**War on Drugs: Accessibility in Saipan**

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CO 210 - ON03

Fundamentals of Speech Communication: Community Issues Topic

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Saipan, what used to be a calm and easygoing-society has taken a turn over the years with its rising crime rates. Behind the respectful image of sandy shores and beautiful sunsets, there is a side that is unspoken of. The war on drugs is nothing new to the citizens on the island, however it has come to be  a rapid and expanding issue taking over innocent lives. The accessibility of drugs is the first factor sparking the initial issue. But how do they keep getting smuggled here? This essay looks at the history, influence and availability of drugs as well as its impact on society. This community issue of drugs is among one of the worst things that can overtake an island. The importance of addressing this concern is crucial to the safety of everyone. In hopes of providing awareness, the discussion of collected data such as statistics, surveys and articles are to be included.

*History of drugs in the Northern Mariana Islands:*

Part of the Mariana Island archipelago, Saipan was established to be a geographic strategic location during World War II in 1944. Our convenient location in the pacific ocean provides easy access to many countries such as the US mainland, China, Indonesia, Japan and Philippines (Drug Threat Assessment 2003). This contributes to how drugs are entering our borders. In 1998, development of gambling industries were introduced to the islands which sparked opportunities for criminal mischief. Over the years, drug distribution and money laundering has increased, generating a problem of addiction and violence among natives. Drugs like marijuana, cocaine and heroin are circling the island. However, the most commonly abused drug is methamphetamine in which almost all drug investigations conducted relate to the usage of this particular drug.

*Influence and availability:*

The availability of drugs is widespread on the island ranging from drug dealers to unethical doctors and customs officers. The negative consequences of these actions introduces society and the younger generation to exposure of addition, health issues and possible death. Drug usage in the household has become a normality for families, and so have the unfortunate outcomes of these actions.

A recent article posted by the Pacific Daily News mentions a filed civil complaint of penalties over $65,000 against Saipan doctor John. L Doyle. It was a shock to the public in regards to the complaint, that multiple prescriptions such as opioids, xanax and benzodiazepines were distributed illegally and in high amounts. U.S. attorney Shawn N. Anderson stated “It is a sad reality that some medical practitioners are fueling drug addiction in the United States.  All too often, the diversion of drugs for illegitimate use results in tragic consequences” (Pacific Daily News 2021). Another factor contributing to the illegal distribution of drugs is obtained through the main post office in Chalan Kanoa, Saipan. According to Ferdie De La Torre with Saipan Tribune, many prohibited drugs are being smuggled through mail packages  in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic. Claiming that most of the packages are coming from China, an estimated amount of 1,072 grams of meth were seized. Secretary David DLG Atalig states, “so we have in fact, a high number of orders coming in from outside vendors” (iDe La Torre 2020).

In addition to drug influence and availability, a local survey was conducted among the citizens of the Saipan community. With the sole purpose of determining how easy it is to avail drugs, the following question was asked: “Could you obtain illegal drugs at this moment?” The anonymous results concluded to be ranging from the ages of 18-35. Over half of the respondents, 65% answered “Yes” while the remaining 35% did not. Given these points, it's clear that drugs have become predominant in the youth. And with its unforgiving accessibility, it opens a gateway for illicit actions.

*Impact on Society:*

 Permanent emotional and physical damage of drugs negatively impacts the friends, families and coworkers of that individual (Consequences of illicit drugs 2010).  Causing severe health complications and addictions, drugs can also result in death from overdose or related illnesses. Within the CNMI, articles arise of parents being detained due to drug smuggling, leaving their young unattended or without a parent. This is heartbreaking, as it not only affects the incarcerated, but also the innocent. Drug rehabilitation and addiction centers are underdeveloped, which prohibits affected individuals to obtain proper guidance and care. This results in conditions being left untreated or worsened.

Overall, illegal drugs substances are prone to taint the community. The easy accessibility of it is the core issue that opens up these possible allegations of drug abuse, violence and overdose. In conclusion of hopes to spread awareness, this essay covered the topics of the history, availability and impact of drugs on society.

References

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