

A Few Similarities between the Drug Wars and the Witch Craze (after SZASZ)

War on Witchcraft

Witches perceived to be in direct conflict with desired control by religious authorities.

In providing medical treatments and spiritual practices, witchcraft threatened the oligarchic control of the church.

In direct competition with control by medical authorities. (usually the church, 'healing' with fasts and prayers, as medicine was usually considered a form of witchcraft)

Witches used pharmacologically active substances and gave them to others

Forbidden to heal unless versed in study of the scriptures and approved as a priest.

Merciless treatment recommended for witches.

Most 'witches' were unlikely to fight back.

Punishments harsh and severe; grossly exceeding any purported harm.

Search and arrest procedure often deliberately destructive and brutal.

Punishments handed out regardless of the outcome their action (regardless of whether they cured or harmed).

Intent considered a punishable act.

Conspiracy conviction could result from testimony of a single informant and did not require physical evidence.

Different standards of law applied to witches than the rest of society. Safe to cheat or attack.

Informants encouraged and rewarded to turn in people they thought were guilty of witchcraft (even if parents or other family members).

Children questioned in the absence of their parents with or without parental consent or knowledge.

Children used as domestic spies and information sources.

Failure to report witchery (or to testify against a witch) could result in condemnation and punishment as an accomplice.

Members punished not only for what they did but also condemned for what they were – an autonomous "counter culture" perceived defiant of the imposed control of authorities.

Loss of parental rights often accompanied pronouncement of guilt.

Property and land seizures directly profited the Inquisitors.

Use of testimony from paid or leveraged informants was acceptable.

Informants could be rewarded with seized property.

War on Drug Craft

Drug activity in direct conflict with desired control by religious/ medical authorities.

By providing illegal drugs, dealers threaten the oligarchic control of physicians and legal drug dealers (pharmaceutical industry).

In direct competition with desired monopolistic control by medical authorities and pharmaceutical/ alcohol/ tobacco manufacturers.

Drug users use pharmacologically active substances and give them to others

Forbidden to use or supply drugs unless versed in study of medicine and approved as a physician or pharmacist.

Merciless treatment recommended for drug dealers (and often users).

Most drug users are unlikely to fight back.

Punishments harsh and severe; grossly exceeding any purported harm.

Search and arrest procedure often deliberately destructive and brutal.

Punishments handed out regardless of the outcome their action (regardless of whether their actions produces harm).

Intent considered a punishable act.

Conspiracy conviction can result from testimony of a single informant and does not require physical evidence.

Different standards of law applied to drug people than the rest of society. Safe to cheat or attack.

Informants encouraged and rewarded to turn in people they thought were guilty of drug involvement (even if parents or other family members).

Children questioned in the absence of their parents with or without parental consent or knowledge.

Children are both trained & used as domestic spies and information sources with the assurances that their actions will "'help" the family.

Failure to report drug sales or possession can result in condemnation and punishment as accomplice (including even the loss of rental properties for failure to control actions of tenants)! Failure to agree to testify in drug cases can result in heavier sentencing than if agreeing to serve as an informant.

Members punished not only for what they do but also condemned for what they are – an autonomous "counter culture" perceived defiant of the imposed control of authorities.

Loss of parental rights often accompanies pronouncement of guilt.

Property and land seizures directly profits anti-drug warriors.

Use of testimony from a paid or leveraged anonymous informant is acceptable; if not encouraged or predominant.

Informants can additionally receive 25% of all seized property.



War on Witchcraft

Inquisitors rewarded handsomely from finding and persecuting witches. Persecuting witches was a lucrative and profitable business.

Development of a powerful group of witch-mongers whose livelihood depended on expanding their powers and finding, if not actually creating, more 'witches'.

Inquisition was international in scope. Two principle centers; Rome and Spain.

Institutionalized [as the Inquisition].

Presented to the public as necessary to 'save them' from the evils of witchery.

Unresponsive to rational analysis, criticism or policy evaluation once the efforts began.

Not answerable to the public.

No middle ground and no meaningful debate.

Witches presented as worthless and undesirable members of society, or as bad and evil people, simply for being witches.

Intensive propaganda efforts characterized by sensationalism and outright lies aimed at stirring adverse public sentiment, intolerance and mass hysteria.

Simple ideological identification accepted as justification to deprive of housing and employment (or worse).

Witches portrayed as subhuman murderous monsters preying on the hapless innocent.

No widely perceived witch 'problem' prior to the War on witches.

Efforts of witch hunters repeatedly presented as valiant failures, claimed due to the perceived size of the 'problem', but with enticement of future success, requiring more autonomy for the witch-hunters and greater authority to take drastic actions. Their real failures were often misrepresented as successes.

Members of targeted group unorganized, as well as politically and socially powerless.

Lacked any effective advocates in positions of power.

Any advocates were also attacked.

Group persecuting them was both politically and socially powerful.

While interpretations certainly might vary, some elements of this drawing suggest cactus spines and vomiting.



War on Drug Craft

Combating the drug trade generates huge amounts of seized property, assets and money for the drug warriors. In addition, a flourishing multi-billion dollar industry has been created out of drug detection services, private prisons and the manufacture/sales of surveillance equipment. Treating drug 'addicts' is similarly a lucrative and immensely profitable business with explosive growth.

Development of a powerful group of drug persecutors whose livelihood depends on expanding their powers and finding, if not actually creating, more 'drug problems' to 'resolve'.

Inquisition is international in scope. Two principle centers; Washington and Geneva.

Institutionalized [as the DEA, the FDA, the National Institute of Mental Health and other "public health" groups who have teamed (ganged?) up for a 'war on drugs'].

Presented to the public as necessary to 'save them' from the evils of drugs.

Unresponsive to rational analysis, criticism or policy evaluation once the efforts began.

Not answerable to the public.

No middle ground and no meaningful debate.

Drug users presented as worthless and undesirable members of society, or as bad and/or evil people, simply for using drugs.

Intensive propaganda efforts characterized by sensationalism and outright lies aimed at stirring adverse public sentiment, intolerance and mass hysteria.

Simple ideological identification accepted as justification to deprive of housing, government services and employment.

Drug dealers portrayed as subhuman murderous monsters preying on the hapless innocent.

No widely perceived drug 'problem' prior to the War on Drugs.

Efforts of drug warriors repeatedly presented as valiant failures, claimed due to the perceived size of the 'problem', but with enticement of future success, requiring more autonomy for the drug warriors and greater authority to take drastic actions. Their real failures are still often misrepresented as successes.

Members of targeted group unorganized, as well as politically and socially powerless.

Lacking any effective advocates in positions of power.

Any advocates are also attacked. Even defense lawyers can find themselves charged with conspiracy or other criminal charges simply for defending drug dealers!

Groups persecuting them are both politically and socially powerful

**Image from the Nazca culture
(Phase 6)
modified from CANE 1985
after EISLEB 1977
shading added for definition**