



Beyond Parody: Communities Must Work Together For Better Tomorrow

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I have spent much of my life - pre-addiction, mid-addiction, and post-addiction - trying to find acceptance socially and personally. The array of doubts and self-criticizing moments that enter my thoughts daily are frequent and quite annoying some days. I believe that part of it is our society, whether intentional or accidental, has conditioned many of us. I am not talking about those that struggle or have struggled with addiction. I am talking about all of us in some way, shape, or form have been conditioned to think, respond, or evade in a particular manner.

Why is it when we are in a group of people, we follow specific status-quo beliefs, but when we are away from that status-quo way of thinking, we sometimes trash the rules we don't typically agree with? What I am getting at is we have been conditioned for decades, possibly even centuries, to vilify those that use drugs to the point of destruction. One of the first dark and revealing memoirs about personal opiate use, published in 1821, was written by Thomas De Quincey. *Confessions of an Opium Eater* highlights Quincey's struggles with opium and the way society looked at those that he coined opium-eaters.

Here is an excerpt:

"Three respectable London druggists, in widely remote quarters of London, from whom I assured me, that the number of amateur opium-eaters (as I may term them) was, at this time, immense: and that the difficulty of distinguishing these persons, to whom habit had rendered opium necessary, from such as were purchasing it with a view to suicide, occasioned them daily trouble and disputes. This evidence respected London only. But, (which will possibly surprise the reader more,) some years ago, on passing through Manchester, I was informed by several cotton-manufacturers, that their work-people were rapidly getting into the practice of opium-eating; so much so, that on a Saturday afternoon the counters of the druggists were strewed with pills of one, two, or three grains, in preparation for the known demand of the evening."

Where there is an opportunity for opulence over the necessity for health and safety in human beings, there will be greed and a devalue in human life. We are some of the most compassionate creatures on Earth, but yet we are the most destructive. Some of us are destructive to ourselves or others. As we read in the excerpt, there is evidence that shows in the 1800s that they knew it was a problem, but the druggists profited. As most of you know, and if you don't, now you do, the pharmaceutical company, Purdue Pharma, has pleaded guilty to three criminal charges. No arrests have been made yet, but money will be awarded to someone... or something. It is still unclear where all of the billions of dollars are doing, but we know they are saying some of the money will be used to back medicated assisted treatment. What! Is the money going to go back into the pharmaceutical industry? If this doesn't make you scratch your head and your blood boil, I don't know what will.

The Sackler family, who currently owns Purdue Pharma, will have to turn over their ownership and dared to say they were acting ethically and lawfully by encouraging doctors to prescribe more opiates. This article isn't the place to go into their disregard for human life entirely. They were the epitome of opulence over the necessity of human value. It never amazes me to see how human beings can be used as some type of cash fodder. We kill humans in preventable wars. We market human beings what look like great solutions to problems only with the hidden guise of making money at the expense of their misled customer.

I am not against capitalism all together; I believe in entrepreneurship, innovation, and fair trade. I believe unchecked capitalism needs to be uprooted and examined when companies like Purdue Pharma were acting like a legal cartel, contributing to thousands of human beings' deaths.

Some of you may be reading this and still have the stubborn position that these "addicts" did it to themselves. Yes, part of getting healthier falls on the individual's motivation to take action, but I implore you to reconsider that worn out and tired way of thinking that someone who struggles is no longer worth a damn. We are supposed to evolve, especially in our hearts and minds. We can do better. We have to do better. I grew up on welfare, receiving food stamps and HUD. Poverty and trauma need to be considered while we develop solutions most of us desperately want. This isn't a joke or a parody. Our communities must work together for a better tomorrow. Many of our lives depend on it.