans were locked into a second-class status during slavery and Jim Crow, and that these earlier systems of racial control created a legacy of political, social, and economic inequality

that our nation is still struggling to overcome. Relatively few, however, seem to appreciate that millions of African Americans are subject to a new system of control -- mass incarceration -- which also has a devastating effect on families and communities. The harm is greatly intensified when prisoners are released. As criminologist Jeremy Travis has observed, "In this brave new world, punishment for the original offense is no longer enough; one's debt to society is never paid."

The scale of incarceration-related discrimination is astonishing. Ex-offenders are routinely stripped of essential rights. Current felon-disenfranchisement laws bar 13 percent of African American men from casting a vote, thus making mass incarceration an effective tool of voter suppression -- one reminiscent of the poll taxes and literacy tests of the Jim Crow era. Employers routinely discriminate against an applicant based on criminal history, as do landlords. In most states, it is also legal to make ex-drug offenders ineligible for food stamps. In some major urban areas, if you take into account prisoners -- who are excluded from poverty and unemployment statistics, thus masking the severity of black disadvantage -- more than half of working-age African American men have criminal records and are thus subject to legalized discrimination for the rest of their lives. In Chicago, for instance, nearly 80 percent of working-age African American men had criminal records in 2002. These men are permanently locked into an inferior, second-class status, or caste, by law and custom.

The official explanation for this is crime rates. Our prison population increased sevenfold in less than 30 years, going from about 300,000 to more than 2 million, supposedly due to rising crime in poor communities of color.

Crime rates, however, actually have little to do with incarceration rates. Crime rates have fluctuated during the past 30 years and today are at historical lows, but incarceration rates have consistently soared. Most sociologists and criminologists today will acknowledge that crime rates and incarceration rates have moved independently of each other; incarceration rates have skyrocketed regardless of whether crime has gone up or down in any particular community or in the nation as a whole.

What caused the unprecedented explosion in our prison population? It turns out that the activists who posted the sign on the telephone pole were right: The "war on drugs" is the single greatest contributor to mass incarceration in the United States. Drug convictions accounted for about two-thirds of the increase in the federal prison system and more than half of the increase in the state prison system between 1985 and 2000 -- the period of the U.S. penal system's most dramatic expansion.

Contrary to popular belief, the goal of this war is not to root out violent offenders or drug kingpins. In 2005, for example, four out of five drug arrests were for possession, while only one out five were for sales. A 2007 report from Sentencing Project found that most people in state prison for drug offenses had no history of violence or significant selling activity. Nearly 80 percent of the increase in drug arrests in the 1990s, when the drug war peaked, could be attributed to possession of marijuana, a substance less harmful than alcohol or tobacco and at least as prevalent in middle-class white communities and on college campuses as in poor communities of color.

The drug war, though, has been waged almost exclusively in poor communities of color, despite the fact that studies consistently indicate that people of all races use and sell illegal drugs at remarkably similar rates. This is not what one would guess by peeking inside our nation's

prisons and jails, which are overflowing with black and brown drug offenders. In 2000, African Americans made up 80 percent to 90 percent of imprisoned drug offenders in some states.

The extraordinary racial disparities in our criminal-justice system would not exist today but for the complicity of the United States Supreme Court. In the failed war on drugs, our Fourth Amendment protections against unreasonable searches and seizures have been eviscerated. Stop-and-frisk operations in poor communities of color are now routine; the arbitrary and discriminatory police practices the framers aimed to prevent are now commonplace. Justice Thurgood Marshall, in a strident dissent in the 1989 case of *Skinner v. Railway Labor Executive Association*, felt compelled to remind the Court that there is "no drug exception" to the Fourth Amendment. His reminder was in vain. The Supreme Court had begun steadily unraveling Fourth Amendment protections against stops, interrogations, and seizures in bus stops, train stations, schools, workplaces, airports, and on sidewalks in a series of cases starting in the early 1980s. These aggressive sweep tactics in poor communities of color are now as accepted as separate water fountains were several decades ago.

If the system is as rife with conscious and unconscious bias, many people often ask, why aren't more lawsuits filed? Why not file class-action lawsuits challenging bias by the police or prosecutors? Doesn't the 14th Amendment guarantee equal protection of the law?

What many don't realize is that the Supreme Court has ruled that in the absence of conscious, intentional bias -- tantamount to an admission or a racial slur -- you can't present allegations of race discrimination in the criminal-justice system. These rulings have created a nearly insurmountable hurdle, as law-enforcement officials know better than to admit racial bias out loud, and much of the discrimination that pervades this system is rooted in unconscious racial stereotypes, or "hunches" about certain types of people that come down to race. Because these biases operate unconsciously, the only proof of bias is in the outcomes: how people of different races are treated. The Supreme Court, however, has ruled that no matter how severe the racial disparities, and no matter how overwhelming or compelling the statistical evidence may be, you must have proof of conscious, intentional bias to present a credible case of discrimination. In this way, the system of mass incarceration is now immunized from judicial scrutiny for racial bias, much as slavery and Jim Crow laws were once protected from constitutional challenge.

As a nation, we have managed to create a massive system of control that locks a significant percentage of our population -- a group defined largely by race -- into a permanent, second-class status. This is not the fault of one political party. It is not merely the fault of biased police, prosecutors, or judges. We have all been complicit in the emergence of mass incarceration in the United States. In the so-called era of colorblindness, we have become blind not so much to race as to the re-emergence of caste in America. We have turned away from those labeled "criminals," viewing them as "others" unworthy of our concern. Some of us have been complicit by remaining silent, even as we have a sneaking suspicion that something has gone horribly wrong. We must break that silence and awaken to the human-rights nightmare that is occurring on our watch.

We, as a nation, can do better than this.

How America Lost The War On Drugs

Ben Wallace-Wells
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1. After Pablo

On the day of his death, December 2nd, 1993, the Colombian billionaire drug kingpin Pablo Escobar was on the run and living in a small, tiled-roof house in a middle-class neighborhood of Medellin, close to the soccer stadium. He died, theatrically, ridiculously, gunned down by a Colombian police manhunt squad while he tried to flee across the barrio's rooftops, a fat, bearded man who had kicked off his flip-flops to try to outrun the bullets. The first thing the American drug agents who arrived on the scene wanted to do was to make sure that the corpse was actually Escobar's. The second thing was to check his house.

The last time Escobar had hastily fled one of his residences -- la Catedral, the luxurious private prison he built for himself to avoid extradition to the United States -- he had left behind bizarre, enchanting detritus, the raw stuff of what would become his own myth: the photos of himself dressed up as a Capone-era gangster with a Tommy gun, the odd collection of novels ranging from Graham Greene to the Austrian modernist Stefan Zweig. Agents from the Drug Enforcement Administration, arriving after the kingpin had fled, found neat shelves lined with loose-leaf binders, carefully organized by content. They were, says John Coleman, then the DEA's assistant administrator for operations, "filled with DEA reports" -- internal documents that laid out, in extraordinary detail, the agency's repeated attempts to capture Escobar.

"He had shelves and shelves and shelves of these things," Coleman tells me. "It was stunning. A lot of the informants we had, he'd figured out who they were. All the agents we had chasing him -- who we trusted in the Colombian police -- it was right there. He knew so much more about what we were doing than we knew about what he was doing."

Coleman and other agents began to work deductively, backward. "We had always wondered why his guys, when we caught them, would always go to trial and risk lots of jail time, even when they would have saved themselves a lot of time if they'd just plead guilty," he says. "What we realized when we saw those binders was that they were doing a job. Their job was to stay on trial and have their lawyers use discovery to get all the information on DEA operations they could. Then they'd send copies back to Medellin, and Escobar would put it all together and figure out who we had tracking him."

The loose-leaf binders crammed in Escobar's office on the ground floor gave Coleman and his agents a sense of triumph: The whole mysterious drug trade had an organization, a structure and a brain, and they'd just removed it. In the thrill of the moment, clinking champagne glasses with officials from the Colombian police and taking congratulatory calls from Washington, the agents in Medellin believed the War on Drugs could finally be won. "We had an endgame," Coleman says. "We were literally making the greatest plans."

At the headquarters of the Office of National Drug Control Policy in Washington, staffers tacked up a poster with photographs of sixteen of its most wanted men, cartel leaders from across the Andes. Solemnly, ceremoniously, a staffer took a red magic marker and drew an X over Escobar's portrait. "We felt like it was one down, fifteen to go," recalls John Carnevale, the longtime budget director of the drug-control office. "There was this feeling that if we got all sixteen, it's not like the whole thing would be over, but that was a big part of how we would go about winning the War on Drugs."

Man by man, sixteen red X's eventually went up over the faces of the cartel leaders: KILLED. EXTRADITED. KILLED. Jose Santacruz Londono, a leading drug trafficker, was gunned down by Colombian police in a shootout. The Rodriguez Orejuela brothers, the heads of the Cali cartel, were extradited after they got greedy and tried to keep running their organization from prison. Some U.S. drug warriors believed that the busts were largely public-relations events, a showy way for the Colombian government to look tough on the drug trade, but most were less cynical. The crack epidemic was over. Drug-related murders were in decline. Winning the War on Drugs didn't seem such a quixotic and open-ended mission, like the War on Poverty, but rather something tangible, a fat guy with a big organization and binders full of internal DEA reports, sixteen faces on a poster, a pinata you could reach out and smack. Richard Canas, a veteran DEA official who headed counternarcotics efforts on the National Security Council under both George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton, can still recall the euphoria of those days. "We were moving," he says, "from success to success."

This is the story of how that momentary success turned into one of the most sustained and costly defeats the United States has ever suffered. It is the story of how the most powerful country on Earth, sensing a piñata, swung to hit it and missed.

2. The Making of a Tragedy

For Canas and other drug warriors, the death of Escobar had the feel of a real pivot, the end of one kind of battle against drugs and the beginning of another. The war itself had begun during the Nixon administration, when the White House began to get reports that a generation of soldiers was about to come back from Vietnam stoned, with habits weaned on the cheap marijuana and heroin of Southeast Asia and hothoused in the twitchy-fingered freakout of a jungle guerrilla war. For those in Washington, the problem of drugs was still so strange and new in the early Seventies that Nixon officials grappled with ideas that, by the standards of the later debate among politicians, were unthinkable radical: They appointed a panel that recommended the decriminalization of casual marijuana use and even considered buying up the world's entire supply of opium to prevent it from being converted into heroin. But Nixon was a law-and-order politician, an operator who understood very well the panic many Americans felt about the cities, the hippies and crime. Calling narcotics "public enemy number one in the United States," he used the issue to escalate the culture war that pitted Middle Americans against the radicals and the hippies, strengthening penalties for drug dealers and devoting federal funds to bolster prosecutions. In 1973, Nixon gave the job of policing these get-tough laws to the newly formed Drug Enforcement Administration.

By the mid-1980s, as crack leached out from New York, Miami and Los Angeles into the American interior, the devastations inflicted by the drug were becoming more vivid and frightening. The Reagan White House seemed to capture the current of the moment: Nancy Reagan's plaintive urging to "just say no," and her husband's decision to hand police and prosecutors even greater powers to lock up street dealers, and to devote more resources to

stop cocaine's production at the source, in the Andes. In 1986, trying to cope with crack's corrosive effects, Congress adopted mandatory-minimum laws, which hit inner-city crack users with penalties as severe as those levied on Wall Street brokers possessing 100 times more powder cocaine. Over the next two decades, hundreds of thousands of Americans would be locked up for drug offenses.

The War on Drugs became an actual war during the first Bush administration, when the bombastic conservative intellectual Bill Bennett was appointed drug czar. "Two words sum up my entire approach," Bennett declared, "consequences and confrontation." Bush and Bennett doubled annual spending on the drug war to \$12 billion, devoting much of the money to expensive weaponry: fighter jets to take on the Colombian trafficking cartels, Navy submarines to chase cocaine-smuggling boats in the Caribbean. If narcotics were the enemy, America would vanquish its foe with torpedoes and F-16s -- and throw an entire generation of drug users in jail.

Though many on the left suspected that things had gone seriously awry, drug policy under Reagan and Bush was largely conducted in a fog of ignorance. The kinds of long-term studies that policy-makers needed -- those that would show what measures would actually reduce drug use and dampen its consequences -- did not yet exist. When it came to research, there was "absolutely nothing" that examined "how each program was or wasn't working," says Peter Reuter, a drug scholar who founded the Drug Policy Research Center at the RAND Corp.

But after Escobar was killed in 1993 -- and after U.S. drug agents began systematically busting up the Colombian cartels -- doubt was replaced with hard data. Thanks to new research, U.S. policy-makers knew with increasing certainty what would work and what wouldn't. The tragedy of the War on Drugs is that this knowledge hasn't been heeded. We continue to treat marijuana as a major threat to public health, even though we know it isn't. We continue to lock up generations of teenage drug dealers, even though we know imprisonment does little to reduce the amount of drugs sold on the street. And we continue to spend billions to fight drugs abroad, even though we know that military efforts are an ineffective way to cut the supply of narcotics in America or raise the price.

All told, the United States has spent an estimated \$500 billion to fight drugs -- with very little to show for it. Cocaine is now as cheap as it was when Escobar died and more heavily used. Methamphetamine, barely a presence in 1993, is now used by 1.5 million Americans and may be more addictive than crack. We have nearly 500,000 people behind bars for drug crimes -- a twelvefold increase since 1980 -- with no discernible effect on the drug traffic. Virtually the only success the government can claim is the decline in the number of Americans who smoke marijuana -- and even on that count, it is not clear that federal prevention programs are responsible. In the course of fighting this war, we have allowed our military to become pawns in a civil war in Colombia and our drug agents to be used by the cartels for their own ends. Those we are paying to wage the drug war have been accused of human-rights abuses in Peru, Bolivia and Colombia. In Mexico, we are now repeating many of the same mistakes we have made in the Andes.

"What we learned was that in drug work, nothing ever stands still," says Coleman, the former DEA official and current president of Drug Watch International, a law-and-order advocacy group. For every move the drug warriors made, the traffickers adapted. "The other guys were learning just as we were learning," Coleman says. "We had this hubris."

3. Brainiacs and Cold Warriors

"At the beginning of the Clinton administration," Canas tells me, "the War on Drugs was like the War on Terror is now." It was, he means, an orienting fight, the next in a sequence of abstract, generational struggles that the country launched itself into after finding no one willing to actually square up and face it on a battlefield. After the Cold War, in the flush and optimism of victory, it felt to drug warriors and the American public that abstractions could be beaten. "It was really a pivot point," recalls Rand Beers, who served on the National Security Council for four different presidents. "We started to look carefully at our drug policies and ask if everything we were doing really made sense." The man Clinton appointed to manage this new era was Lee Brown.

Brown had been a cop for almost thirty years when Clinton tapped him to be the nation's drug czar in 1993. He had started out working narcotics in San Jose, California, just as the Sixties began to swell, and ended up leading the New York Police Department when the city was the symbolic center of the crack epidemic, with kids being killed by stray bullets that barreled through locked doors. A big, shy man in his fifties, Brown had made his reputation with a simple insight: Cops can't do much without the trust of people in their communities, who are needed to turn in offenders and serve as witnesses at trial. Being a good cop meant understanding the everyday act of police work not as chasing crooks but as meeting people and making allies.

"When I worked as an undercover narcotics officer, I was living the life of an addict so I could make buys and make busts of the dealers," Brown tells me. "When you're in that position, you see very quickly that you can't arrest your way out of this. You see the cycle over and over again of people using drugs, getting into trouble, going to prison, getting out and getting into drugs again. At some point I stepped back and asked myself, 'What impact is all of this having on the drug problem? There has to be a better way.' "

In the aftermath of the Rodney King beating, this philosophy -- known as community policing -- had made Brown a national phenomenon. The Clinton administration asked him to take the drug-czar post, and though Brown was skeptical, he agreed on the condition that the White House make it a Cabinet-level position. Brown stacked his small office with liberals who had spent the long Democratic exile doing drug-policy work for Congress and swearing they would improve things when they retook power. "There were basic assumptions that Republicans had been making for fifteen years that had never been challenged," says Carol Bergman, a congressional staffer who became Brown's legislative liaison. "The way Lee Brown looked at it, the drug war was focused on locking kids up for increasing amounts of time, and there wasn't enough emphasis on treatment. He really wanted to take a different tactic."

Brown's staff became intrigued by a new study on drug policy from the RAND Corp., the Strangelove-esque think tank that during the Cold War had employed mathematicians to crank out analyses for the Pentagon. Like Lockheed Martin, the jet manufacturer that had turned to managing welfare reform after the Cold War ended, RAND was scouting for other government projects that might need its brains. It found the drug war. The think tank assigned Susan Everingham, a young expert in mathematical modeling, to help run the group's signature project: dividing up the federal government's annual drug budget of \$13 billion into its component parts and deciding what worked and what didn't when it came to fighting cocaine.

Everingham and her team sorted the drug war into two categories. There were supply-side

programs, like the radar and ships in the Caribbean and the efforts to arrest traffickers in Colombia and Mexico, which were designed to make it more expensive for traffickers to bring their product to market. There were also demand-side programs, like drug treatment, which were designed to reduce the market for drugs in the United States. To evaluate the cost-effectiveness of each approach, the mathematicians set up a series of formulas to calculate precisely how much additional money would have to be spent on supply programs and demand programs to reduce cocaine consumption by one percent nationwide.

"If you had asked me at the outset," Everingham says, "my guess would have been that the best use of taxpayer money was in the source countries in South America" -- that it would be possible to stop cocaine before it reached the U.S. But what the study found surprised her. Overseas military efforts were the least effective way to decrease drug use, and imprisoning addicts was prohibitively expensive. The only cost-effective way to put a dent in the market, it turned out, was drug treatment. "It's not a magic bullet," says Reuter, the RAND scholar who helped supervise the study, "but it works." The study ultimately ushered RAND, this vaguely creepy Cold War relic, into a position as the permanent, pragmatic left wing of American drug policy, the most consistent force for innovating and reinventing our national conception of the War on Drugs.

When Everingham's team looked more closely at drug treatment, they found that thirteen percent of hardcore cocaine users who receive help substantially reduced their use or kicked the habit completely. They also found that a larger and larger portion of illegal drugs in the U.S. were being used by a comparatively small group of hardcore addicts. There was, the study concluded, a fundamental imbalance: The crack epidemic was basically a domestic problem, but we had been fighting it more aggressively overseas. "What we began to realize," says Jonathan Caulkins, a professor at Carnegie Mellon University who studied drug policy for RAND, "was that even if you only get a percentage of this small group of heavy drug users to abstain forever, it's still a really great deal."

Thirteen years later, the study remains the gold standard on drug policy. "It's still the consensus recommendation supplied by the scholarship," says Reuter. "Yet as well as it's stood up, it's never really been tried."

To Brown, RAND's conclusions seemed exactly right. "I saw how little we were doing to help addicts, and I thought, 'This is crazy,' " he recalls. " 'This is how we should be breaking the cycle of addiction and crime, and we're just doing nothing.' "

The federal budget that Brown's office submitted in 1994 remains a kind of fetish object for certain liberals in the field, the moment when their own ideas came close to making it into law. The budget sought to cut overseas interdiction, beef up community policing, funnel low-level drug criminals into treatment programs instead of prison, and devote \$355 million to treating hardcore addicts, the drug users responsible for much of the illegal-drug market and most of the crime associated with it. White House political handlers, wary of appearing soft on crime, were skeptical of even this limited commitment, but Brown persuaded the president to offer his support, and the plan stayed.

Still, the politics of the issue were difficult. Convincing Congress to dramatically alter the direction of America's drug war required a brilliant sales job. "And Lee Brown," says Bergman, his former legislative liaison, "was not an effective salesman." With a kind of loving earnestness, the drug czar arranged tours of treatment centers for congressmen to show them the kinds of programs whose funding his bill would increase. Few legislators came. Most politicians were skeptical about such a radical departure from the mainstream consensus on crime.

Congress rewrote the budget, slashing the \$355 million for treatment programs by more than eighty percent. "There were too many of us who had a strong law-and-order focus," says Sen. Chuck Grassley, a Republican who opposed the reform bill and serves as co-chair of the Senate's drug-policy caucus.

For some veteran drug warriors, Brown's tenure as drug czar still lingers as the last moment when federal drug policy really made sense. "Lee Brown came the closest of anyone to really getting it," says Carnevale, the longtime budget director of the drug-control office. "But the bottom line was, the drug issue and Lee Brown were largely ignored by the Clinton administration." When Brown tried to repeat his treatment-centered initiative in 1995, it was poorly timed: Newt Gingrich and the Republicans had seized control of the House after portraying Clinton as soft on crime. The authority to oversee the War on Drugs passed from Rep. John Conyers, the Detroit liberal, to a retired wrestling coach from Illinois who was tired of drugs in the schools a rising Republican star named Dennis Hastert. Reeling from the defeat at the polls, Clinton decided to give up on drug reform and get tough on crime. "The feeling was that the drug czar's office was one of the weak areas when it came to the administration's efforts to confront crime," recalls Leon Panetta, then Clinton's chief of staff.

4. The Young Guns

The administration was not doing much better in its efforts to stop the flow of drugs at the source. Before Clinton had even taken office, Canas -- who headed drug policy at the National Security Council -- had been summoned to brief the new president's choice for national security adviser, Anthony Lake, on the nation's narcotics policy in Latin America. "I figured, what the hell, I'm going back to DEA anyway, I'll tell him what I really think," Canas recalls.

The Bush administration, he told Lake, had been sending the military after the wrong target. In the 1970s, drugs were run up to the United States through the Caribbean by a bunch of "swashbuckling entrepreneurs" with small planes -- "guys who wouldn't have looked out of place at a Jimmy Buffett concert." In 1989, in the nationwide panic over crack, Defense Secretary Dick Cheney had managed to secure a budget of \$450 million to chase these Caribbean smugglers. (Years later, when a longtime drug official asked Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld why Cheney had pushed the program, Rumsfeld grinned and said, "Cheney thought he was running for president.") The U.S. military loved the new mission, because it gave them a reason to ask for more equipment in the wake of the Cold War. And the Bush White House loved the idea of sending the military after the drug traffickers for its symbolism and swagger and the way it proved that the administration was taking drugs seriously.

The problem, Canas told Lake, was that the cocaine traffic had professionalized and was now moving its product through Mexico. With Caribbean smugglers out of the game, the military program no longer made sense. The new national security adviser grinned at Canas, pleased. "That's what we think as well," Lake said. "How would you like to stay on and help make that happen?"

Taking a new approach, the Clinton administration shifted most military assets out of the Caribbean and into the Andes, where the coca leaf was being grown and processed. "Our idea was, Stop messing around in the transit countries and go to the source," Canas tells me. The administration spent millions of extra dollars to equip police in Bolivia and Colombia to bust the crop's growers and processors. The cops were not polite -- Human Rights Watch condemned the murders of Bolivian farmers, blaming "the heavy hand of U.S. drug enforce-

ment" -- but they were effective, and by 1996, coca production in Bolivia had begun a dramatic decline.

After Escobar fell, the American drug agents who had been chasing him did not expect the cocaine industry to dry up overnight -- they had girded for the fallout from the drug lord's death. What they had not expected was the ways in which the unintended consequences of his downfall would permanently change the drug traffic. "What ended up happening -- and maybe we should have predicted this would happen -- was that the whole structure shattered into these smaller groups," says Coleman, the veteran DEA agent. "You suddenly had all these new guys controlling a small aspect of the traffic."

Among them was a hired gun known as Don Berna, who had served as a bodyguard for Escobar. Double-crossed by his boss, Berna broke with the Medellin cartel and struck out on his own. For him, the disruption caused by the new front in America's drug war presented a business opportunity. But with the DEA's shift from the Caribbean into Bolivia and Colombia, Berna and other new traffickers had a production problem. So some of the "microcartels," as they became known, decided to move their operations someplace where they could control it: They opened negotiations with the FARC, a down-at-the-heels rebel army based in the jungles of Colombia. In return for cash, the FARC agreed to put coca production under its protection and keep the Colombian army away from the coca crop.

Berna and the younger kingpins also had a transportation problem: Mexican traffickers, who had been paid a set fee by the cartels to smuggle product across the U.S. border, wanted a larger piece of the business. The Mexican upstarts had a certain economic logic on their side. A kilo of cocaine produced in Colombia is worth about \$2,500. In Mexico, a kilo gets \$5,000. But smuggle that kilo across the border and the price goes up to \$17,500. "What the Mexican groups started saying was, 'Why are we working for these guys? Why don't we just buy it from the Colombians directly and keep the profits ourselves?'" says Tony Ayala, a retired DEA agent and former Mexico country attache. The remaining leaders of the weakened Cali cartel, DEA agents say, traveled up to Guadalajara for a series of meetings with Mexican traffickers. By 1996, the Colombians had decided to hand over more control of the cocaine trade to the Mexicans. The Cali cartel would now ship cocaine to Guadalajara, sell the drugs to the Mexican groups and then be done with it. "This wasn't just happenstance," says Jerome McArdle, then a DEA assistant agent for special operations. "This was the Colombians saying they were willing to reduce their profits in exchange for reducing their risk and exposure, and handing it over to the Mexicans. The whole nature of the supply chain changed."

Around the same time, DEA agents found themselves picking up Mexican distributors, rather than Colombians, on the streets of New York. Immigration and customs officials on the border were meanwhile overwhelmed by the sheer number of tractor-trailers -- many of them loaded with drugs -- suddenly pouring across the Mexican border as a consequence of NAFTA, which had been enacted in 1994. "A thousand trucks coming across in a four-hour period," says Steve Robertson, a DEA special agent assigned to southern Texas at the time. "There's no way we're going to catch everything."

Power followed the money, and Mexican traffickers soon had a style, and reach, that had previously belonged only to the Colombians. In the border town of Ciudad Juarez, the cocaine trafficker Amado Carrillo Fuentes developed a new kind of smuggling operation. "He brought in middle-class people for the first time -- lawyers, accountants -- and he developed a transportation division, an acquisitions division, even a human-resources operation, just like a modern corporation," says Tony Payan, a political scientist at the University of Texas-El Paso who has studied the drug trade on the border. Before long, Carrillo Fuentes had a fleet of

Boeing 727s, which he used to fly cocaine, up to fifteen tons at a time, up from Colombia to Mexico. The newspapers called him El Senor de los Cielos, the Lord of the Skies.

The Mexican cartels were also getting more imaginative. "Think of it like a business, which is how these guys thought of it," says Guy Hargreaves, a top DEA agent during the 1990s. "Why pay for the widgets when you can make the widgets yourselves?" Since the climate and geography of Mexico aren't right for making cocaine, the cartels did the logical thing: They introduced a new product. As Hargreaves recalls, the Mexicans slipped the new drug into their cocaine shipments in Southern California and told coke dealers, "Here, try some of this stuff -- it's a similar effect."

The product the Mexican cartels came up with, the new widget they could make themselves, was methamphetamine. The man who mastered the market was a midlevel cocaine trafficker, then in his late twenties, named Jesus Amezcua. In 1994, when U.S. Customs officials at the Dallas airport seized an airplane filled with barrels of ephedrine, a chemical precursor for meth, and traced it back to Amezcua, the startling new shift in the drug traffic became clear to a handful of insiders. "Cartels were no longer production organizations, whose business is wrapped up in a single drug," says Tony Ayala, the senior DEA agent in Mexico at the time. "They became trafficking organizations -- and they will smuggle whatever they can make the most profit from."

5. The Lobbyists & the Mad Professor

It is only in retrospect that these moments -- the barrels of ephedrine seized in Dallas, the quiet suggestion that meth had worked its way into the cocaine supply chain -- take on a looming character, the historic weight of a change made manifest. Up until methamphetamine, the War on Drugs had targeted three enemies. First there were the hippie drugs -- marijuana, LSD -- that posed little threat to the general public. Then there was heroin, a horrible drug but one that was largely concentrated in New York City. And, finally, there was crack. What meth proved was that even if the DEA could wipe out every last millionaire cocaine goon in Colombia, burn every coca field in Bolivia and Peru, and build an impenetrable wall along the entire length of the Mexican border -- even then, we wouldn't have won the War on Drugs, because there would still be methamphetamine, and after that, something else.

Gene Haislip, who served for years as one of the DEA's top-ranking administrators, believes there was a moment when meth could have been shut down, long before it spiraled into a nationwide epidemic. Haislip, who spent nearly two decades leading a small group at the agency dedicated to chemical control, is his own kind of legend; he is still known around the DEA as the man who beat quaaludes, perhaps the only drug that the U.S. has ever been able to declare total victory over. He did it with gumshoe methodicalness: by identifying every country in the world that produced the drug's active ingredient, a prescription medication called methaqualone, and convincing them to tighten regulations. Haislip believes he was present the moment when the United States lost the war on methamphetamine, way back in 1986, when meth was still a crude biker drug confined to a few valleys in Northern California -- a decade before the Mexican drug lords turned it into the most problematic drug in America. "The thing is, methamphetamine should never have gotten to that point," Haislip says. And it never would have, he believes, if it hadn't been for the lobbyists.

Haislip was known around the DEA as precise-minded and verbal. His impulse, in combatting meth, was the same one that had pushed the drug warriors after Escobar: the quixotic

faith that if you could just stop the stuff at the source, you could get rid of all the social problems at once. Assembling a coalition of legislators, Haislip convinced them that the small, growing population of speed freaks in Northern California was enough of a concern that Congress should pass a law to regulate the drug's precursor chemicals, ephedrine and pseudoephedrine, legal drugs that were used in cold medicine and produced in fewer than a dozen factories in the world. "We were starting to get reports of hijacking of ephedrine, armed robbery of ephedrine, things that had never happened before," Haislip tells me. "You could see we were on the verge of something if we didn't get a handle on it."

All that was left was to convince the Reagan administration. One day in late 1986, Haislip went to meet with top officials in the Indian Treaty Room, a vast, imposing space in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building: arches, tiled floors, the kind of room designed to house history being made. Haislip noticed several men in suits sitting quietly in the back of the room. They were lobbyists from the pharmaceutical industry, but Haislip didn't pay them much attention. "I wasn't concerned with them," he recalls.

When Haislip launched into his presentation, an official from the Commerce Department cut him off. "Look, you're way ahead of us," the official said. "We don't have anything to suggest or add." Haislip left the meeting thinking he had won: The bill he proposed was submitted to Congress, requiring companies to keep records on the import and sale of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine.

But what Haislip didn't know was that the men in suits had already gone to work to rig the bill in their favor. "Quite frankly," Allan Rexinger, one of the lobbyists present at the meeting later told reporters, "we appealed to a higher authority." The pharmaceutical industry needed pseudoephedrine to make profitable cold medications. The result, to Haislip's dismay, was a new law that monitored sales of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine in bulk powder but created an exemption for selling the chemicals in tablet form -- a loophole that protected the pharmaceutical industry's profits.

The law, drug agents say, sparked two changes in the market for illegal meth. First, the supply of ephedrine simply moved overseas: The Mexican cartels, quick to recognize an emerging market, evaded the restrictions by importing powder from China, India and Europe and then smuggling it across the border to the biker groups that had traditionally distributed the drug. "We actually had meetings where we planned for a turf war between the Mexicans and the Hells Angels over methamphetamine," says retired DEA agent Mike Heald, who headed the San Francisco meth task force, "but it turned out they realized they'd make more money by working together." Second, responding to a dramatic uptick in demand from the illegal market, chemical-supply companies began moving huge amounts of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine out to the West Coast in the form of pills, which were then converted into meth. Rather than stemming the tide of meth before it started, the Reagan administration had unwittingly helped accelerate a new epidemic: Between 1992 and 1994, the number of meth addicts entering rehab facilities doubled, and the drug's purity on the street rose by twenty-seven percent.

Haislip resolved to have another go at Congress, but the issue ended up in a dispiriting cycle. The resistance, he says bitterly, "was always coming from the same lobbying group." In 1993, when he persuaded lawmakers to regulate the sale of ephedrine in tablet form, the pharmaceutical industry won an exception for pseudoephedrine. Drug agents began to intercept shipments of pseudoephedrine pills in barrels. Three years later, when lawmakers finally regulated tablets of pseudoephedrine, they created an exception for pills sold in blister packs. "Congress thought there was no way that meth freaks would buy this stuff and pop the pills

out of blister packs, one by one," says Heald. "But we're not dealing with normal people -- we're dealing with meth freaks. They'll stay up all night picking their toes."

By the time Haislip retired, in 1997, the methamphetamine problem was really two problems. There were the mom-and-pop cooks, who were punching pills out of blister packs and making small batches of drugs for themselves. Then there were the industrial-scale Mexican cartels, which were responsible for eighty percent of the meth in the United States. It took until 2005 for Congress to finally regulate over-the-counter blister packs, which caused the number of labs to plummet. But once again, the Mexican groups were a step ahead of the law. In October 2006, police in Guadalajara arrested an American chemist named Frederick Wells, who had moved to Mexico after losing his job at Idaho State University. An academic troublemaker who drove around campus with signs on the back of his pickup truck raging at the college administration, Wells had allegedly used his university lab to investigate new ways that Mexican traffickers could use completely legal reagents to engineer meth precursors from scratch. "Very complicated numerical modeling," says his academic colleague Jeff Rosenreter. By the time Wells was arrested, the State Department had only just succeeded at pressuring Mexico to restrict the flow of pseudoephedrine, even though Wells had apparently been hard at work for years creating alternatives to that chemical. The lobbying by the pharmaceutical industry, Haislip says, "cost us eight or nine years."

For some in the drug war, it was a lesson that even the most promising efforts to restrict the supply of drugs at the source -- those that rely on legal methods to regulate legally produced drugs -- remained nearly impossible, outflanked by both drug traffickers and industry lobbyists. The tragedy of the fight against methamphetamine is that it repeated the ways in which the government tried to fight the cocaine problem, and failed -- racing from source to source, trying to eliminate a coca field or an ephedrine manufacturer and then racing to the next one. "We used to call it the Pillsbury Doughboy -- stick your finger in one part of the problem, and the Doughboy's stomach just pops out somewhere else," says Rand Beers. "The lesson of U.S. drug policy is that this world runs on unintended consequences. No matter how noble your intentions, there's a good chance that in solving one problem, you'll screw something else up."

6. The General & the Adman

Within the Clinton White House, the reform effort spearheaded by Lee Brown had created a political dilemma. Republicans, having taken control of Congress in 1994, were attacking the administration for being soft on drugs, and the White House decided that it was time to look tougher. "A lot of people didn't think Brown was a strong leader," Panetta tells me. As senior figures within the administration cast about for a replacement, they started by thinking about who would be the opposite of Brown. "We wanted to get someone who was much stronger, much tougher, and could come across that way symbolically," Panetta says.

During the planning for a possible invasion of Haiti, Panetta and others had discovered a rising star at the Pentagon, a charismatic, bullying four-star general named Barry McCaffrey, who had annoyed many in the Pentagon's establishment. In 1996, halfway into his State of the Union address, Clinton looked up at McCaffrey, a lean, stern-seeming military man in the balcony, and informed the nation that the general would be his next drug czar. "To succeed, he needs a force far larger than he has ever commanded before," Clinton said. "He needs all of us. Every one of us has a role to play on this team." McCaffrey, the bars on his epaulets shimmering, saluted. It was one of the president's biggest applause lines of the night.

For the drug warriors in McCaffrey's office, "the General" was everything the languid, considered, academic Lee Brown had not been. "It was clear from the outset that here was a guy who would take advantage of the bully pulpit and who, unlike Brown, would probably be able to get things done," says Bergman, Brown's former liaison. "One thing that surprised us all was how thoughtful he was -- he wasn't a knee-jerk, law-enforcement guy. He understood there needed to be money for treatment. He prided himself on being very sensitive to the racial issues, and he was sensitive to the impact of sentencing laws on African-American men." McCaffrey imported his own staff from the Southern Command -- mostly men, all military. They lent the White House's drug operation -- previously a slow place -- the kinetic energy of a forward operating base. "We went to a twenty-four-hour clock, so we'd schedule meetings for 1500," one longtime staffer recalls. "His people sat down with senior staff and told us what size paper the General wanted his memos on, this kind of report would have green tabs, this would have blue tabs."

The General's genius was for publicity. "He was great at getting visibility," Carnevale says. McCaffrey held grandstanding events everywhere from Mexico to Maine, telling reporters that the decades-long narrative of impending doom around the drug war was out of date -- and that if Congress would really dedicate itself to the mission, the country had a winnable fight on its hands. Drug-use numbers were edging downward; even cocaine seemed to be declining in popularity. "We are in an optimistic situation," McCaffrey declared.

For the first time ever, McCaffrey had the drug czar's office develop a strategy for an end-game to the drug war, a plan for finishing the whole thing. The federal government needed to reduce the amount of money it was spending on law enforcement and interdiction. But McCaffrey believed this was only possible once it could guarantee that drug use would continue to decline. "The data suggested very strongly that those who never tried any drugs before they were eighteen were very likely to remain abstinent for their whole lives, but that those who even smoked marijuana when they were teenagers had much worse outcomes," says McCaffrey's deputy Don Vereen. So the General decided to focus the government's attention on keeping kids from trying pot.

The "gateway theory," as it became known, had a natural appeal. Because most people who used hard drugs had also smoked marijuana, and because kids often tried marijuana several years before they started trying harder drugs, it seemed that keeping them off pot might prevent them from ever getting to cocaine and heroin. The only trouble is, the theory is wrong. When McCaffrey's office commissioned the Institute of Medicine to study the idea, researchers concluded that marijuana "does not appear to be a gateway drug." RAND, after examining a decade of data, also found that the gateway theory is "not the best explanation" of the link between marijuana use and hard drugs. But McCaffrey continued to devote more and more of the government's resources to going after kids. "We have already clearly committed ourselves," he declared, "to a number-one focus on youth."

"That decision," Bergman says, "was where you could see McCaffrey begin to lose credibility."

In 1996, less than a year into his term, the new drug czar met Jim Burke, a smooth-talking, silver-haired executive who chaired the Partnership for a Drug-Free America -- the advertising organization best known for the slogan "This is your brain on drugs." "Burke personally was very hard to resist," one of his former colleagues tells me. "I've seen him sell many conservative members of Congress and also liberals like Mario Cuomo."

Burke told McCaffrey a simple story. In the late 1980s, he said, the major television networks

had voluntarily given airtime to the Partnership to run anti-drug ads aimed at teenagers. The number of teenagers who used drugs -- especially marijuana -- declined during that period. But in the early 1990s, Burke said, the rise of cable TV cut into the profits of the networks, which became stingier with the time they dedicated to anti-drug advertising. The result, the adman told the General, was that the number of teenagers who used drugs was climbing sharply -- to the outrage of Dennis Hastert and other conservative members of Congress. As a clincher, Burke handed McCaffrey a graph that showed the declining amount of airtime dedicated to anti-drug advertising on one axis and the declining perception among teenagers of the risks associated with drugs on the other. "I'm ninety-nine percent sure," one staffer at the Partnership tells me, "that it was that conversation that sold McCaffrey."

The General mobilized his office, lobbying Congress to allocate enough money to put anti-drug advertising on the air whenever teenagers watched television. His staff was skeptical. For all of McCaffrey's conviction and charisma, he didn't have much in the way of facts. "That was all we had -- no data, just this one chart -- and we had to go and sell Congress," Carnevale recalls. But Congress proved to be a pushover. Conservatives, who held a majority, were thrilled that soft-on-pot liberals in the Clinton administration finally wanted to do something about the drug problem. "At some point, you have to draw a line and say that some things are right and some things are wrong," says Sen. Grassley, explaining his support of the measure. "And using any drugs is just flat-out wrong." To the Partnership's delight, Congress allocated \$1 billion to buy network time for anti-drug spots aimed at teenagers.

The General was also starting to make friends beyond the Clinton administration. The drug czar had found a natural ally in Hastert, who had become the GOP's de facto leader on drug policy. The former wrestling coach struck few as charismatic -- his joyless and drudging style, his form like settled gelatin -- but his experiences in high schools had left him with the feeling that the drug issue, in the words of his longtime aide Bobby Charles, "had become extremely poignant." Hastert wasn't quite Lee Brown; he believed that the prime focus of the drug war should be to increase funding for military operations in Colombia. But he and his staff had grown frustrated with the exclusively punitive character of drug policy and wanted the Republicans to take a more compassionate stance. His staff had studied the RAND reports and largely agreed with their conclusions. "We felt if you didn't get at the nub of the problem, which was prevention and treatment, you weren't going to do any good," says John Bridgeland, a congressional aide who helped coordinate Republican drug policy. Hastert eventually won \$450 million to be used, in part, to expand a faith-based program discovered by Bridgeland: Developed by a former evangelical minister, it brought together preachers, parents and drug counselors to fight the problem of "apathy" through "parent training" and "messages from the pulpit."

But with McCaffrey's emphasis on kids came another, almost fanatical focus: going after citizens who used pot for medical purposes. If he was fighting marijuana, the General was going to fight it everywhere, in all its forms. He threatened to have doctors who prescribed pot brought up on federal charges, and dismissed the science behind medical marijuana as a "Cheech and Chong show." In 1997, voters in Oregon introduced an initiative to legalize medical marijuana in the state. "I'll never forget the senior-staff meeting the morning after the Oregon initiative was announced," Bergman says. "McCaffrey was furious. It was like this personal affront to him. He couldn't believe they'd gotten away with it. He wanted to have this research done on the groups behind it and completely trash them in the press." As the General traveled to the initiative states, stumping against medical marijuana, his aides sneered that the initiatives were "all being mostly bankrolled by one man, George Soros," the billionaire investor who favored decriminalizing drugs.

Even for those who shared McCaffrey's philosophy, the theatrics seemed strange: There he was, on evening newscasts, effectively insisting that grandmothers dying of cancer were corrupting America's youth. His office pushed arguments that, at best, stretched the available research: Marijuana is a gateway drug that leads inexorably to the abuse of harder drugs; marijuana is thirty times more potent now than it was a generation ago. "It didn't track with the conclusions our researchers came to," says Bergman. "It felt like he was trying to manipulate the data."

McCaffrey had taken the drug war in a new direction, one that had little obvious connection with preventing drug abuse. For the first time, the full force of the federal government was being brought to bear on patients dying from terminal diseases. Even the General's allies in Congress were appalled. "I can't tell you how many times I went to the Hill with him and sat in on closed-doors meetings," Bergman recalls. "Members said to him, 'What in the world are you doing? We have real drug problems in the country with meth and cocaine. What the hell are you doing with medical marijuana? We get no calls from our constituents about that. Nobody cares about that.' McCaffrey was just mystified by their response, because he truly believed marijuana was a gateway drug. He truly believed in what he was doing."

7. The Harvard Man

For the cops on the front lines of the War on Drugs, the federal government's fixation with marijuana was deeply perplexing. As they saw it, the problem wasn't pot but the drug-related violence that accompanied cocaine and other hard drugs. After the crack epidemic in the late 1980s, police commissioners around the country, like Lee Brown in Houston, began adding more officers and developing computer mapping to target neighborhoods where crime was on the rise. The crime rate dropped. But by the mid-1990s, police in some cities were beginning to realize there was a certain level that they couldn't get crime below. Mass jailings weren't doing the trick: Only fifteen percent of those convicted of federal drug crimes were actual traffickers; the rest were nothing but street-level dealers and mules, who could always be replaced.

Police in Boston, concerned about violence between youth drug gangs, turned for assistance to a group of academics. Among them was a Harvard criminologist named David Kennedy. Working together, the academics and members of the department's anti-gang unit came up with what Kennedy calls a "quirky" strategy and convinced senior police commanders to give it a try. The result, which began in 1995, was the Boston Gun Project, a collaborative effort among ministers and community leaders and the police to try to break the link between the drug trade and violent crime. First, the project tracked a particular drug-dealing gang, mapping out its membership and operations in detail. Then, in an effort called Operation Ceasefire, the dealers were called into a meeting with preachers and parents and social-service providers, and offered a deal: Stop the violence, or the police will crack down with a vengeance. "We know the seventeen guys you run with," the gangbangers were told. "If anyone in your group shoots somebody, we'll arrest every last one of you." The project also extended drug treatment and other assistance to anyone who wanted it.

The effort worked: The rates of homicide and violence among young men in Boston dropped by two-thirds. Drug dealing didn't stop -- "people continued what they were doing," Kennedy concedes, "but they put their guns down."

As Kennedy reflected on the success of the Boston project, which ran for five years, he won-

dered if he had discovered a deeper truth about drug-related violence. If the murders weren't a necessary component of the drug trade -- if it was possible to separate the two -- perhaps cities could find a way to reduce the violence, even if they could do nothing about the drugs.

In 2001, Kennedy got a call from the mayor of San Francisco that gave him a chance to examine his theories in a new setting. The city had experienced a recent spike in its murder rate, much of it caused by an ongoing feud between two drug-dealing gangs -- Big Block and West Mob -- that had resulted in dozens of murders over the years. Could Kennedy, the mayor asked, help police figure out how to stop the killings?

Kennedy flew out to San Francisco and met with police. But as he researched the history of the violence, it seemed to confirm his findings in Boston. Though both Big Block and West Mob were involved in dealing drugs, the shootings were not really drug-related -- the two groups occupied different territories and were not battling over turf. "The feud had started over who would perform next at a neighborhood rap event," says Kennedy, now a professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. "They had been killing each other ever since."

Such evidence suggested that drug enforcement needed to focus more narrowly on those responsible for the violence. "Seventy percent of the violence in these hot neighborhoods comes back to drugs," Kennedy says. "But one of the profound myths is that these homicides are about the drug trade. The violence is driven by these crews -- but they're not killing each other over business." The real spark igniting the murders, he realized, was peer pressure, a kind of primordial male goad that drove young gang members to kill each other even in instances when they weren't sure they wanted to.

Given that police departments had already locked up every drug dealer in sight and were still having problems with violence, Kennedy thought a new approach was worth a try. "There's a difference between saying, 'I'm watching this, and you should stop,' and putting someone in federal lockup," he says. "The violence is not about the drug business -- but that's a very hard thing for people to understand."

But in the early days of the Bush administration, police departments were in no hurry to experiment with an approach that focused on drug-related murders and mostly ignored users who weren't committing violence. Kennedy's efforts proved to be yet another missed opportunity in the War on Drugs -- an experience that made clear how difficult it is for science to influence the nation's drug policy.

"If ten years ago the medical community had figured out a way to reduce the deaths from breast cancer by two-thirds, every cancer clinic in the country would have been using those techniques a year later," Kennedy says. "But when it comes to drugs and violence, there's been nothing like that."

8. Helicopters and Coca

Instead of pursuing the Boston Gun Project and other innovative approaches to fighting drug violence, the federal government decided to escalate its military response in Colombia. For the past decade and a half, cooperation from officials in Bogota had been halfhearted, sporadic and deeply corrupt. But by 1999, the country, it seemed, was on the verge of collapsing into civil war. The drug money that had flowed into Colombia had found its way into the hands of the rebel militia -- the FARC -- which had been laying siege to the Colombian government. The Clinton foreign-policy team, having spent the previous few years dealing with the conse-

quences of failed states in Somalia and the Balkans, was deeply concerned about the possibility of a failed narco-state in America's own back yard.

One afternoon in June 1999, a dozen senior Clinton officials filed into the National Security Council's situation room, summoned by Sandy Berger, the president's national security adviser. Even though Bogota had ceded control of vast swaths of the country to the left-wing rebels, they were told, recent peace talks had collapsed. "The FARC had basically always been jungle campesinos -- they were a pretty austere bunch," says Brian Sheridan, who was in charge of the Pentagon's counternarcotics effort at the time and attended the meeting. "All of a sudden, they were leveling these attacks that had gotten more and more audacious." When FARC rebels had emerged from the jungle for a round of peace talks the previous fall, they had brandished brand-new AK-47s and Dragunovs, as if on military parade. One U.S. official observed at the time that the weaponry was "far beyond" what the Colombian army had - in a pitched battle, the Clinton administration worried, the Colombian government could plausibly collapse.

The White House advisers weren't the only officials in Washington concerned about Colombia. Earlier that day, two men who attended the briefing -- Rand Beers of the State Department and Charlie Wilhelm of the Defense Department -- had gotten a call from the Republican caucus on the Hill. Dennis Hastert, who had been elevated to Speaker of the House six months earlier, wanted to see them right away. "It was kind of unusual," Beers recalls -- but when Hastert called, you came.

When Beers and Wilhelm arrived, Rep. Porter Goss, then the chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, handed them a piece of paper. It was a copy of a supplemental spending authorization that the Republicans planned to offer immediately. Crafted by Bobby Charles, Hastert's longtime aide, the bill would have more than doubled military aid to Colombia to take on the rebels and narcotraffickers -- to a staggering \$1.2 billion a year. But it was the politics of the situation that worried Beers as much as the money. "It occurred to me that if the administration was going to do anything on Colombia, it better do it soon," he says now, "or the Republicans would once again outflank what they perceived as the I-never-inhaled Clinton administration." Beers told the Republicans he would take a look, and then hurried to Berger's meeting.

Throughout much of the Clinton administration, the hope had been that the United States would be able to reduce its military aid to the Andes as the cocaine epidemic waned. Now, as Berger's group heard from intelligence agents, that hope seemed to be fading. Narcotraffickers were paying off the FARC so they could grow coca in the jungles of Colombia. The FARC were then turning around and using the money to buy weapons to stage attacks on the Colombian government.

Berger decided to act. Rather than oppose the Republican plan, he agreed to negotiate on an assistance package to bail out the Colombian government. The result was Plan Colombia -- nearly \$1.6 billion to escalate the War on Drugs in the Andes. The new program would arm the military and police in their fight against the FARC, launch an ambitious effort to spray herbicide on coca crops from the air and provide economic assistance to poor farmers in rural villages. The initial aid, officials decided, would be heavily concentrated in Putumayo, a rebel-run province in the jungle.

No one is sure what convinced President Clinton to approve such an ambitious escalation in the War on Drugs. But some observers at the time speculated that the critical factor was a conversation with Sen. Christopher Dodd, the Connecticut Democrat, whose state is home to

the helicopter manufacturer Sikorsky Aircraft. In early 2000, Clinton unveiled Plan Colombia -- and Sikorsky promptly received an order for eighteen of its Blackhawk helicopters at a cost of \$15 million each. "Much has been made of the notion that this was Dodd looking to sell Blackhawks to Colombia," Beers tells me. He pauses before adding, "I am not in a position to tell you it didn't happen."

Plan Colombia would be the Clinton administration's primary and most -- costly contribution to the War on Drugs, the major counternarcotics program it bequeathed to the Bush administration. But as with so many other aspects of American drug policy, the plan had an unintended consequence: As it evolved, the emphasis on supplying arms to the Colombian government ended up having less to do with drugs and more to do with helping Bogota fight its enemies. Colombia used the military aid to target the left-wing FARC -- even though many believed that right-wing paramilitaries, who were allies of the government, were more directly involved in narcotrafficking. "It wasn't really first and foremost a counternarcotics program at all," says a senior Pentagon official involved in the creation of Plan Colombia. "It was mostly a political stabilization program."

9. The Temple of Hope

In July of 1999, Gov. George W. Bush of Texas traveled to Cincinnati to visit Hope Temple, a former crack house that had been turned into a church. It was an almost unbearably hot day. Bush was on a tour through the Midwest during which he was testing out his philosophy of compassionate conservatism, trying to see if its rhetoric and principles could sustain a winning presidential run. "The American dream is vivid," Bush told audiences, "but too many feel, 'This dream is not meant for me.'" John Bridgeland, the congressional aide who had helped steer federal funding to Hope Temple, says Bush was "overwhelmed" by his visit to the church that day, and stayed the whole afternoon. That evening, Bush spoke about the fervent religiosity of the place and the rough joys of the addict's redemptions. "These," he said, "are the armies of compassion."

This was a strange moment in the politics of the drug war: Just as the Clinton administration was toughening its rhetoric, influential Republicans were going all soft and gentle. John DiIulio, a political scientist from the University of Pennsylvania who would become a key Bush adviser, was disgusted by the "perverse consequences" of harsh sentencing laws that had put millions of young Americans in prison, disbelieved the "sweeping scientific claims" made about the dangers of medical marijuana and wanted to expand "meaningful drug-treatment opportunities in urban areas." DiIulio and his contemporaries were troubled, too, by the racial imbalances of the War on Drugs: Blacks, who comprised only fourteen percent of drug users, made up seventy-four percent of those in prison for drug possession. It was not as if the Republican Party had suddenly taken up a position on the far left of the drug war. But it did seem, for a moment during the 2000 campaign, as if some moderation were possible.

Three months later, when the Bush campaign released its drug policy, even the most experienced drug warriors were impressed. The platform balanced spending between demand- and supply-side programs, stressed treatment and doubled the number of community anti-drug coalitions. When Bush won the White House and DiIulio became the director of the Office of Faith-Based Programs, they raided the team of compassionate conservatives surrounding Hastert: Bridgeland became director of the White House Domestic Policy Council, and Charles became assistant secretary of state for narcotics control. The new administration, DiIulio believed, would take the lead in "reforming drug-related sentencing policies that re-

search had shown were having perverse consequences."

"If you look back at that campaign document, it really is pretty impressive," says Carnevale, who ended up heading the drug office's transition team for the Bush administration. "Which is kind of remarkable, given what happened next. They've appointed a drug czar who ran like hell from a very sensible policy."

It took Bush nearly a year to pick his drug czar, and almost no one felt encouraged by his choice: John Walters, a laconic Midwesterner who had served as Bill Bennett's chief of staff during the administration of George H.W. Bush. "We all knew who Walters was," one long-time drug warrior tells me, "but he wasn't what you would call an inspiring figure, even to conservatives." When Walters submitted his first National Drug Control Strategy to Bush in February 2002, it became clear that the administration's focus had narrowed: Walters was devoted to Plan Colombia and to a prevention campaign that would keep kids from trying drugs for the first time, aimed particularly at marijuana -- even though the number of first-time pot smokers had been flat for half a decade. Longtime drug warriors like Carnevale were stunned. "We were going back to an Eighties-style drug policy," he says -- one that emphasized the kind of military and law-and-order programs that had been proven not to work, while ignoring programs, particularly treatment, that did.

Walters also had a complaint with the ads that the Partnership for a Drug-Free America had created for the drug czar's office under McCaffrey. They were, he said, too soft. He had a point. The ads, which ran under the slogan "The Anti-Drug," had been designed by a committee of academics who apparently believed that kids needed to be shown that not doing drugs could be fun too. In one characteristic spot, a pen draws an animated landscape, with a cartoon boy avoiding the advances of cartoon dealers before driving off into the distance with a cartoon dragon on a cartoon motorcycle. "My name is Brandon, and drawing is my anti-drug," the narrator says sweetly. The commercials made abstinence seem so lame they could have been designed by the cartels. "A lot of the ads that were produced were really boring," admits Philip Palmgreen, a University of Kentucky communications professor who served on the ad committee. Walters not only wanted harder-hitting messages -- he also wanted the focus "to narrow around marijuana," according to one staffer at the Partnership who asked not to be identified. "Very candidly, the Partnership pushed back against that because the problems associated with marijuana are not very dire." But Walters disagreed, the staffer adds, "and we lost."

Walters refused to be interviewed for this story, but his office did make available one of his top advisers, David Murray. I asked him why his boss had narrowed the focus to marijuana, even though studies had disproved the causal link between marijuana and hard drugs. "If you're going to have a national office of drug-control policy, you look at the most prevalent drug in the society that's readily available -- you don't go after meth first thing," he says. "You think about it like an epidemiologist, and you go for the vector that's most likely to spread, and that's teen marijuana users."

The new ads took a counterintuitive approach. "We wanted to make sure we were getting through to the thrill-seekers -- those teenagers who are much more likely to use drugs -- and convince them that it was more exciting not to do drugs," says Palmgreen. In a heralded spot called "Pete's Couch," the teenage narrator says, "I smoked weed and nobody died. I didn't get into a car accident. I didn't OD on heroin the next day. Nothing happened. We sat on Pete's couch for eleven hours." Then the camera shifts to show other teenagers, presumably those who haven't smoked weed, doing fun things -- biking, playing basketball, flirting with girls. "You have a better shot at dying out in the real world," the narrator says, "but I'll take

my chances out there." The advertising community was impressed with the spot: "Finally, an admission that smoking pot isn't calamitous," cheered Slate's advertising columnist, Seth Stevenson. Said Palmgreen: "Really good spots. The focus groups of thrill-seekers gave them great grades."

But the reality is that such ads -- no matter how persuasive -- do little if anything to prevent teens from trying pot. In 2005, a government-commissioned study designed to evaluate the prevention campaign over five years delivered its conclusions: Kids who had been -- exposed to the campaign ended up with rates of drug use that were roughly the same as those of the control group, who had not seen the ads. Murray loudly challenged the study's methodology, but when Congress asked federal analysts at the Government Accountability Office to assess the findings, the GAO upheld the report. The anti-drug campaign had not worked at all.

There was another problem with the Walters approach: Just as the federal government asserted the dangers of smoking pot, the states -- first California, then three others -- were permitting doctors to legally prescribe marijuana to relieve the chronic pain that came with cancer, polio and other debilitating long-term diseases. Attorney General John Ashcroft dispatched federal agents to begin raiding the suppliers and purchasers of medical marijuana in California -- people who were operating completely within state law. The raids were even more surreal in their theatrics than the ones that had been launched by McCaffrey: In one particularly ludicrous incident, a forty-four-year-old post-polio sufferer named Suzanne Pfeil, who smoked prescription marijuana to relieve her pain, was hauled off to jail by DEA agents who pointed automatic rifles at her head and handcuffed her to her wheelchair. The rhetoric reached the level of crusade: Walters called citizens who plant and tend marijuana gardens "terrorists who wouldn't hesitate to help other terrorists get into the country with the aim of causing mass casualties."

What was striking to many veteran drug warriors was how fully the drug czar's office had bet on the youth marijuana initiative. For all Ashcroft's bluff talk about wanting to "escalate the War on Drugs," only a very small portion of it was being escalated. Funding for drug courts, which channel nonviolent drug offenders through treatment programs rather than prison, was zeroed out, and funding for local police was gutted. Carnevale, who quit his job after overseeing the transition in 2000, began to feel he was in a time warp. "This White House is walking away from prevention funding and treatment," he says now. "They haven't supported the community anti-drug coalitions, which actually work pretty well, and domestic law enforcement is flat or declining. To have a successful drug policy, you need all these elements, and what this administration has done is go crazy on exactly the element that doesn't work."

By the summer of 2005, the drug czar's failures were beginning to spill out into the open. For four years, while he focused obsessively on pot, Walters had done virtually nothing about meth, which was rapidly devastating the red states that had elected his boss. Walters struck a strangely discordant note on the growing epidemic, insisting that even as methamphetamine spread from the West Coast to the East, it remained a regional problem, not a national one, and therefore did not place high on his list of priorities. That September, the House's meth caucus asked Walters to come in for a meeting, to see if they could restore some element of dialogue and begin to rebalance the budget. The drug czar, once again downplaying the issue, sent Murray in his place. The congressmen, who had excluded the press to prevent grandstanding, went through the budget in detail and told the drug deputy what they wanted restored to fight meth. But, according to one staffer, Murray just sat there: "He didn't even bother to ask a question."

Incensed, Rep. Mark Souder, a Republican who chairs the House Subcommittee on Drug

Policy, walked out of the room and held an angry press conference. Murray's testimony, he said, had been "pathetic" and "an embarrassment," and Walters was not doing his job: "If he does not lead, we need a change of the drug czar." Sen. Grassley, the Iowa Republican, echoed Souder a few days later. "What I've never understood," he said, "is why they took marijuana so much more seriously than methamphetamine, when methamphetamine is a much more serious drug."

By virtually every objective measure, the White House had lost the War on Drugs. Last year, Walters boasted that drug use among teenagers has fallen since 2002 -- ignoring the fact that overall drug use remains unchanged. The deeper problem is that the drug czar has stopped measuring anything other than drug use. During the 1990s, at the direction of Gen. McCaffrey, Carnevale had created a comprehensive system to measure whether we were winning the drug war. The system took into account drug price and availability in the United States, how difficult it was for drug smugglers to get their product into the country and the consequences of drug use on public health and crime. But Walters simply tossed out that system of evaluation -- as well as the unflattering facts it highlighted. "Had we kept it," Carnevale tells me, "we would see that the Bush administration has not made a positive impact on any of the measures."

Most unexpectedly of all, crime -- a problem that seemed to have been licked a decade ago -- is beginning to creep back up. In October 2006, the Police Executive Research Forum released a report declaring that violent crime in the country was "accelerating at an alarming pace." Murders were up twenty-seven percent in Boston over the previous year, sixty percent in San Antonio and more than 300 percent in Orlando. Even in the cloistered world of policing, complaints began to build about the numbers and about the cuts in federal funding. "The reality is a lot of police officers are politically conservative folks," says Ron Brooks, the president of the National Narcotics Officers' Association. "But there's been a lack of leadership in this administration on this issue."

10. The Return of Don Berna

While the drug czar was cracking down on medical marijuana, the Bush administration was also overseeing a dramatic escalation in its overseas front of the War on Drugs. From the start, the White House had trumpeted Plan Colombia as an essential weapon in its anti-drug arsenal, eliminating inconvenient rules that had gotten in the way of a full military commitment to the project. For "those in the drug business," Walters declared in January 2002, "now is the time to get out." But despite the billions the administration spent on the program, and the new impunity given to the Colombian military, nobody really knew whether it was working. In July 2006, Adam Isacson decided to see for himself.

Isacson, a scholar who runs the Colombia program at the Center for International Policy, flew down to the Andes to construct his own assessment of Plan Colombia. He decided to make two stops -- in Medellin, to determine how much the country's security situation had improved, and in Putumayo, to determine the success of the plan to eradicate the drug traffic. Regular assessments compiled by the White House drug office suggested that the crop-eradication program had reduced the acreage under coca cultivation in Colombia, but Isacson was skeptical: The price of cocaine on the American street had not risen, and separate estimates by the United Nations undercut the Bush administration's findings.

The modern Medellin he found looked more like Miami than a front in the drug war. The

government and its paramilitary allies had secured the city, and U.S. officials went out of their way to praise the cooperation they were getting from Colombian police and military units -- which had been cleansed, they said, of corruption. When Isacson pressed people about why the violence had decreased so dramatically, he was told repeatedly that "the paramilitaries won" -- that government-supported forces had simply driven off the left-wing guerrillas and ended civil war in the city.

The paradox for Americans was that paramilitary commanders, such as Don Berna, had also taken control of the cocaine trade and retained enough political clout, according to a study by a Colombian think tank, to alter the composition of the Colombian Senate. When Don Berna was arrested two years ago, the entire bus transportation system of Medellin shut down for a day. "The command came down from the prison phone," says Aldo Civico, a professor of international relations at Columbia University who has done extensive research on drug smugglers and the paramilitaries. Don Berna is now in a jail cell south of Medellin, from which he continues to control his trafficking organization. "It is a signal to everyone that Don Berna is the one who is in power in Medellin," Civico says.

In Putumayo, Isacson found tent cities buried in the thick jungle, migrants living underneath sheets of plastic. Though tens of millions of American dollars had been spent on trying to improve the local economy, the main road that farmers were supposed to use to ferry their legitimate products to market was still unpaved, and a factory American money had built in 2003 was already shut down. Putumayo had been the first target of Plan Colombia's spray-eradication efforts and the site of its initial success: Coca cultivation had been cut by ninety-three percent from 2000 to 2004. But the place Isacson saw only two years later was "depressed." With no real financial incentive to switch to legitimate crops, farmers in the region had once again begun planting coca: Cultivation doubled in 2005. "We didn't see anything to suggest the improvement was sustainable," Isacson tells me.

The problem was that coca had simply moved next door, to the rural province of Narino, along the country's Pacific Coast. Traffickers were planting strains of coca that could grow from seed to harvest in just six months. "The spray planes eradicated Putumayo," Isacson says, "and then all of a sudden coca cultivation starts in Narino, and you see the same pattern -- coca money means all these nightclubs and stores go up in these nothing towns, the police start reporting a sharp increase in murders, and eventually the provincial government is overwhelmed." The traffickers hopscotched across the country -- Putumayo to Narino, Narino to Antioquia -- always one step ahead of the drug agents and soldiers.

"As a drug-control policy," Isacson says, "it's hard to come to any conclusion other than that Plan Colombia has failed." In June of this year, the CIA released an assessment that confirmed Isacson's conclusion. Admitting that it had previously been undercounting the coca crop, the agency issued revised numbers showing that six years of Plan Colombia, at nearly \$1 billion a year, had not cut coca cultivation at all. The effort to stop cocaine at its source had not made a dent.

"We've been working in Colombia for thirty years, and we don't have a hell of a lot to show for it," says Myles Frechette, the American ambassador to Colombia during the Clinton administration. "This is like a cancer. Every year the lesion, if you took a snapshot, would be bigger."

11. The Water Balloon

At night, the population of el Paso, Texas, is 700,000, and that of Ciudad Juarez, just across the border, is 1.4 million. During the day, those numbers shift, as Mexicans stream across the cobblestone bridge over the Rio Grande for legal work in the United States. Every twelve hours, the two cities pass 100,000 people back and forth, squeezing them from end to end like the contents of a water balloon. "Among them," says Tony Payan, the political scientist at the University of Texas-El Paso and an expert in the dynamics of the local drug trade, "you see the spotters, the lingerers, mostly young men who are just standing there, watching out for when the coast is clear or when an American border agent who's been paid off by the cartel comes on duty. Then they tell the people that need to know, so they can make their drug runs across the border into Texas." With the failure of Plan Colombia, a handful of bridges along the Mexican border have become the main front in the War on Drugs.

Cocaine trafficking in Mexico has its own prehistory. For generations, family networks of smugglers had moved marijuana and cheap, black-tar heroin across the border veteran DEA agents were accustomed to arresting the grandsons of men they had arrested years earlier -- and the whole drug traffic in Mexico was small enough, by the mid-1980s, that it was effectively controlled by one man, Miguel Angel Felix Gallardo, who ran a violent trafficking organization out of Tijuana. As Colombian groups, chased from the Caribbean by American interdiction efforts, began to look to the southwest border in the early 1990s, Felix Gallardo discovered he could no longer control the traffic himself from prison. "He had a meeting with his lieutenants and divided the Mexican border crossings up among them, creating the modern cartels," Payan says. "His nephews kept Tijuana, and one group got the Sinaloa-Arizona crossing, another got Laredo-Nuevo Laredo, and Amado Carrillo Fuentes got El Paso-Juarez."

Mexican officials along the border, whose PRI party had kept a lock on national power for seventy years, allowed traffickers to move their product in exchange for reduced violence. "In order to coexist, the government looked the other way as long as the cartels didn't wreak havoc in the country," says Armand Peschard-Sverdrup, director of the Mexico Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "It became somewhat of a safety valve in terms of dealing with organized crime, as a way of mitigating the political instability." Though the U.S. government pushed Mexican officials to crack down on corruption, its pleas and threats went largely unheeded. By 1997, Carrillo Fuentes -- the Lord of the Skies -- was moving tons of cocaine across the border every year and had amassed a fortune worth \$25 billion. But that same year, Carrillo Fuentes died on an operating table in Mexico City, where he had been undergoing plastic surgery to change his appearance and avoid detection: In the ghoul-ish post-mortem photographs, his face is speckled like a snake's skin, two shades of brown and one of pink. Juarez fell into a testy, three-way competition for control of the drug trade, and the murders took on a symbolic vocabulary of their own: Tortured victims piled in oil barrels filled with concrete and buried alive, members of opposing cartels murdered and left to rot in car trunks in their own neighborhoods, snitches killed and left on the side of the road. The violence between cartels is so pervasive, Payan says, "if you move into a home in Juarez, you will never know whether there's a body underneath the floor in your dining room."

At the beginning of the Bush administration, it looked like Mexico might actually begin to bust corrupt cops who did business with drug smugglers. In 2000, when Vicente Fox, the reforming, conservative rancher and friend of George W. Bush, took power, he began prosecuting dirty police officers, throwing tens of thousands of them off the force. "There were unintended consequences," says Peter Andreas, a Brown University professor who has studied drug trafficking along the border. "Many of the corrupt cops went to work in the drug trade"

-- a shift in power that had the effect of professionalizing the violence. In addition, an estimated 90,000 Mexican soldiers deserted during the Fox administration, many of them signing up with the cartels.

In Juarez, the effect was devastating. Free to operate as they pleased, the cartels began to split, with capos challenging one another openly for control of the drug corridors. Local and state police killed each other over the right to protect the traffic. A new gang called the Zetas, made up of Mexican soldiers who had quit their day jobs to take over the drug trade, waged war in Juarez and killed 100 people in the corridor around Nuevo Laredo in the summer of 2005. The gaudy theatrics of the murders have only intensified as drug gangs seek to guarantee that their killings send a message by getting media attention: Last year, gunslingers wearing military uniforms walked into a popular nightclub in Uruapan and dumped the severed heads of five rivals on the dance floor, like soccer balls. Over the past year, drug-related murders in Mexico's border states have doubled, driven primarily by the booming trade. "What we're seeing is the Colombianization of Mexico," says Andreas.

For those who have studied American drug policy, the catastrophe along the border looks like a final reckoning for overseas interdiction. "It's like a balloon effect -- we've never succeeded in cutting off the traffic, we've just pushed it around," says Payan. "We cut off supply in the Caribbean, and it came here. We cracked down on the Colombian traffickers, and it just meant the Mexicans traffickers got wealthier, and the violence came here." Like many DEA agents and border experts, Payan was consumed last summer by the story of Zhenli Ye Gon, a Chinese pharmaceutical executive whose house Mexican police raided, suspecting him of diverting meth components from China for illegal use. Inside they found \$206 million in cash final evidence of just how far the meth epidemic has spiraled out of control since pharmaceutical lobbyists prevented Gene Haislip from forestalling it with a simple federal regulation. Payan believes, as do many in the DEA, that Ye Gon is a harbinger of the next frontier in the War on Drugs.

"Even if somehow we could manage to get the drug trade away from the Mexican border, it will come through Asia next," he says. "Instead of fighting a border war, we'll be fighting it in containers. But unless we can reduce demand, it's a zero-sum game."

12. The Privateers

Even by conservative estimates, the War on Drugs now costs the United States \$50 billion each year and has overcrowded prisons to the breaking point -- all with little discernible impact on the drug trade. A report by the Government Accountability Office released at the end of September estimated that ninety percent of the cocaine moving into the United States now arrives through Mexico, up from sixty-six percent in 2000. Even Walters acknowledges that for all of the efforts the Bush administration has devoted to overseas drug enforcement, the price of cocaine has dropped while its purity has risen. More than forty percent of Americans support legalizing marijuana, yet the government continues to target pot smokers. In October, the administration announced it was planning a new military offensive, dubbed Plan Mexico, with a price tag of \$1.4 billion. Things look so bleak that Walters was recently moved to describe a momentary upward blip in drug prices as "historic progress."

There are a handful of battles in the War on Drugs that have actually been won, times when fresh thinking prevailed over politics -- but they are not the kind of victories that the Bush administration is eager to trumpet. In the summer of 2003, the police department in High

Point, North Carolina, held its annual command-staff retreat in a small conference center themed to look like the log cabins of the pioneers who settled the region. One topic dominated the conversation: an increase in violent crime that was concentrated in three drug-dealing neighborhoods in the city. "The place we were at was that all the traditional enforcement was making no difference," says the department's deputy chief, Marty Sumner. "We agreed we weren't going to be able to eliminate drug use. We weren't even going to try to go after drug use. We wanted to change the marketing of the drug."

Sumner's department called in the Harvard criminologist David Kennedy. The High Point police had worked with Kennedy before, adopting the Boston Gun Project's policy of trying to break the link between drugs and crime. Now the criminologist told them that he had a new kind of project to propose, one that went beyond the Boston experiment. Kennedy's pitch was simple: The trick, he said, wasn't to focus on eliminating drugs but rather to shut down the most "overt" drug markets, the ones operating so openly that they attracted prostitution and violent crime. "Instead of looking at it as a drug problem, we decided to think of it as a drug-market problem," Sumner says. "What the public really couldn't stand was the violence associated with public drug markets." Dealers operating in the open are targets for stickup men and other would-be robbers, and the public swagger and turf consciousness of street slingers can cradle violent, simmering beefs.

High Point police began in the West End neighborhood, one of the city's three overt drug markets. A team of officers staked out the site, videotaping hundreds of hand-to-hand sales and mapping out a complete anthropology of the West End drug market. They found it was strikingly small: Sumner had expected as many as fifty dealers working there, but it turned out there were only sixteen. Before long, the officers had enough evidence to put away each of the sixteen dealers for good. But they didn't. Instead, Sumner and Kennedy called them in for a meeting. They showed each of them the portfolio of evidence against them and said that unless they stopped dealing drugs, the whole file would be handed over to the prosecutors and they'd be in jail for years. Family members were brought in to urge the dealers to stop, and social-service providers pledged assistance with food, housing and job training.

"We didn't think it would work," Sumner tells me, "but the drug markets have disappeared."

For five years before the program went into effect, the number of drug-related murders in High Point had stayed steady, around fifteen a year. In 2007, in the program's fourth year, it has plummeted to two. Violent crime in the West End has declined by thirty-five percent. "The use of drugs isn't something we could affect," says Kennedy. "But the violence was." His logic has an appealing clarity for overworked police departments: There are now more than sixty cities in the United States that use some version of Kennedy's program, edging away from thirty-five years of punitive measures that have turned the United States into the world's leading jailer to a social-work model that encourages communities and cops to engage the problem on a more human level. The real radicals of the War on Drugs are not the legalization advocates, earnestly preaching from the fringes, but the bureaucrats the cops and judges and federal agents who are forced into a growing acceptance that rendering a popular commodity illegal, and punishing those who sell it and use it, has simply overwhelmed the capacity of government.

In 2000, voters in California, whose prisons now hold nearly twice as many inmates as they were designed to incarcerate, passed a referendum called Proposition 36, which has since sent more than 150,000 nonviolent drug offenders to treatment instead of prison. The program is not perfect: Though the outcomes for those who make it through treatment are surprisingly strong, many convicts simply skip the sessions, and there are few enforcement mechanisms to

compel them to attend. But the program, according to a study conducted by researchers at UCLA, still saves tax-payers \$2.50 for every dollar put in. And a pilot program in Honolulu which requires near-constant drug tests of those on probation and provides incremental punishments for each extra failed test -- suggests an effective model for treating hardcore addicts, says Angela Hawken of UCLA and Pepperdine University. "It offers the promise that we might really be able to solve this problem."

In recent years, there have been flickers of political progress that suggest America's drug policy is ready for a historic shift. Democrats in both the House and Senate have voted to cut proposed funding for Plan Colombia and have pushed for hearings on sentencing reform. As the politics of crime and drugs have lost their power to move votes, some conservatives, including Republican senators Jeff Sessions and Sam Brownback, have begun to question the logic of mandatory-minimum sentences. "There is a more promising environment for drug-policy reform than at any time since the Carter administration," says Ethan Nadelmann, executive director of the Drug Policy Alliance and one of the country's foremost critics of the drug war.

But despite their evident success, the most forward-looking programs remain buried at the fringes of drug policy, featured not in the president's budgets but in academic journals and water-cooler talk in cities like High Point. Experimentation at the community level is more imaginative than programs that are federally sanctioned. "We haven't had the kind of national leadership that blesses this and encourages it," says Caulkins, the RAND researcher from Carnegie-Mellon. "So this kind of innovation stays below the radar." Thirty-five years after Richard Nixon launched the War on Drugs, the most promising programs continue to be shunted aside by Washington's unswerving emphasis on law and order.

The drug war, in the end, has been undone in no small part by the sweeping and inflexible nature of its own metaphor. At the beginning, in the days of Escobar, the campaign was a war as seen from the situation room, a complicated assault that spanned multiple fronts, but one which had identifiable enemies and a goal. Today, the government's anti-drug effort resembles a war as seen from the trenches, an eternal slog, where victory seems not only unattainable but somehow beside the point. For the drug agents and veterans who busted Escobar, the last decade and a half have been a slow, agonizing history of defeat after defeat, the enemy shifting but never retreating. "You get frustrated," Joe Toft, a former DEA country attaché in Colombia, tells me. "We've never had a true effort where the U.S. as a whole says, 'We're never going to crack this problem without a real demand-reduction program.' That's something that's just never happened."

Toft, now a private security consultant, thinks back to the heady days after the fall of Escobar, the days when winning the War on Drugs seemed only a matter of dispatching more American helicopters to the Andes. "The first couple years, I had this very naive idea that I was really going to make a huge impact," he says. "But after a while, you start realizing that without a concerted effort to reduce demand, it's not going to happen. Over the years, I came to see my job as basically keeping the lid on the garbage can trying to sit on that lid and prevent that garbage can from overflowing. If you talk to a hundred agents, that's what almost all of them would say. We're just being realistic."

The Truce On Drugs

Ben Wallace-Wells
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Cannabis is a highly persuadable plant. It thrives in Afghanistan; it grows beautifully in Mexico. It can prosper indoors or outdoors, in contained environments or expansive ones. Even on the essentials, like soil, light, and water, accommodations can be made. Cannabis in the wild will flower only once a year, early in the fall, but it can be tricked. Indoors, artificial light can be timed to mimic the patterns of the early sunsets of autumn, seducing the plant to bud; outside, the same effect is achieved by laying parabolic tarps, each shaped like the St. Louis arch, over the crop to obscure the sun. Nor does cannabis require expert botanists. There is a pattern that has been showing up in the criminal courts of Northern California in which a day laborer, often an illegal immigrant, is picked up for work, driven to tend a marijuana garden growing deep in Mendocino National Forest, and told that he is now in the employ of the Mexican Mafia. The guess, locally, is that the Mexican Mafia is not really involved, that this is just a ghost story to make sure the laborers stay put. But still, an untrained day laborer hired at Home Depot is all you need to manage a large crop. He'll do fine.

Marijuana has remained mostly illegal, even as many Americans have come to consider it harmless and normal, and so it now occupies a uniquely ambiguous place in American law and life. There are a few places in the United States that have been known for decades for marijuana—far-northern California, Kentucky—where people are comfortable with sedition, and willing to live outside of the law. But during the last decade, as growing and selling marijuana began to edge out of the shadows, these places have become the sites of this country's first experiments with tacit decriminalization. And so the business has shifted, too. "We have to face facts," says a veteran California grower named Anna Hamilton. "We are in a commodity business."

The full implications of this first became clear to Kristin Nevedal one day a few years ago, when some neighbors of hers in southern Humboldt County, four hours north of San Francisco, noticed a rainbow, discolored and distended, rising over their yard. This part of California is gorgeous, and hallucinatory, but even here a weird rainbow is an unusual sight, and so they investigated. Next door was a large indoor growing operation, and when they walked over, they saw an abandoned generator leaking fuel into Hacker Creek. Soon there were diesel rainbows up and down the stream. "The gentleman who owned the property was in Thailand," Nevedal says. Nevedal helped found the association of cannabis growers in Humboldt, and she is a bit of an idealist about pot. Everything about the episode—the use of diesel, the indoor growing, the recklessness, but mostly the absenteeism—seemed an affront. She says "Thailand" the way a Sufi mystic might say "Dubai."

That Humboldt County has remained so much a culture apart has something to do with the origami folds of its canyons and hills, which permit a certain isolation, but something more to do with pot. Driving through Myers Flat once, I saw a dreadlocked blonde girl, obese and braless, filling a van with male hitchhikers, like a cross between a community bus and a gen-

der-reversal Manson Family. Most other back-to-the-land communes of the seventies eventually packed up and retreated, their members quietly reabsorbed into the suburban belt. The hippies in Humboldt had cannabis, which meant that though they were in many ways beyond the reach of government, they could pay for their own schools, for fire departments and private roads. They could see a future, and so they stayed.

Still, reminders of their alienation were everywhere. By the early eighties, the California law-enforcement agencies were conducting annual raids (called by their acronym, CAMP). You would walk onto your deck, on a sunny south slope, and suddenly a helicopter would be hovering there, cops with rifles scanning the valley below. Camouflaged SWAT teams jumped out of forest groves pointing guns. “People here can be a little paranoid anyway—there were an awful lot of Vietnam vets here early on,” one longtime grower says, and the raids made paranoia seem reasonable. But there were side benefits to this armed form of prohibition. One joke here is that the Campaign Against Marijuana Planting was actually the Campaign to Appreciate Marijuana Prices. If you were savvy enough to dodge through the forest with helicopters overhead, carrying plants on a canvas stretcher, if you knew how to trim a tall tanoak in the forest so that its topmost branches protected the crop from view while still letting in just enough sunlight, then you could really make it. By 1996, marijuana here was going for \$4,000 a pound.

That was the year California legalized medical marijuana. At first, nothing much changed in Humboldt. “Initially, the cops were cracking down,” remembers one local, Mikal Jakubal. “They would come in and say, ‘You’ve got twenty plants, I think you only need two or three of these. Cut ‘em down.’” California hadn’t done much to regulate the market or to delineate how much one could grow, and amid a confounding patchwork of local ordinances a quiet accord developed between growers and town cops: Only if you grew much more than their neighbors were you likely to be troubled by police.

Part of the price of building a utopia in America is that eventually you must make some reckoning with capitalism. Soon, each neighbor seemed to be pushing beyond the standard by 5 percent, maybe 10. People noticed what was happening, and the hippies had long, dreamy-angsty conversations about whether this was all too corporate, too big (“‘Too big’ is always one more plant than you’re growing,” says one longtime grower), but it wasn’t really a hippie game anymore. Now there were out-of-state license plates and landholders who bulldozed their property, crammed it full of cannabis plants, slept in a trailer all summer, and then left after the harvest. (Humboldt’s marijuana economy generates more than \$400 million each year.) Dealers from the East were coming through, mumbling to people at local grocery stores that they wanted a connection. A kind of crass instinct had infiltrated the dispensaries, too. “Gamblers, pornographers, illegal-drug dealers,” says Steve DeAngelo, the founder of the Oakland dispensary Harborside Health Center, remembering his rivals. “One guy had \$600,000 in the back of his car. Another guy, in his basement there was a gold throne.”

Medicinal marijuana was also altering the basic chemistry of the drug. When pot was illegal, many growers worked to cultivate the drug’s basic intoxicant, THC, to produce a more potent high. But many new, medicinal customers wanted a softer sensation or a guard against panic attacks. So the growers reengineered the plant to cushion the drug’s effects. (DeAngelo’s dispensary offers some 250 strains, one of which was developed to help mitigate the symptoms of epilepsy.) An artisanal middle road seemed to open between working with drug dealers and enduring the ugliness of pot’s industrialization. There were meetings held with representatives from the county government to try to figure out how to brand Humboldt as cannabis country. These have now slowed down, because a group of federal prosecutors have targeted the dis-

pensaries vigorously, but still there is bold talk everywhere about becoming what Napa Valley is to wine.

All of which has made Humboldt County something close to the opposite of what its post-sixties settlers imagined it might be: a model for how drug prohibition in America might evolve in the 21st century. Throughout the country, the once-clear lines of drug law have been steadily blurring into a messy crosshatch of locale and jurisdiction. Slowly, coaxed along on one side by the libertarian streak in the electorate and on the other by the disinterest of cops, we have begun to create many more places that look something like Humboldt County—a bustling economy where many people are growing more than their town allows, everyone is growing more than the Feds allow, and the industry is operating not on the familiar outlaw territory but within a new system whose contours they do not know and can't define. This year's harvest happened about six weeks ago, and Jakubal told me about what he called the "rip-off moon," the full moon in September so bright that cannabis plots are vulnerable to thieves and poachers. Large growers have little recourse to the police. Instead, cameras and guards abound; one of Jakubal's neighbors keeps a machete. And so: this bizarre lagoon. You go to branding meetings with county representatives. You speculate about whether legalization elsewhere will drive the prices down or create new customers. Your friends are arrested for driving the crop to market. At home, you keep a machete.

Three weeks ago, voters in Colorado and Washington chose to legalize marijuana for recreational use in both states—to make the drug legal to sell, legal to smoke, and legal to carry, so long as you are over 21 and you don't drive while high. No doctor's note is necessary. Marijuana will no longer be mostly regulated by the police, as if it were cocaine, but instead by the state liquor board (in Washington) and the Department of Revenue (in Colorado), as if it were whiskey. Colorado's law has an extra provision that permits anyone to grow up to six marijuana plants at home and give away an ounce to friends.

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Anatomy of a Heroin Ring

Mick Dumke
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At first it seemed like just another senseless shooting in an already violent summer. A little after 4 AM on Monday, August 18, 2008, two men were fired on as they sat in a Mercedes outside the Rock 'n' Roll McDonald's. By the time police arrived four minutes later, the Mercedes was on its way to Stroger Hospital. The 29-year-old driver had been shot five times; the passenger, his younger brother, was declared dead on arrival at Stroger. From the little information police were able to piece together at the time, the slaying seemed to have stemmed from an altercation at Excalibur, the popular nightclub a couple blocks away.

Area residents and bar patrons expressed alarm, noting that shootings don't usually happen in low-crime River North, and certainly not at heavily trafficked tourist stops like the landmark McDonald's. To some, it was the latest sign that bloodshed seemed to be spreading everywhere that summer—even the Taste of Chicago had been marred by a deadly shooting as thousands of people left the fireworks show on the Fourth of July. The city was well on its way to more than 500 murders for the year, the highest total since 2003. Even more troubling, police were able to identify suspects in only about a third of them.

The slaying outside the McDonald's would remain one of the open cases. What led to the gunfire—and how it was connected to a string of other violent acts around the city—wouldn't become evident for another two years, after an investigation led deep into a highly profitable heroin ring on the west side that employed dozens of residents, served thousands of customers from around the midwest, and had ties to Mexican drug cartels.

What turned out to be most notable about the operation, though, was how typical it was. The DEA estimates that 80 percent of the heroin and cocaine sold in Chicago originates with the Sinaloa cartel in Mexico. Distributors here extend the cartel's reach by connecting with street gangs. The gangs, in turn, hasten the decline of distressed communities into open-air drug markets through their skillful use of product promotion, their ability to offer job opportunities where there are few, and their willingness, when necessary, to use violence to stay in business.

The survivor of the River North shooting had the attention of authorities even before he left the hospital. His name was Dana Bostic, and he was the older brother of Curtis Ellis, who'd been fatally shot in the seat next to him. Not long after Bostic was hospitalized, Mahogany Barbee, his longtime girlfriend, rushed in to see him. The couple lived together with their children in suburban Aurora, not far from where she worked as a nurse's assistant. To her and the couple's friends and family, Bostic was loyal and generous, known for lending money when anyone was short and organizing block parties or boat outings for special occasions.

Police, though, knew him as "Bird," a big guy—6'2" and heavysset, with a large round face and a scar on his forehead—who was a longtime member of the New Breeds street gang based on Chicago's west side.

Investigators learned that earlier that night Bostic and his brother had been at Excalibur, where they'd scuffled with a group that included NBA player Tony Allen, a native west-sider who had just signed a new two-year, \$5 million contract with the Boston Celtics.

It wasn't the first time Allen had been in a fight with members of the New Breeds. In 2005, he and several friends from the old neighborhood got into a confrontation at the White Palace Grill in the South Loop that ended with one man shot and another suffering a fractured eye socket. Allen was eventually acquitted of aggravated battery.

Bostic and his brother weren't involved in the 2005 fight, but friends of theirs were, including two men who sued Allen for damages in civil court. "There was some notoriety amongst his crew," Commander Joe Gorman, the former head of the Chicago Police Department's gang investigations section, recalled of Bostic. "Him and Tony Allen, there were some confrontations amongst those groups."

As police tried to find out more about the Rock 'n' Roll McDonald's shooting, Bostic received another visitor in the hospital: Maurice Davis, a fellow member of the New Breeds who'd grown up with Bostic and his brother. Davis was a tough character. Nicknamed Capone, he was 6'4" and weighed 235 pounds. He was 22 at the time and had been selling drugs since he was 14, typically while high, since he smoked marijuana and used ecstasy every day. He'd been incarcerated for heroin possession and domestic battery, and had a girlfriend who was just 16. He was also a loyal soldier who was known to carry a gun.

Davis had hurried to the hospital as soon as he learned of Ellis's death. As he later recalled, Bostic didn't mince words about what had happened to his brother: "He just said Curt got shot in the head." And according to Davis, Bostic was just as direct about whom he considered responsible: the Takers, or Undertaker Vice Lords, whom the New Breeds had been at odds with for years. Bostic and Davis believed some of them were friends with Tony Allen and had played a role in the shooting in 2005 in addition to the one earlier that morning.

Bostic left the hospital a few hours after being admitted. That evening, according to Davis, he held a meeting in an apartment he rented for friends at 4019 W. Van Buren, a two-story brick building painted green with neat white trim, in a part of West Garfield Park known as K-Town because the north-south street names all start with K. Bostic later denied being part of any of the gang's violent activity, but Davis's account of what happened at the meeting couldn't be more different. Davis said he and most of the other top members of their clique were present as Bostic issued unequivocal orders. "Bird said it was a green light on everybody," Davis recalled. "It's time to go to war . . . [on] whoever had something to do with Curt getting killed."

Everyone there knew that Bostic didn't tolerate dissent, according to Davis and others—stories had circulated for years about his willingness to hurt members of his own organization who stepped out of line.

He told the group that anyone who didn't want to be part of it needed to "get the fuck home," Davis recounted. Nobody did.

The New Breeds had been at the center of conflicts over shifting gang alliances and drug territory for years. The gang was formed in the 1980s when members of the Black Gangsters broke away from their leadership. But the splinter group soon became the more prominent, and within a decade the New Breeds swallowed up the BGs.

By the 1990s the New Breeds were notorious for their use of violence to protect heroin and

crack territory, especially in vicious conflicts on the west side with factions of the Vice Lords. In 1996, 102 people were murdered in the 11th police district, which includes the neighborhoods of West Humboldt Park and East and West Garfield Park; that figure accounted for more than one of every eight murder victims in the entire city. Even when the west-side homicide count began to drop in subsequent years, the drug markets remained in place. Police made thousands of arrests annually for the possession or delivery of crack and heroin, and federal authorities announced crackdowns on west-side drug operations run by the New Breeds every year from 2004 to 2007. Yet dealers continued to openly hawk their wares in communities crippled by poverty and disinvestment.

Bostic grew up in the middle of the west side's toxic drug landscape. He was three when his father was sent to prison. His mother's next long-term boyfriend—Curt Ellis's father—was bludgeoned to death. Bostic's mother sank into a heroin addiction and, by most accounts, frequently left her children to fend for themselves. When Bostic was eight, state child welfare workers gave his grandmother custody of the kids, but she was overwhelmed by the 12 people crammed into her one-bedroom apartment. She died within the year. Bostic later said he could recall "regularly eating half a loaf of bread per day and nothing else."

Bostic sought refuge the first place he could find it—on the street, where neighborhood drug dealers served as mentors and caregivers, buying him pizza and teaching him how to earn his own spending money. He started selling marijuana at 12. A year later, he took an entry-level job in the heroin trade, making about \$8 an hour to alert street dealers when police were in the area.

At age 14, Bostic was placed in a group home, where he said supervision was lax. He stopped going to school and, when he wasn't being held in a juvenile detention facility for carrying a gun and stealing a car, he moved up the hierarchy of the drug trade. At best, he was able to read at a grade school level.

In 2000, Bostic, then 20, was arrested near the corner of Pulaski and Gladys after police said they saw him selling a small baggie of crack. Bostic contested the charge, saying he was simply hanging out with a lifelong friend named Eleazar Alves. A county judge found Bostic guilty, but let him off with a year of probation.

It wasn't Bostic's first run-in with police—he'd previously been arrested for gambling, disorderly conduct, and unlawful use of a weapon. What was significant this time, though, was his mention of Alves. Known on the street as Boodro or Dro, Alves controlled drug sales in the blocks around Van Buren and Pulaski, authorities and other dealers said. Bostic had become one of his top deputies, they alleged, with a reputation for securing territory through violence and intimidation.

Bostic has always denied the allegations—including in 2002, when he was charged with homicide for the slaying of a member of the rival Undertakers. The murder was one of 648 in Chicago that year, including 70 in the 11th District alone. The story is hard to piece together because of the lack of cooperation and shifting accounts of witnesses. It's a roadblock investigators encounter regularly, and the major reason so few murder cases are solved.

What's clear is that around 9 PM on May 19, 2002, a New Breed was shot in the leg in a vacant lot near Gladys and Pulaski. Later that night, a rival Undertaker was shot and killed about a mile away, on Kilpatrick. Bostic claimed he had an alibi that night: he was with one of his neighbors the whole time. But she told police Bostic didn't come to her house until well after the Kilpatrick shooting. When police asked her to give a written statement, however, she

changed her story and then declined to cooperate further.

A couple weeks later, a man who survived the Kilpatrick shooting told police the perpetrator was a guy everyone knew as "Bird" and identified Bostic in a photograph. The witness said he didn't share the information sooner because "he was afraid that 'Bird' or his gang would kill him," according to the police report.

The witness later recanted during the trial. Still, a Cook County judge found Bostic guilty of first-degree murder—but not for long. Bostic's attorney filed a motion asking the judge to reconsider in light of the shifting witness accounts, and the conviction was reversed.

The acquittal only enhanced Bostic's intimidating street reputation, according to authorities. And by that time, Bostic had a lot at stake that depended on it.

A year before the Undertaker slaying, Bostic's younger brother, Ellis, began recruiting Davis and other old friends to help run a drug operation headed by Boodro, Bostic's boss and mentor, at Van Buren and Pulaski.

They started working for the operation the way Bostic had been indoctrinated years earlier: keeping an eye out for cops. As they demonstrated their reliability, they were promoted to street sellers.

But within a year, Boodro was shot and killed at a block party. Friends and police say everyone understood that Bostic was taking over his drug operation.

Bostic quickly established his leadership style—and he didn't tolerate sloppy mistakes. Davis's cousin Ladonta Gill found that out the hard way. Gill was like the other members of the organization—he'd grown up in the neighborhood under the roughest of conditions. His father was out of the picture. Gill's mother sold heroin and left his sister to care for him, except that his sister was a heroin addict who often disappeared, leaving him to spend the night by himself in the back of a truck. His grandmother was incarcerated for killing his aunt. Gill hung out on the streets with Ellis and the other guys in the gang, who called him Bam. He started selling heroin when he was 16.

None of that inspired mercy when Gill reported being robbed of \$400 in heroin proceeds that he owed the boss. "Bostic didn't believe me," Gill said. As punishment, Bostic broke Gill's hand with a baseball bat.

But Bostic also had a softer side. In 2001 he started dating Barbee, then 23, a fellow westsider and a nurse's assistant who worked in the suburbs. Barbee had also grown up amid drugs, gangs, and violence—she recalled seeing several people killed near her home, and if she and family members wanted to go to the store, they frequently had to use the back door and alley to avoid fighting or gunfire on the street. Two of her brothers had sold drugs and become leaders of the Unknown Vice Lords, but she had moved to the south side to get away from the life.

Barbee later said that Bostic initially told her he lived in Minnesota and was just back in town visiting. But as they spent more time together she realized that he was a drug dealer. "I noticed that Bird had money," she said, though "Bird hasn't had a job in the time I have known him."

Still, the couple moved in together, first in Berwyn and then in nicer homes ever farther from their old neighborhood—in Cicero, Woodridge, and finally Aurora. In December 2003, they

had a baby girl. Barbee said she avoided talking to Bostic about his work, since it only led to fights, though she agreed to rent cars for him, and to register his Mercedes in her name.

And she recalled that after Bostic and his brother were shot at the McDonald's in 2008, a number of Bird's friends showed up at their home with guns. "They were standing outside the house to make sure nothing else happened," she said.

After Ellis was killed, police heard murmurs that Bostic was planning retaliation.

"His half brother was 25," says Gorman, then the police department's top gang investigator. "We had information that he was going to kill 25 rivals for the killing of his half brother."

But Bostic himself stayed away from the violence, allegedly instructing his underlings to get ready for war. And they did.

"I got me a gun," Davis later explained. He said several were stored in the gang's apartment at 4019 W. Van Buren. He then went and found one of the organization's street dealers—Cornelius Thomas, nicknamed Bunny—who was also an expert at stealing cars. Bunny knew the drill—he got the call every time his supervisors were preparing to do a drive-by shooting. Davis, Bunny, and several others drove around in Davis's blue Stratus looking for something suitably nondescript.

But along the way they got word that several Undertakers had been seen outside a store on Madison and Kostner. They sped over, and within minutes two of the men jumped out of the Stratus and began firing.

No one was killed, and Davis and the others fled as police arrived.

But that wasn't the case three nights later, on August 21, 2008. That night, Davis got behind the wheel of his Stratus. He said Gill—the fellow New Breed whose hand Bostic had broken years earlier—was in the passenger seat, and other New Breeds trailed them in a stolen Impala. Gill, however, denied being there.

Davis said they cruised the west side looking for Undertakers, until finally they passed a guy they knew as D-Low—Davon Taylor, 27, the cousin of one of the guys who'd been in the fight at Excalibur. A woman was in the car with Taylor.

Davis did a U-turn and pulled up alongside Taylor at a light so he and his friends could make sure it was the right guy. Then they followed him to a gas station at Chicago and Laramie. When Taylor stepped out to fill up, Davis said he pulled up alongside him and instructed Gill to be careful not to hurt the woman. "I told him, 'Go on ahead,'" Davis said, but "'don't shoot the bitch.'"

A security camera captured footage of what happened next: a man in a white T-shirt casually stepped out of the Stratus, got a good look at Taylor, and then shot him once in the back and once in the head.

"He got back in the car, and we left," Davis said. He was careful not to speed or otherwise attract notice.

With his brother gone, Bostic promoted his brother-in-law Lee Floyd to serve as his second-in-command, according to friends and investigators. Bostic's lifelong friend Charles Cowart—whom everyone called Maniac—also took on more responsibility in making sure street dealers had enough product to sell. It's common for the leaders of drug organizations, from street

gangs to cartels, to surround themselves with top aides who are family members or lifelong friends—people they can trust because of their blood ties and shared financial stake in the business.

It's also common for the chain of command to be broken by eruptions of violence.

On the evening of June 22, 2009—Father's Day—Bostic held what had become an annual barbecue in honor of his predecessor and friend Boodro. Dozens were gathered on a lot behind Melody school, at Congress and Keeler, when a couple young women came by and informed Bostic's crew that a friend was out of prison and ready to take over area drug sales.

Bostic told them to go away, but Cowart—Maniac—wasn't as levelheaded. Punches were thrown, friends of the girls showed up as reinforcements, and a full fight broke out. When someone started shooting, a little after midnight, Cowart shot back—but instead of hitting his enemies, he shot Floyd. Police reported that Floyd was dropped off at Stroger Hospital by a group of males who then fled. He died early the next morning.

Cowart was arrested four days later and charged with first-degree murder and being an armed habitual criminal.

Bostic was running out of trusted deputies. This time, rather than promote from within, he looked outside the organization for help—to Brandon Richards, a childhood friend of Bostic's slain brother.

According to numerous accounts, Richards was different from Bostic and many of the others in the organization. Like them, he'd grown up without a father amid the neighborhood drug markets. But he'd finished high school, moved out of the city to suburban Bellwood, taken a straight job as a restaurant cook, and stayed involved in his young daughter's life. Ellis had urged Richards to stick with "honest work." Everybody called him Smooth.

But Bostic had always been like a big brother to Richards. When Bostic got in touch and said there was no one else he could trust, Richards agreed to help.

By June 2009, antigang and antiviolence units of the police department were ready to zoom in on Bostic's organization. That month, police sat down for a chat with a high-ranking member of the operation who was incarcerated. In later court documents, he was referred to as "Confidential Informant 1."

The informant laid out the structure of the organization for the police. No one had formal titles, he said, but the hierarchy, production process, and compensation system were well established.

Several times a week, he would join Bostic and sometimes Richards in driving a rental car to buy 100 or 200 grams of heroin from a supplier. Then they'd take the haul to an apartment and prepare it to be sold: they'd mix it with over-the-counter pharmaceuticals like Dormin and other antihistamines to increase its bulk (and decrease its purity); wrap one-tenth-gram portions in tinfoil; and place the packets into small plastic baggies, often blue or pink to distinguish their product from competitors'. The baggies were bundled with plastic strips in groups of 14 known as packs or "jabs."

The informant said he would then get in touch with another member of the organization, whose job was to pick up the packaged heroin and connect with other street managers, known as runners. The runners would distribute jabs to street dealers. Each baggie sold for

\$10. The dealers were responsible for turning \$120 over to the runners for each pack, meaning they could keep two baggies or \$20 for themselves every time they sold a dozen. The runners kept another \$20 and turned \$100 over to Richards.

"CI-1 said that most members of the New Breeds' clique have their own customer base," authorities later reported, "but all of the members of the clique go through CI-1 and Bostic to purchase heroin."

He said their home base was the apartment on Van Buren. On average days, the operation brought in \$4,000 to \$6,000; on good days, such as the first of the month, they could haul in \$10,000, the informant said. In other words, they were selling between 400 and a thousand dime bags of heroin a day, much of it to buyers who appeared to be from the suburbs or out of state.

The informant added that the organization also had its own wholesale customers who often bought larger portions of heroin.

The police understood they were looking at a highly profitable street business with a clear management structure. Bostic "ruled by violence and people weren't going to question his authority," says Commander Gorman. "It got to the point where he didn't have to be out there on the street. He lived out in the suburbs, but he was in charge."

They also realized that the operation had ties to a significant source of heroin. That's when they asked for assistance from the feds. "Joe Gorman sees the volume of dope coming in and out, and he recognizes that this is more than a street-level organization," says Jack Riley, the special agent in charge of the Chicago division of the Drug Enforcement Agency. "He sees the violence and the history of the guys. And when we see there's a Mexican connection, we say, 'Let's go.'"

Since Bostic was the center of the investigation, they called it "Operation Bird Cage."

Just after 6 AM on October 24, 2009, a potential drug customer called a cell phone number used to make heroin buys from Bostic's crew. The buyer asked for \$100 worth and the person on the other end agreed to meet in the parking lot of a grocery store at Pulaski and Congress. The customer said he'd be driving a green Dodge. When he pulled into the lot less than half an hour later, a man dressed in black approached him and cautiously handed him a dozen pink baggies. The man said his name was Mike—which wasn't his real name, as most dealers used street nicknames or aliases to conceal their real identities—and gave the buyer a new phone number to call anytime he needed something. He also asked for feedback on the quality of the product. "Call me and tell me what you think of it," Mike said. "Everybody's been telling me it's good."

"Mike" didn't realize that he'd just sold to an undercover cop.

Once the police had confirmed that the substance in the baggie was heroin, they wanted to know who "Mike" really was. They found their opportunity a couple hours later, when they saw him driving a van with temporary plates and pulled him over. After he presented a license showing his name was Cornelius Thomas, they let him go.

Thomas, otherwise known as Bunny, wasn't always fooled. In November, he noticed an undercover officer in a car near the site of an arranged deal. Instead of making the sale, he kept on walking and got on the phone to warn his coworkers.

Yet as careful as Bostic and his crew were, they were sloppy at other points, even as the investigation slowly moved closer to the top.

In late November 2009, Bostic was pulled over and arrested on drunk driving and heroin charges. For the next couple weeks, he spoke openly over the jail phone with Richards, his top deputy, even though it's well known that authorities regularly monitor calls in and out of correctional facilities.

Bostic grew upset as Richards informed him that he'd also been pulled over by police, that the organization's heroin supplies were dwindling, and that receipts had come up short. But what really touched a nerve was when Richards told him that Cowart—Maniac—seemed to be succumbing to the stress of murder charges stemming from the barbecue shooting.

"Man, Maniac sounded like he was finna cry," Richards said.

Bostic came across as unsympathetic, noting that they were facing heat from authorities since the melee. "If he wouldn't've smack that bitch, that shit would've never happened, man." Cowart was eventually convicted and sentenced to 51 years in state prison.

Meanwhile, police were also gleaning information from sources outside of Bostic's operation—info that led back to Bostic. They'd recently spoken with informants close to a leader of the Dirty Unknown Vice Lords who controlled a section of the Austin neighborhood near Chicago and Laramie. The informants told them that even though Bostic was supposedly in a rival organization, the two gang leaders hung out regularly. More important to the investigation, the source said that Bostic had become the other organization's heroin supplier. The authorities weren't surprised—at the highest levels, they say, gang identification is often far less important than business relationships. "You see how the leaders of different gangs are working together through a common source," says Gorman, the former CPD antigang commander.

The key was finding what that source was. Rather than rounding up Bostic at this point, authorities wanted to see where the heroin trail led. Over the next few months, they found out by listening to lots and lots of phone calls.

On some of them, they say, Richards arranged money collection and received updates from street managers on the day's sales figures, heroin supply levels, and news of street workers who'd been busted or violated the terms of their employment. Such was the case in February 2010, when Maurice Davis caught Thomas, aka Bunny, selling heroin at a time Bostic's organization didn't have any of its product out on the street—meaning, in other words, that Thomas was freelancing without permission. Davis reported that he sent someone to "smack him down all types of shit." Like a good soldier, Thomas took the beating without fighting back.

More significantly, the authorities say they were able to track calls discussing pickups of heroin. Then they started witnessing the pickups themselves.

When Bostic's brother-in-law and top deputy, Lee Floyd, was killed in June 2009, Eddie Valentino was faced with a dilemma.

Valentino was 24 at the time and had grown up in Bucktown. He was wiry, with a long face and long hair he wore in a ponytail. He was a regular pot smoker and had been caught with it once, but the case was thrown out and he hadn't been in any other real trouble. He knew some guys who dealt drugs, including his own brother, but Valentino had stayed away, work-

ing straight jobs at fast-food restaurants and a lumberyard.

That changed around 2008, when Floyd asked if he had any connections to heroin. Valentino and Floyd had become friends after meeting at a barbecue a few years earlier, and Floyd had then introduced Valentino to his friend "Freak"—another of Bostic's nicknames. When Floyd inquired about a heroin connection, Valentino decided to help him out—and help himself out, too. He got in touch with Erik Guevara, a guy he'd grown up with. Guevara, in his mid-20s, had a relative in Mexico who could get him cocaine and heroin.

Valentino realized he could make some quick cash as a go-between. He would buy 100 grams of heroin from Guevara for \$6,000, then sell it to Floyd—and, by extension, Bostic—for \$6,500 to \$6,800. Valentino understood Bostic had people dealing it for him on the street.

This went on for a few months. But after Floyd was slain at the barbecue, Valentino was wary of dealing directly with Bostic. "I was afraid of him because he is a known gang member," Valentino said. But he knew Floyd's widow—Bostic's sister—and she assured him it would be all right.

When it came time for deliveries, Valentino and Bostic, and usually one of his deputies, would meet at a designated spot on the west side or in nearby Berwyn or Cicero, almost always in a public place such as the parking lot of a Walgreens or gas station, apparently as a way of hiding in plain sight.

But it turned out that they weren't hidden at all. By the spring of 2010, officials were regularly following the transactions with wiretaps and in-person surveillance.

On May 3, 2010, investigators listened in as Bostic called Valentino and wondered why he hadn't been in touch for days. Valentino said he was just about to call, but Bostic didn't buy it.

"Man, you weren't finna do shit," Bostic said.

Valentino explained that he meant to call back the day before, until he'd showed up for his bowling league and realized it was the last night of the season. "I didn't get out of bowling 'til like six-thirty, man," he said. "But I'm right here leaving the crib. You want me to come by?"

Bostic told him he was a "goofball" but yes. That was noon. It was almost 4 PM before Valentino was able to make his delivery in the parking lot of a diner at Roosevelt and Central—to Richards, since Bostic was actually vacationing in Las Vegas at the time.

Richards then met up with Gill at an apartment in Cicero, and the two of them cut the heroin for street sale. In the meantime, Valentino went to a nearby gas station, where agents watched him get into a Volkswagen driven by Guevara, his supplier. A couple minutes later Valentino got back into his car and left, while Guevara drove to a house in Berwyn and switched cars before heading to his home in the city.

The next day, police watched as one of Bostic's street managers distributed heroin packets to salesmen in front of the apartment at 4019 W. Van Buren.

When officers approached, the manager took off. Half a block up Van Buren, police said they saw him throw three bags in a vacant lot. Each was stamped with a gold crown insignia to market it as a New Breeds product.

A few minutes later, a woman left the apartment building wearing a red backpack. When police stopped her, they found nearly 16 grams of heroin, with a street value of at least \$2,000.

It fell on Richards to call Bostic with the bad news of the bust—including the fact that the police had seized all that product. Bostic was in disbelief.

"I should've stayed in Vegas," he said.

Several months later, in late July 2010, federal agents finally got the big break they were waiting for: they listened in as Valentino's friend and heroin source Erik Guevara talked on his phone about the arrival of a large shipment.

Guevara, a chunky guy nicknamed "Fat Ass," was careful about whom he dealt with personally. Yet he often seemed to go about business with little urgency. Valentino frequently bickered with him about his habit of sleeping in after a night of drinking or showing up for appointments hours late.

This time Guevara was the one who was annoyed. One of the guys working for him had called and said they'd encountered a problem—they couldn't get into the compartment of the Dodge Dakota where the heroin shipment had been hidden.

Guevara told them to try turning the screw the other way. When that didn't work, he suggested they "just kick the motherfucker." That didn't do the trick either. Finally, realizing he was going to have to take care of it himself, Guevara drove to Home Depot and met the men at a house in suburban Franklin Park. Authorities covertly watched as he worked with several other men on the Dakota parked in the yard.

The next day officers saw one of Guevara's workers take a drive shaft from the truck and place it in the back of Guevara's Jeep. When he drove off, they followed him. Guevara headed slowly toward the city, driving about ten miles an hour under the speed limit, until swerving onto the Austin exit from the Eisenhower. Police pulled him over after a few blocks.

As one officer asked him to step out of the car for a search, the other quietly took the drive shaft from the Jeep's rear compartment. The police asked Guevara to get back into the Jeep while they supposedly ran his name—but instead they sped back to the 11th district police station, where they found almost eight kilograms of suspected heroin in the crankshaft's tubes. They estimated it was worth well more than \$1 million on the street.

On an August morning in 2010, Bostic listened as his longtime girlfriend, Mahogany Barbee, tried to convince him to turn himself in. The couple and their children had been staying in a suburban hotel, but friends had started to call and text her to say that the authorities were looking for Bird and it was all over the news. Barbee pulled the stories up on her laptop—how 25 people had been named in a sealed 230-page criminal complaint filed a day earlier in district court, charging them with conspiracy to possess and distribute heroin. "Heroin bust a blow to street gang," the *Sun-Times* headline declared.

"I remember it said that he would make \$10,000 a day," Barbee would later recall to investigators. "Bird was sitting across the table from me. I asked him if it was true, and he said, 'Hell, no.' I was wondering where all the money was that the police said he had made."

Barbee added: "He knew he was going to jail, since this was a federal case."

The next day—Friday, August 13—federal marshals caught up with the couple as they tried to slip out the back of a home in suburban Villa Park where one of Bostic's friends lived—one of the guys who'd been in the fight with NBA player Tony Allen at the White Palace Grill in 2005. Barbee was charged with harboring a fugitive.

Over the next few months, several key members of the organization agreed to cooperate with the investigation in return for the consideration of lighter sentences, including Valentino, who sold heroin to Bostic; Thomas, the street dealer and car thief; and, most significantly, Maurice Davis, who provided graphic details of several unsolved shootings, most of them stemming from a years-long feud between the New Breeds and the Undertaker Vice Lords.

One by one, in 2011 and 2012, each of the defendants pleaded guilty, typically to a single one of the multiple counts against them. Their sentences varied depending on their cooperation and level of involvement. Richards, who'd served as Bostic's lieutenant for a little more than a year but had no significant criminal history, was sentenced to 184 months. Guevara, who admitted to supplying heroin to the New Breeds and a number of other gangs, received a 360-month sentence. After cooperating, Valentino—the liaison between Guevara and Bostic's crew—got a relatively light 71 months.

Despite admitting his involvement in a number of shootings, Davis was sentenced to 20 years after cooperating. Gill denied Davis's accusation that he was one of Bostic's hired shooters—and responsible for the retaliation killing for Bostic's brother's death—but still got 329 months.

Gill's attorney, Jerry Bischoff, stresses that Gill admitted to being a midlevel heroin dealer but was never proven to shoot anyone. He argues that the federal government's use of cooperating witnesses with a history of lying—like Davis—is "reckless" and unfair, especially when combined with heavy mandatory sentences for drug crimes.

"It's good we're getting some of these guys off the street," says Bischoff, a former Cook County prosecutor. "But a lot of low-level guys get locked up for what amounts to murder time. They're born into this environment and you can predict how they're going to end up."

Last February Bostic pleaded guilty to a single count of conspiring to distribute 1,000 grams or more of substances containing heroin. At his sentencing hearing six months later, he told Judge Matthew F. Kennelly that he had nothing to do with the violence. "Yes, I sold drugs," he said. But "I didn't tell these people to do none of that."

The judge wasn't moved. "Running a heroin ring alone is very damaging—to the people involved in selling who are going to prison, to the addicts, to the neighborhood," he said. "Mr. Bostic is not out there pulling any triggers, I agree with that. He's very well insulated. He's like most CEOs. There's people that take the weight for him. . . . And, you know, violence is part of running a business like that.

"What Mr. Bostic did was victimizing people who lived in his community."

Judge Kennelly sentenced Bostic to 38 years in federal prison.

After years of covert surveillance, wiretaps, and legal work by local and federal officials, 24 of the 25 indicted coconspirators in Operation Bird Cage have been convicted, including one scheduled to be sentenced this week. Just one defendant remains a fugitive.

Local and federal officials say the case illustrates their commitment to using resources on the street and in the courtroom to eliminate drug markets. The U.S. Attorney's office in Chicago charges about 100 defendants annually for being part of major drug conspiracies, each one the result of months or even years of intense investigation.

Riley, the head DEA agent in Chicago, says the feds are no longer interested in seeing how

much dope they can seize—their goal is to disrupt organized-crime networks, especially those with suspected ties to Mexican cartels, and to send the message that perpetrators will spend much of their remaining lives in prison.

"Did we completely eliminate drug trafficking in Chicago? No," Riley says of the Bostic investigation. "But it eliminated, start to finish, one of the many organizations responsible for narcotics and violence in a neighborhood, and I hope people there feel better about their safety.

"If we lock up the guys selling drugs on the corner, they'll be replaced that day. If we take the supply chain out, now we've caused some problems that can't be fixed overnight."

Yet the problems haven't disappeared, even in the middle of Bostic's old neighborhood. The New Breeds' former base of operations on West Van Buren has been razed, and the street was quiet on several afternoons recently. But just a few blocks away, at Wilcox and Springfield, men were lined up waiting to help customers. In fact, the pace of drug arrests in the police beat that includes Bostic's old territory has gone up since his crew was taken down.

On January 26, a 16-year-old and a 32-year-old were shot and killed near a vacant lot on the 4200 block of West Congress, a corner Bostic once controlled. Police are still investigating. In the meantime, well-wishers have created a memorial, with bunches of bright-colored balloons and a hand-painted sign that simply says, "RIP."

www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/gang-violence-heroin-new-breeds-vice-lords/Content?oid=8761736

Heroin, LLC

Mick Dumke
The Chicago Reader
Dec. 4, 2013

Antonio Johnson called Ray Longstreet to talk business.

Longstreet, a veteran leader of the Four Corner Hustlers gang, controlled the drug trade on 36 city blocks around Hamlin and Iowa in West Humboldt Park. But the potential to make money trumped old-time gang labels, and he had rented out some of his corners to Johnson, a member of the New Breeds, in return for supplies of heroin and cocaine—and proceeds of up to \$10,000 a week. Together they collected tens of thousands of dollars a day, a revenue stream matched by few legal businesses on the west side.

The two considered themselves like-minded professionals who faced threats to their heroin and cocaine business: interference from police, rising costs from wholesale Mexican suppliers, and the rapid turnover of laborers willing to hit the street hard and keep sales brisk.

Johnson noted that he kept himself insulated from street dealing—"All them little cats that be out there, they ain't nowhere close to me, man"—while also setting high standards for his employees. "I fire people off the first mistake, dawg," he told Longstreet, according to court records. "The second one might cost a motherfucker if the first one don't."

Longstreet complained that some of his own street sellers were partying, making noise, and disturbing neighbors while on the job. He said he'd told some of his employees, "If I was an older person and I owned a house over here I'd call the police on you niggas too."

Johnson agreed. And he said he didn't tolerate disrespect for clients, either. His employees needed to remember that the customer is always right. "Whatever he is, whatever [he] do, he still a man," Johnson said of the consumer of his product. "And that's who feeding us."

But it wasn't customer service or an inept workforce that killed Johnson and Longstreet's business. A few weeks after the call, in late May 2005, authorities who'd had Longstreet and Johnson under wiretap surveillance moved in and began making arrests, indicting 34 managers and workers and charging them with participating in a drug conspiracy. Johnson and Longstreet are now in federal prison.

But business is still booming in the west-side drug trade. Chicago police and federal agents have made thousands of subsequent arrests in the area, including those resulting from a series of federal investigations centered within a short walk of Hamlin and Iowa. New operations, most specializing in heroin, have adopted tactics that allow managers to continue meeting demand and raking in profits, making the drug trade one of the most resilient and successful industries in the city.

"It's not just a bunch of idiots out there," Aaron Clayton, a former street manager for the op-

eration around Iowa and Hamlin, said in a recent interview from Elkton federal prison in Ohio. "It is like any other business. The only thing is that our business was illegal."

The west side of Chicago has been known for decades as home to some of the largest and most vibrant drug markets in the country, where customers from around the midwest travel to find street dealers offering "blow" or "rocks" just minutes off the Eisenhower Expressway or the CTA's Blue and Green lines. The steady stream of buyers, combined with a long decline in job opportunities, has made the drug trade one of the area's largest employers.

Over the last 50 years, on commercial corridors like Arthington, Lake, Madison, Pulaski, and Cicero, most of the jobs that once lured residents to the area have disappeared, as attested to by abandoned candy, lumber, and plastics factories and empty lots that used to be movie theaters and hotels. Between 2002 and 2011, the area lost 10,000 jobs, according to the census.

In contrast, the drug business has moved from discreet sales in hotels and homes to open-air transactions on the street. Law enforcement busts offer an indication of the scale. In 1964, Chicago police made a total of 2,232 arrests for drug violations citywide. In 2012, they made 35,088, including 6,824 for heroin alone, the largest category after marijuana. Sixty-one percent of the heroin busts occurred on the west side, mostly in West Humboldt, East and West Garfield Park, and Austin.

More than 9,000 people were charged with felony drug offenses last year in Cook County, including about 4,100 for manufacture or delivery of a controlled substance—the charge usually assigned to those accused of selling heroin or cocaine—according to an analysis by Loyola University professor Don Stemen. Another 3,800 people were charged with possession. While many of the defendants charged with possessing cocaine or heroin were merely users looking to get high, a portion of the cases involved drug sellers.

That means well over 4,000 people in Cook County have worked at least part-time in the drug trade, most of them on the west side of Chicago.

While the drug business doesn't employ as many people locally as such leading fields as health care (160,000 jobs in 2011, according to the census bureau) and professional services (137,000), it's on par with fields like utilities, which employed 4,600.

On the west side the drug trade is an even more potent economic force, employing a far larger share of people than anywhere else in the city. Businesses in the three zip codes that make up the heart of the west side employed about 24,000 people, according to 2011 figures. Most west-side residents commute to jobs elsewhere. Even so, the drug business still would have employed almost as many west-siders as manufacturing (3,600), accommodations and food service (4,100), education (4,200), and retail (5,300).

Heroin sales have been a growth sector for the industry as the popularity of cocaine has waned over the last decade. The supply of heroin is so plentiful in Chicago that street prices are among the lowest in the country, trailing only Detroit, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration concluded in a study released in March. And demand appears to remain high as well. Roosevelt University researchers have found that the Chicago area ranks first in the rate and number of hospitalizations for heroin overdoses.

Court records and interviews with former street-level dealers show that the success of the drug trade is based on the basic principles of all profitable businesses. In addition, it's been able to capitalize on a cheap and plentiful supply of labor—poor young men who are introduced to the enterprise early and who believe they have few other options.

"It creates opportunity for people," says Derek Thomas, who's serving a federal sentence for participating in a heroin conspiracy in West Garfield Park. "I understand the negative aspect of it, but it creates a way where there wasn't a way."

The business plan

Federal and local law enforcement officials say the structure of businesses such as Longstreet and Johnson's tends to be similar. At the top are veteran executives with connections to wholesale distributors who get product from Mexico. The execs have the capital to buy large supplies up front, and the security apparatus—often armed members of their gang—to protect their revenue, sales territory, and street workers.

Last June authorities charged Cornel Dawson and his associates in the Black Souls gang with running such an operation—and with a number of murders, including the shooting of a government cooperator and the beating of a street salesman who was accused of stealing money and drugs.

The case has not gone to trial yet, but in court documents authorities describe the Black Souls enterprise as highly profitable and structured, as well as vicious. Dawson, 38, had led the heroin operation around Monroe and Pulaski for ten years, sources told police, and by the time it was broken up it was making \$11 million a year. Dawson had invested some of his money in legal businesses, including a west-side barbershop.

Dawson and other leaders bought heroin from wholesalers and mixed and packaged it indoors, sometimes at an apartment in another neighborhood, authorities charged. One of their managers would deliver it to street supervisors, known as pack runners. The street supervisors would provide the sellers with "jabs" or packs, which are made up of 13 small bags of heroin, each of which retails for \$10. Workers were required to return \$100 from each jab to their supervisors, meaning their commission was \$30 in cash or three bags of heroin for every ten they sold.

A confidential source told authorities that workers could typically sell eight or nine jabs per shift, which added up to earnings of \$240 to \$270 for eight hours on the street. Pack runners were paid a \$10 commission for each jab sold, and if business was good that week, they might receive a \$1,500 to \$2,000 bonus on Friday.

Marketing was important. After the organization sold a batch of heroin that wasn't popular, they tried to win back customer loyalty by handing out free samples of their new product, an event known as a "pass out." The Black Souls' heroin was also known to come in distinctive blue bags. But when a competitor started selling better stuff in purple bags, the Black Souls switched to purple to capitalize.

Managing employees was often a headache. Dawson tried to keep underlings in line with brutal discipline, so that "everyone who works for him knows that if they steal or do something wrong . . . something bad will happen," an associate told authorities. But Dawson couldn't control the unreliable nature of his employees. He was recorded telling an associate that while he was making money, all of his workers were "on paper"—that is, on probation or bond, meaning they were always in danger of being locked up.

As one of Dawson's associates told authorities: "The Black Souls are always looking for additional workers."

The sales force

Like all retail businesses, the drug trade relies on both a steady customer base and a supply of low-cost workers. In the heroin trade, many of the street dealers are essentially day laborers who work on commission to support their own addictions.

Michael Jones has seen the heroin business from multiple angles. In three decades of using, he's bought and sold it all over the Chicago area. "Don't nobody want to admit we have a drug epidemic," says Jones, who's now clean and on parole at St. Leonard's Ministries, a halfway house on the west side. "And all of it is because there's no hiring and no jobs."

Jones, 52, grew up in Evanston, where his family had moved from Memphis in the early 60s. His mother died when he was a child, and Jones and his eight siblings were sent to different foster homes around the city and suburbs.

Jones says he joined gangs and learned how to fend for himself. To make money, he started selling heroin. Then he started using it.

To support his habit, he became a burglar and a thief, working mostly in the suburbs. He says he knew the barbershops and flea markets where he could ask people what sort of goods they were looking for, and then he could go steal them. In 1980 he was sentenced to three years in state prison for burglary. He's returned eight times since, for residential burglary, home invasion, aggravated battery, and possession of heroin.

"When I came home I didn't have no support groups, no jobs or nothing, so I end up back in the streets," Jones says. "I could always hustle. And then to deal with the anger and the pain, I could always go back to drugs."

Jones held legal jobs working construction and cooking. "But my background kept me from getting into a lot of jobs. So did my habit. I'd go back to the west side on my lunch break."

There were always opportunities in the illegal economy. When he wasn't selling stolen goods, Jones knew a number of spots in Lawndale or K-Town (the section of West Garfield Park where the north-south streets start with *K*) where he could make some cash or work for his fix. "If you're up at five in the morning and you're out in one of those areas, there's no problem finding work. It's just like day labor. You can get a couple jabs."

Jones estimates that more than half of the street dealers he worked with were users like him, who showed up to sell only when they needed a fix. But they had to prove their worth or they wouldn't keep the gig.

Jones had his own sales techniques. He wouldn't wait for customers to roll up—he'd call his old connections and let them know he had a product they'd be interested in. The word would get around.

"If you're a slow worker they'll put somebody else in. By me being an addict, I know the needs. I knew who the money spenders was. It's a network."

Customer service

Through years of experience, Derek Thomas learned what it takes to be a successful street salesman: treating customers with respect and not taking their business for granted.

Thomas admits that he didn't need to start selling heroin; it wasn't a matter of survival. But it was so readily available—an option he could always turn to when he needed some cash—that eventually he came to rely on it.

"The first 15 years of my life, outside of my family, I didn't know anybody who had a job," he says from federal prison in West Virginia. "That was the way people made a living."

Thomas, who's 30, grew up in K-Town. His father was a dietary specialist for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and his mother worked at a bank and volunteered at their neighborhood elementary school, Melody, where she served as PTA president.

Thomas and his twin brother were the youngest of five children; the older siblings started businesses, volunteered in the community, and went to church. Both twins were accepted at Von Steuben, a well-performing high school on the northwest side, but Derek struggled with the long commute from West Garfield Park, and ended up getting a GED.

By that time, he says he'd already begun to sell drugs. Friends had new shoes and clothes, and Thomas knew how they'd paid for them. "I wanted things my mother and my father couldn't get me."

Along with neighborhood friends, he also joined a gang, the New Breeds. "It seemed like this is the way it's supposed to be. When you grow up over here, if I went out and said I was [not in a gang], the police wouldn't even believe me. It was like, "This is who you are." His street nickname was Fatboo.

Members of the New Breeds ran a lucrative heroin ring around Van Buren and Pulaski, though many of the workers in the operation weren't part of the gang—they were users who needed to work for their heroin, or young guys who'd commute in to make a few bucks.

Once Thomas learned how to interact with customers, he found the job to be straightforward. He didn't even have to search for buyers. "They trusted me. I don't look down on people. They use drugs, they may be a bum, whatever, I don't hold that against nobody. People would look for me because they knew that I would treat them like a human being."

They kept coming, mostly driving in on I-290 or taking the Blue Line. "Most of them were from outside the area," he says. "There isn't that much money in that neighborhood."

Thomas says he was able to set aside concerns about the dangers of heroin and see his sales as a business transaction. Most of his heroin customers were "functional," he says. "When you see them you don't see the struggle and the hurt—they're going to be clean and they're going to have cars. A crackhead, they may try to sell you their TV or their kids' milk or something."

He would usually quit after making a few hundred dollars a day in profit, though he emphasizes that the opportunities were almost limitless. "Some people say they want to make \$2,000 a day and they don't leave until they make it. It's just like anything else in life: you work hard, you get more; you work less, you get less."

When he was working, Thomas had to remain vigilant about potential stickups or other threats. "I mean, you know what a shady character looks like, so you try to stay away from those type of people."

He understood the risks of the business. He spent a year in prison on a drug charge, then moved to the south side to try getting away. He found other jobs—he worked at McDonald's for a while, then at a tire factory. But he was laid off in late 2009 as he and his girlfriend were planning to move in together. Thomas went back to the street.

At a little after 7 AM on February 19, 2010, Thomas sold heroin to a customer who, unbeknownst to him, was an undercover officer. During the sale, Thomas offered his cell phone number to arrange future deals, according to court records. When the undercover officer called later, Thomas asked him if the heroin was good. The officer said yes.

By March, Thomas had quit selling again and enrolled in Putting Illinois to Work, a job training and placement program run by the state. After finishing it, in August, he landed an interview with the secretary of state's office for a position aimed at ex-offenders.

He never made it. "The feds grabbed me," he says. Though he hadn't been selling for months, he was named as part of a drug conspiracy centered around the New Breeds in K-Town.

Prosecutors acknowledged that he had stopped selling before his arrest, but they stressed that he knew he was dealing dangerous drugs for an organization that was linked to shootings and murders. Thomas ended up pleading guilty to one count of the conspiracy charges and was sentenced to 162 months in prison.

Now that he's away from Chicago, Thomas says he's gained perspective about how dangerous it is for young people in neighborhoods like the one where he grew up. He says it's not easy to break out of the environment of the drug trade, but he'd like to get the training to work as a youth counselor so he can share his story as a warning.

"When I'm around people on the streets, that facade I have to put forward, it's like a character almost—like Fatboo is one person and Derek is somebody totally different. When all this happened with the feds, I wasn't being Fatboo. I was trying to be productive in life. But when I tried to bring Derek to the forefront, nobody wanted to see him, because the things that Fatboo did just overshadowed it."

The middle manager

The heroin trade, like all businesses, relies on skilled middle managers who know how to get the best out of their employees. When he worked as a supervisor for Longstreet's organization in West Humboldt Park, Aaron Clayton drew on his past experience with street sales as well as his observations of what makes people tick.

"I was like a liaison for the higher guys and the lower guys," says Clayton, 42, during a phone call from prison. "And that was my niche anywhere I went, because I started off on the street selling bags hand to hand."

Clayton says he first started selling because his family was struggling and it seemed like the best opportunity for making money.

In the early 1960s Clayton's maternal grandparents moved from rural Mississippi to West Garfield Park, where his grandfather found work in a copper factory and his grandmother as a switchboard operator in a hotel. Clayton's mother graduated from Crane High School and

had him when she was 18. To support Clayton and his three siblings, she worked at the Tootsie candy factory on Pulaski and then at a contact lens manufacturer.

But while their family struggled, others in the neighborhood had money—the cocaine and heroin dealers.

"It was easier for me to go and sell and make rent money and bill money and help my mom," Clayton recalls. "I felt guilty being out selling, and my mom was like a police officer herself—she'd run me off the corner, 'Get your ass in the house!' But I'd come in and pay those goddamn bills, \$125 for light bills, \$100 for that. It became a way of life."

He tried straight jobs. Clayton says he worked at a plastics company until he failed a drug test. His uncle taught him how to work with cars and he would fix his friends' just to get extra practice, but he never found a mechanic's job. He stocked groceries and did a stint at McDonald's.

Once he started getting picked up by police, it became even harder to turn to other work. In 1994 an officer reported seeing several people approach Clayton on West Iowa Street at 1:30 in the afternoon. When they handed him cash, he reached into his waistband and gave them plastic-wrapped tinfoil packets of heroin. Clayton was eventually convicted of heroin possession and, after a stint in jail, returned home on probation.

"You just can't go into a factory and say, 'I can do that forklift.' Your experience from 16 to 25 is being out on the street and selling drugs. It's kind of hard to all of a sudden turn that switch off and turn another switch on when you don't have any skills and no education."

On the other hand, Clayton had discovered that he was good at listening and communicating with people, and he understood how the drug business worked. "A lot of people think these guys are just gangbangers and drug users. But each and every one of those guys, they've got to work well with others, take initiative to do things without being told. Those are qualities that you look for out there in the streets."

Performance and reliability mattered far more than gang affiliation. Clayton identified as a Gangster Disciple, because that's what his friends were where he grew up. But he landed a job with the Four Corner Hustlers operation based on his experience and skill set.

Clayton's managerial strategy was based on the simple premise that workers should be praised for dependability and output, and he tried to learn what motivated each of them. "I would reward them for coming early and staying late. It could be something as simple as getting them cigarettes or food, or if they did blow I got them blow. These guys were like day laborers. They didn't sign a contract to stay with us, and I knew that.

"On the other hand, there was discipline involved too. I would curse their ass out or have to maybe put my hands on them, but that was the extent of it. I didn't have to get a weapon and shoot nobody or nothing like that. I was nice but also had to be firm with them."

Clayton says many middle managers were paid based on commission, while others might earn a weekly salary in the range of \$1,000 to \$1,500. But he understood that it wouldn't last. After being arrested as part of the federal investigation into Longstreet, he pleaded guilty to one count of participating in a drug conspiracy and was sentenced to 146 months in prison.

He worries about what kind of work he'll be able to find when he's released next year, and dreams of getting a tow truck or starting his own business. "I've blown 25 years of my life in

the drug business, and I have nothing to show for it," he says. "I've hurt and I've compromised a lot of people's lives in the process. I'm ready to give something back."

Though the open-air drug trade is visible and vibrant, Clayton stresses that most west-siders aren't involved in it. "It's a small number of people. But damn, when the kids come out they see the guys on the corner, they see the addicts walking around in the morning or at night, they see the strangers come in the neighborhood, all the different kinds of people, and of course it's influencing them."

www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/heroin-arrests-sales-dealers-west-side-economics/Content?oid=11722393

Heroin Moves to Chicago Suburbs in Small Amounts Through Users

Rob Wildebour
WBEZ 91.5
Dec. 9, 2013

Gabriela Muro's mother and stepfather live in a quiet townhome development in west suburban Aurora. The streets are named after trees and the uniform buildings are tidy. Next to the two-car garage is the front door, which opens to a two-story foyer with wood floors. When she was 15 years old Muro started making the drive from this townhome to Chicago's West Side to buy heroin. The first time she went she made the trip with the friends who had introduced her to heroin.

"So I just remember like getting on 88 and then going to 290 and just going to this ghetto area off of Independence," said Muro at a recent interview at her parents' house.

Muro quickly got over her fear of Chicago's West Side and started making the 60-mile round trip more and more often.

Muro had dealers that she used pretty consistently, a brother and sister that she liked. She'd call them on a cell phone and they'd ask her how much she needed and then they'd tell her where to go. She usually went to their house at Austin and Washington, but sometimes her dealers would be out and about and she'd have to meet them elsewhere.

"Many time's I've had to go to the beauty salon where the girl was getting her hair done and just wait outside until she was done. Many times I've just had to go to their house and just have one of their family members come out and give it to us. We've had to go to family functions like cook outs," said Muro.

Muro says she once went to Humboldt Park where the entire extended family was having a party. "And they were all in like, I guess, their little business. They all knew what was going on."

The heroin trade relies heavily on networks. Dealers can't advertise so they use word of mouth and reward users who bring in new business. "Oh yeah, like if we sent people their way they would hook us up with more bags," Muro said. .

Muro introduced a number of her suburban friends to her dealer. She's since realized that her friends who got her into heroin and took her to Chicago, they were doing the same thing. They were using her to get more for themselves.

As her addiction deepened, Muro sometimes found herself commuting to the West Side three times a day.

"Well we would spend our whole day just, we would wake up in the morning, go straight to the city, come back, get more money, go back to the city, we were constantly working on getting our next high. It was like a full-time job being a heroin addict," said Muro.

I-290 is a trigger

Frankie Bauer has been clean for two months but this is his sixth time in rehab. He's relapsed five times. He's got to stay away from things that could trigger a relapse and the Eisenhower Expressway is definitely a trigger.

"Your stomach starts churning," Bauer recounted in an interview at the Blue Island library near the sober living facility where he stays. "Dogs do that, they do that thing with the ringing of the bell. Ring a bell, show a dog meat. Ring a bell, show a dog meat ,and then ring a bell and the dog salivates. That's how it is with heroin addicts on 290."

Bauer is 22. He grew up in the western suburbs and remembers his friends prepping their syringes and cooking rigs in the backseat as they headed towards his dealer on Kostner just a couple blocks south of the Eisenhower. He says as soon as he got some heroin he'd pull into an alley and take two minutes to shoot up and then get back on the highway. Or sometimes, he'd shoot up in the parking lot of Rush hospital, which is nearby, just off 290. He and his friends knew the hospital because they also went there for drug treatment.

Bauer usually worked with the same dealer, but if his dealer didn't have any dope he'd hit the blocks on the West Side.

"You just hop off of 290 at you know, you could go to Harlem, Austin, you could go to Cicero, Independence, you could just get off at any of those exits and all you gotta do is look for a guy standing on the corner, just ride up to him say, 'Yo,' he'll ask you what you need, you'll tell him and he'll sell it to you and that's really it," said Bauer. "You could be pulling up and buying dope and the cops will just drive by. They don't do anything about it and it's disgusting how you could see people standing on the corner, and you know what they're there for, and you know what you can score from them, and nothing was done."

Of course, Chicago police do arrest lots of drug offenders, but driving around the West Side it's easy to see why Bauer thinks nothing is being done. Such open drug dealing is much less common in the suburbs-- one reason so many kids are commuting on 290.

Naperville police monitoring heroin users

"If they bring anything back it's usually a small amount and they share it with their friends. So there's not a hub here, where heroin's being distributed, it's basically Chicago," said Naperville deputy police chief Brian Cunningham.

Cunningham has spent much of his career either working, or overseeing, narcotics investigations. On his desk is a folder with the most recent crime statistics.

"This, the current year, we're at three confirmed heroin deaths in Naperville," Cunningham said last week.

That's down compared to recent years when Naperville had as many as 10 heroin deaths but Cunningham says the number of overdoses has been consistent this year. He says that means kids are still using just as much as they did in 2011 and 2012.

"We have kids doing burglaries. We have kids doing thefts but they're not actually dying from it so heroin is a huge, huge issue with us," said Cunningham.

In his file of crime statistics Cunningham has a map of Naperville with little stars. The stars represent heroin users in town. Not dealers, or drug markets--users. The police are trying to keep an eye on every addict. It's quite a contrast to Chicago's West Side.

Cunningham says Naperville police will follow kids into the city and do surveillance of them buying drugs and driving back to the suburbs.

"The one thing about heroin addicts, from my own personal experience of dealing with them and arresting them and from the units, is that when you arrest a heroin addict, they're very willing for the most part to tell you exactly what's going on. It's almost like they're reaching out for help," he said.

Cunningham admits that many addicts also share information hoping to get out of the station quickly and avoid dope sickness, the sickness that sets in when they don't have access to heroin. And because heroin dealing relies so much on networks and relationships, heroin users know each other and can share that information with police.

Temptation too much

Gabriela Muro from Aurora was once arrested in the city of Chicago. She says she led police to a dealer she rarely used because she didn't want to give up her main dealer, something that could have choked off her supply. She was also arrested in DuPage County by an officer who had been following them and recounted everywhere they'd been that day, including shooting up in a Walgreens parking lot and then getting back on the expressway.

Muro got probation a couple times and then was put in a drug court program, "and I did well for like five months but drug court placed me in a halfway house on the West Side, like literally a block away from my dealer's house," said Muro. The temptation was too much.

Eventually she got charged with breaking into houses and got two years. She's glad she got such a long sentence. "If I would have gotten out I would have been doing the same stuff because for the first six months that I was in there I still wanted to get high," she said. It took that long for her to get over her cravings.

Muro's now been clean for three years, long enough. she says, that she can drive down the Eisenhower Expressway without wanting to pull off to buy some heroin.

www.wbez.org/news/heroin-moves-chicago-suburbs-small-amounts-through-users-109326

Chicago is Hub for Heroin in the Midwest

Rob Wildeboer with Mick Dumke

WBEZ 91.5

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There have been times in her life when Connie Johnson was homeless along with her six children. “Going to relatives’ house, day in day out, they get tired of you,” Johnson says in a recent interview. We’re in the kitchen of her second floor apartment on Chicago’s West Side. “Everyone extend their hand but when you come in, it’s, the story changes, welcome ran out kind of fast, you know?”

Then about eight years ago, she heard from a niece living in Waterloo, Iowa, a 5-hour drive from Chicago. “She was saying that you can get work there, so, we all moved down there and everybody that went got work: my daughter, my sons, my husband.”

It was a hopeful start and things were good there, for a while anyway.

Johnson walks from the kitchen past the bathroom to the dining room (her apartment is a typical layout for a Chicago 2-flat.) Her bedroom is just off the dining room and on the windowsill she keeps a plaque. It was awarded to her husband Lusta and is a reminder of those good times in Iowa.

“This is the plaque from Tyson that Lusta had got and it says ‘for five years service,’ but he actually worked there about seven years,” she says.

Tyson is Tyson Foods, which makes things like Asian chicken thighs and honey chicken tenders. That’s where her husband Lusta found work in Iowa. Johnson keeps the plaque in plastic. The Tyson logo and the brass plate with her husband’s name are pristine. Johnson tells me it “shows that he was doing something, that he was headed to doing the right thing, you know?”

But things went sideways. Her husband is addicted to heroin, has been since the late 70s. She has also struggled with addiction, as have other members of the family. In Iowa, in addition to working new jobs at Tyson, they bought and sold heroin. Now Johnson’s son is doing 15 years federal time. Her sister-in-law, 15 years federal time. Her nephew is doing life and her husband Lusta is facing trial and likely a similar fate.

The size of a pencil eraser

“Lusta Johnson distributed heroin,” says federal prosecutor Lisa Williams in an interview at the new glass-and-stone federal courthouse in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Williams has indicted much of the Johnson family and knows their stories well.

“They all long before they came to Waterloo had heroin habits. And so when they got to

Waterloo the heroin habit didn't go away just by crossing the state line and so they found themselves back into distributing heroin, obtaining it in Chicago and using it as well," Williams says.

In the Johnson case Williams says they would bring back heroin in amounts of 10, 15, sometimes 20 or 30 grams. To get an idea of what that looks like, Williams says one gram of heroin is about the size of a pencil eraser. "And so you would take 30 of those eraser tops and that would be 30 grams. It would fit in your palm about so it's not a huge quantity but it's still a significant quantity," said Williams.

It's also profitable. Williams says a gram goes for about \$100 in Chicago; a four- or five-hour drive to Iowa doubles its value. So 30 grams would be \$3,000 in Chicago and \$6,000 in Iowa. But there's more.

Williams says you can cut the heroin and mix it with another substance like sleeping pills. "So not only do you double your money, but you're tripling your quantity and so that's how you can really start to make a profit on it."

Williams says that \$3,000 of heroin in Chicago can be worth \$12,000 or \$18,000 in Iowa.

In addition to the Johnson case, Williams is prosecuting other Chicagoans who moved out to Iowa and sold heroin, 36 cases in all right now. And there are others.

Heroin sales not so blatant in Iowa

Sergeant Dave Dostal of the Cedar Rapids police department stands on the curb in an older neighborhood in Cedar Rapids close to the central part of the city. The houses look like the houses in many other Midwestern towns, foursquare homes that could be beautiful but many of them are run down. Dostal points to a house with an appliance sitting in the front yard and says two guys from Chicago moved there and started selling heroin, and cars would be driving up all day. "Classic drug trafficking signs, you know, short term traffic," says Dostal.

Cedar Rapids is not like Chicago where guys are standing on the corners. Here, you need to know someone. Dostal says police made some buys by calling the dealers on cell phones and then meeting them, sometimes at a Laundromat just across the street.

"We'd set up surveillance and photograph as the individuals would come out of this house, walk over, transaction would be completed and then that individual would walk back to this place," Dostal says as he points between the house and the Laundromat.

But Dostal didn't arrest them for making small individual sales. He was putting together a larger case. "What happens is, if they're selling out of one specific house and your surveillance is done long enough and you get probable cause for a search warrant, you're going to get them and all their product and maybe money," he says. That means more serious charges and heavier time.

Dostal says the surveillance of this house was part of a case that led to federal charges for 11 more people bringing heroin from Chicago.

Cedar Rapids the end of the line

Dostal says Cedar Rapids isn't a drug hub like Chicago. No one's moving heroin through Cedar Rapids, it's the end of the line. According to the DEA in Cedar Rapids, there have been 200 heroin overdoses in Northeastern Iowa since 2007, and 50 of those overdoses resulted in death. One of those people was Jon Jelinek's 22-year-old son Sam.

Jelinek learned about his son's heroin addiction when Sam was arrested once. Jelinek helped him get clean and stuck with him through a relapse and an overdose. And they talked. Sam told him his heroin was being brought into Cedar Rapids by two cousins from Chicago.

On March 22 of this year Sam didn't show up for work. He worked at the restaurant Jelinek owns and Jelinek called him. "Didn't get any call back. Had lunch and then about 1:30 felt something in my stomach saying something ain't right so I jumped in my truck, and I knew all the way out here, I knew he had overdosed," Jelinek says.

Sam's room was locked so Jelinek kicked in the door. "I found him kneeling on his knees, with his head in his pillow, like he was trying to get up out of bed, the needle was still in between his fingers," said Jelinek.

Jelinek walks through the foyer of the house where his son died, down a couple steps to the family room. The door to Sam's bedroom is in the corner. He goes to the door and pushes it open. "This is the first time I've been back in here since."

Jelinek looks down and sees a belt on the floor and picks it up. "This is his tourniquet. They put it just like you see on T.V. Put it around, bite it and pull it, so they get that vein sticking out." He pauses, silent. "It's just sad that it come to that," he finally says.

Jelinek blames the dealers. He says his son was trying to get clean, but because dealing in Cedar Rapids is all done by cell phone the dealers had Sam's number and they texted him that they had a new shipment in. It must have been too much to resist.

Dealers often users and victims too

Back on the West Side of Chicago, in her second floor apartment, Connie Johnson weeps in her kitchen. She weeps because much of her family is going to be in federal prison for many years for dealing heroin. But she also weeps because of all the harm heroin has done to her and her husband; there have been decades of addiction, poverty and homelessness. She says heroin is an ugly thing. And I ask her, if the authorities don't lock up the people dealing, people like her son and husband, what should they do to stop this ugly drug that kills people and ruins lives?

Through tears she says she wishes she knew the answer.

www.wbez.org/news/chicago-hub-heroin-midwest-109373