REEFER MADNESS: REVISITED.

Reefer Madness: Revisited.

By Doug Snead

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## Table of Contents

1. CREDITS ........................................... 1  
2. INTRO ............................................... 5  
3. INT. - CLASSROOM - NIGHT .......................... 9  
4. INT. - MAE'S APARTMENT - DAY ...................... 16  
5. EXT. - SCHOOL CROSSING ON MAIN STREET - DAY ........ 19  
6. INT. - MALT SHOP - DAY ............................ 24  
7. EXT. - MARY LANE'S HOUSE - DAY .................. 27  
8. INT. - BILL HARPER'S HOUSE - NIGHT ............... 32  
9. EXT. - IN TOWN, ON MAIN STREET - DAY ............. 35  
10. INT. - THE MALT SHOP - DAY ....................... 37  
11. INT. - MAE'S APARTMENT - DAY .................... 39  
12. EXT. - IN FRONT OF BOSS'S OFFICE - DAY .......... 45  
13. INT. - INSIDE BOSS'S OFFICE - DAY ............... 46  
14. EXT. - IN FRONT OF BOSS'S OFFICE - DAY .......... 49  
15. INT. - BREAKFAST AT MARY LANE'S HOUSE - DAY .... 51  
16. INT. - GOVERNMENT OFFICE - DAY ................ 54  
17. INT. - PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY ................. 58  
18. EXT. - TENNIS COURT - DAY ...................... 61  
19. INT. - MAE'S APARTMENT - DAY .................... 62  
20. EXT. - MARY LANE'S HOUSE - DAY ................ 65  
21. INT. - MALT SHOP - DAY ............................ 67  
22. INT. - MAE'S APARTMENT - DAY .................... 68  
23. INT. - MALT SHOP - DAY ............................ 75  
24. INT. - COURTROOM - DAY .......................... 77  
25. INT. - APARTMENT 32 - DAY ....................... 80  
26. INT. - BOSS'S OFFICE - DAY ...................... 83  
27. INT. - COURTROOM - DAY .......................... 85  
28. INT. - JURY ROOM - DAY ........................... 88  
29. INT. - COURTROOM - DAY .......................... 91  
30. INT. - APARTMENT 32 - NIGHT ..................... 92  
31. INT. - POLICE INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT ....... 98  
32. INT. - JUDGE'S CHAMBER - DAY ................... 101  
33. INT. - COURTROOM, JUDGE'S BENCH - DAY .......... 105  
34. INT. - CLASSROOM - NIGHT ........................ 108
Reefer Madness: Revisited.

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Dedicated to my wife, Pat.
1. CREDITS

"Reefer Madness"

Mae's apartment, where kids are lured into taking dope (publicity still)

Reefer Madness

Formerly "TELL YOUR CHILDREN"
"Reefer Madness", is the 1936 camp-classic movie: an anti-pot morality play. Yet the term reefer madness has come to encompass no longer an insanity caused by marijuana, but now refers to the lunacy caused by excessive and zealous devotion to the prohibition of marijuana.

Once this type of reefer madness has struck, truth succumbs to the fantastic. There's no story too tall, no statistic too twisted, no research too cherry-picked or biased or obviously bought-and-paid for by government to render the story unfit for use as anti-marijuana propaganda. Any ol' lie will do, when it comes to scaring kids off of the pot.

And if ever there was a time and place for a bit of truth-stretching, what better vehicle could there be than a "drug awareness" movie? Remember: it's all to save the kids from dope.

Original Story: Lawrence Meade

Screenplay: Author Hoerl

Additional Dialogue: Paul Franklin
Directed by: Louis Gasnier

Associate Producer: Sam Siege

Chief Cameraman ... Jack Greerhalgh, A.S.C.

Assistant Director ... Ray Nazzaro

Sound Director ... Hans Weeren

Musical Director ... Abe Meyer

Editor: Carl Pierson

Art Director: Robert Priestley

Properties: Lois Diege

Cast:

Dorothy Short as Mary

Kenneth Craig " Bill
Lillian Miles " Blanche
Dave O'Brien " Ralph
Thelma White " Mae
Carleton Young " Jack
Warren McCullom " Jimmy
Pat Royale " Agnes

MARIHUANA MAKES FIENDS OF BOYS IN 30 DAYS: HASHEESH GOADS USERS TO BLOOD-LUST

Physicians Called On to Urge Harding Bid · All Nations Meet to Throttle Dope At Its Source, United States Laws Too Lenient

"By the tons it is coming into this country-the deadly, dreadful poison that racks and tears not only the body, but the very heart and soul of every human being who once becomes a slave to it in any of its cruel and devastating forms. Which is the worst of the five evils? Who can say? Marihuana is a short cut to the insane asylum. Smoke marihuana cigarettes for a month and what was once your brain will be nothing but a storehouse of horrid specters. Hasheesh makes a murderer who kills for the love of killing out of the mildest mannered man who ever laughed at the idea that any 'habit' could ever get him."

(San Francisco Examiner, 1923)
Let's take a little trip down memory lane, into *Reefer Madness*. We'll look at reefer madness then and now. True, *Reefer Madness* is 1930's tripe: but there's method in that madness, which, even now, is method used in today's anti-marijuana propaganda.

Reefer Madness scared the hell out of our grandparents, causing them to listen to government-peddled fears, rather than their own eyes - or common sense. How did this happen?

Let's pick this turkey clean, and we'll see how a generation was led astray into believing that a little reefer causes good boys and girls to go hopelessly and incurably insane.

Using the actual words spoken in the movie (the screenplay dialog), alongside of newspaper clippings from the 1930's, we'll see why intelligent, well-read people fell for the barrage of propaganda against "marihuana", and those who use it.

Our grandparents couldn't escape the constant hammering of anti-marijuana propaganda. Notice how the anti-marijuana images and pictures of the early 20th century reinforce the messages of the movie.

Images used in this book are for the purposes of critical analysis, which are a fair use of the materials.
Reefer Madness: Revisited.

2. INTRO

Scrolling text.

THE INCIDENTS AND CHARACTERS PORTRAYED IN THIS MOTION PICTURE ARE PURELY FICTIONAL AND ANY SIMILARITY TO ACTUAL OCCURRENCES AND LIVING OR DECEASED PERSONS IS COINCIDENTAL.

FORWARD: The motion picture you are about to witness may startle you. It would not have been possible otherwise, to sufficiently emphasize the frightful toll of the new drug menace which is destroying the youth of America in alarmingly increasing numbers. Marihuana is that drug -- a violent narcotic -- an unspeakable scourge -- The Real Public Enemy Number One!

MARAHUANA - A NEW MENACE.

'Persons using this narcotic, smoke the dried leaves of the plant, which has the effect of driving them completely insane. The addict loses all sense of moral responsibility. Addicts to this drug, while under its influence, are immune to pain, and could be severely injured without having any realization of their condition. While in this condition they become raving maniacs and are liable to kill or indulge in any form of violence to other persons, using the most savage methods of cruelty without, as said before, any sense of moral responsibility.

'When coming from under the influence of this narcotic, these victims present the most horrible condition imaginable. They are dispossessed of their natural and normal will power, and their mentality is that of idiots. If this drug is indulged in to any great extent, it ends in the untimely death of its addict.'

(Janey Canuck*, pen name for Canadian Supreme Court Justice Emily F. Murphy, from The Black Candle, 1922)

Its first effect is sudden violent, uncontrollable laughter, then come dangerous hallucinations -- space expands -- time slows down, almost stands still.... fixed ideas come next, conjuring up monstrous extravagances.
-- followed by emotional disturbances, the total inability to direct thoughts, the loss of all power to resist physical emotions leading finally to acts of shocking violence ... ending often in incurable insanity.

In picturing its soul-destroying effects no attempt was made to equivocate. The scenes and incidents, while fictionized for the purposes of this story, are based upon actual research into the results of Marihuana addiction. If their stark reality will make you think, will make you aware that something must be done to wipe out this ghastly menace, then the picture will not have failed in its purpose.

Because the dread Marihuana may be reaching forth next for your son or daughter ... or yours ... or YOURS!

Reefer Madness wasn’t the first anti-marijuana movie. Americans in the 1930’s received anti-marijuana propaganda in a variety of ways: comic books for the kids, magazine articles targeted at more the sophisticated, and movies and radio news and shows for everyone.

The comic book version (summarized in the film intro) goes like this. A good boy gets introduced to reefers. He goes berserk, and robs and kills indiscriminately.

After smoking reefers, good girls lose their virtue.
Reefer Madness: Revisited.

Fade in to big, important-looking newspaper presses, cranking away a stream of newspapers.

Montage of newspaper front-pages headlines screaming dope (marihuana) is the enemy.

![Image of newspaper front-page]

*note the slogan ‘drug war’*

Erotic, Violent Marihuana

‘Despite the fact that medical men and scientists have disagreed upon the properties of marihuana, and some are inclined to minimize the harmfulness of this drug, the records offer ample evidence that it has a disastrous effect upon many of its users. Recently we have received many reports showing the crimes of violence committed by persons while under the influence of marihuana.

‘The effect of the use of the drug depends largely upon the individual. Among some people the dreams produced are usually of an erotic character, but the principal effect is on the mind which seems to lose the power of directing and controlling its thoughts.’

*(Hearings Before the House Committee on Ways and Means, Session on HR 6385, 1937)*
"Come! Hear! Learn! MEETING TONIGHT 8:30 P.M. School-Parents Association TRUMAN HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM DR. ALFRED CARROLL Subject ... TELL YOUR CHILDREN

"The incidents and characters portrayed in this motion picture are purely fictional." True, but alas, little else in the movie is. The scrolling text here sets the stage for the rest of the screenplay.

If we did not already know, Marihuana is a "violent narcotic," the "Real Public Enemy Number One!" A quick review of the evil effects of this drug: laughter, hallucinations, troublesome fixed ideas, then those ugly monstrous extravagances. (You'll find monstrous extravagances in the DSM - right next to the fixed ideas entry, no doubt.) Of course, smoke enough reefer and you'll commit "acts of shocking violence" leading "often" to "incurable insanity," which is what this gem of a movie is all about. Scared yet? Feeling the fear? When you are, you'll be ready for the propaganda payload here, the instructions to take some action. In this case, you must be pumped full of fear until you realize "something must be done" (in America this translates roughly to, there outta be a law) "to wipe out this ghastly menace" - the menace of marihuana. (As if governments could decree that certain plants no longer exist. Or as if government could dictate the very thoughts and desires of people. They can't, but let's suspend our disbelief - for the duration of the movie.)

Notice here the big, important-looking printing presses and the newspaper headline montage. We read it in the papers, so it must be worthy of attention, true, etc.

Notice also the use of the term drug war in one headline. That is two Richard Nixon-isms in one short space. In 1971, Nixon also declared war on drugs. "America's Public Enemy No. 1 is drug abuse," said ol' Tricky Dick.
Dr. Carroll is addressing a group of concerned parents.

**DR. CARROLL**

It must be stopped.

You, and all the parent-school groups about the country.

And you must stand united on this, and stamp out this frightful assassin of our youth!

You can do it by bringing about compulsory education, on the subject of narcotics in general;

(thumps desk)

The dread marihuana in particular. That is the purpose of this meeting ladies and gentlemen. To lay the foundation for a nationwide campaign by you,

(thumps desk)

To demand by law, such compulsory education. Because

**Hypnotic Dr. Carroll**

Were sophisticated (for 1936) hypnotic techniques slipped into the movie? In the 1985 treatise *Mind Control in America* author Steven Jacobson argues they were.

``Speaking to a PTA meeting, high school principal Dr. Carroll commands parents to stamp out this "assassin of our youth" -- marijuana."

``Dr. Carroll looks into the camera and into the eyes of the audience - [a] hypnotic technique. Picture yourself in a movie theatre, now imagine a huge face on the screen staring at you."

``Dr. Carroll delivers his lines with a hypnotic rhythm that is punctuated by changes in pacing, volume and tone (just like a hypnotist). Dr. Carroll speaks with authority. This happens to be a technique used in hypnosis. Authoritarian techniques, sometimes called paternal techniques, use a strong, commanding, dominating approach."
it is only through enlightenment, that this scourge can be wiped out.

Out of the trafficking in these drugs, a lawlessness that we can scarcely estimate is grown and is now flourishing.

It exists in almost every city and hamlet in the country.

It might be interesting and important for you to know some of the methods used in bringing these drugs into the country and the work of the forces of law and order which are daily combating the traffic, always at the risk of life by their agents.

---

**Narcotics Commissioner**

H. J. Anslinger, Says:

(1920) “Marijuana makes darkies think they’re as good as white men”

(1937) “How many murders, suicides, robberies, criminal assaults, hold-ups, burglaries, and deeds of maniacal insanity it causes each year, especially among the young, can only be conjectured”

(1937) “Marijuana is the most violent drug in the history of mankind”

(1937) “Negro entertainers with their jazz and swing music are declared an outgrowth of marijuana use which possesses white women to tap their feet”

(1938) “Marijuana is more dangerous than heroin or cocaine”

(1938) “If the hideous monster Frankenstein came face to face with marijuana, he would drop dead of fright”

(1948) “Marijuana leads to pacifism and communist brainwashing”
This ceaseless fight against the drug traffic is directed by the Department of Narcotics, Washington.

I have received a letter of vital importance from a member of the Narcotics Bureau. I'm going to read this message to you.

My dear Dr. Carroll, the suppression of the use of marihuana and of the forces lurking behind it are the most important jobs this department is now engaged in.

At the outset of this letter, there is one vital fact I would like to submit. There is a powerful agency: I speak of the School-Parent Association of this country. It can be invaluable in stamping out this scourge. Their help, their eternal vigilance, could be the deciding factor in our fight against it.

Look Into My Eyes

``When Dr. Carroll begins to speak, he raises a sheet of paper in front of him and reads certain "facts" from it. The white sheet of paper prominent in the middle of the screen is a distraction for the eyes to cause that state of mind that is just like "day dreaming" while information is programmed to the audience verbally." (Steven Jacobson, Mind Control in America, 1985)
In 1979, historian William L. White identified **THE PROHIBITIONIST THEMES** -- ideas and images used keep drugs illegal.

1. "The drug is associated with a hated subgroup of the society or a foreign enemy."

2. "The drug is identified as solely responsible for many problems in the culture, i.e., crime, violence, and insanity."

3. "The survival of the culture is pictured as being dependent on the prohibition of the drug."

4. "The concept of 'controlled' usage is destroyed and replaced by a 'domino theory' of chemical progression."

5. "The drug is associated with the corruption of young children, particularly their sexual corruption."

6. "Both the user and supplier of the drug are defined as fiends, always in search of new victims; usage of the drug is considered 'contagious.'"

7. "Policy options are presented as total prohibition or total access."

8. "Anyone questioning any of the above assumptions is bitterly attacked and characterized as part of the problem that needs to be eliminated."

The weed marihuana is grown in every state in the union. Recently in the city of Brooklyn, New York, a field of marihuana was found behind a tenement court. The weed was here being cultivated, regularly stripped and dried and sold in schools and at government army posts, in and around New York. The dried leaves and berries are ground up and made into cigarettes, by a simple hand machine.

Kids in school are in danger from reefer. The Army too.
The deadly narcotic is thus quickly and easily prepared for the market. The sale of marihuana is even more difficult to detect and halt than the traffic in drugs such as opium, morphine and heroin. They are hidden in fake jewelry cases, in the heels of shoes, women's shoes especially, because the drugs can be secreted in false heels.

As we watch the reefer madness unfold, we'll see these prohibitionist ideas play out over and over, like a broken record. (Prohibitionists use repetition to "catapult the propaganda", and reefer madness is no exception.)

Originally entitled, "Tell Your Children," Reefer Madness is a study in how to link marijuana with the injury of children. From beginning to end, the movie will pound home the point that reefer injures and kills kids. The "Reefer Madness" title for the movie nicely identifies marihuana as responsible for many problems in the culture, - crime, violence, and insanity.

Hollow shaving brushes are another means, books with false centers are often used; watch cases convenient hiding places. The value of drugs thus seized is enormous.
Recently a huge supply of heroin was taken. It was concealed in an apparently harmless shipment of thirty-five barrels of olive oil. The deadly drug was burned in the incinerator of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing.

prohibitionists toss soul-destroying drugs into inferno

...as the wicked are cast into the lake of fire. Drug warriors style themselves as avenging angels

this scene from the movie Reefer Madness (1936) appears to be stock footage of a 1930 "big drug bust" photo-op staged by Anslinger/FBN
Reefer Madness: Revisited.

And more vicious, more deadly even than these soul-destroying drugs, is the menace of marihuana!

No doubt, many of you do not believe that these things do happen, that they cannot happen to you. You may also believe that the facts have been exaggerated.

Let me tell you of something that happened right here, in our own city. You probably read about it in the papers; however I'll give you the real facts, behind the case. There was an apartment near one of our high schools. It was run by a woman known as Mae Coleman...

Marihuana: Murder, Assault, Rape - 1938

'I am surprised to learn that certain police officers have been inclined to minimize the effects of the use of marihuana. These officers should review some of the cases that are reported to the Bureau. They would, I am sure, be convinced that the drug is adhering to its old world traditions of murder, assault, rape, physical demoralization and mental breakdown. A study of the effects of marihuana shows clearly that it is a dangerous drug, and Bureau records prove that its use is associated with insanity and crime. Therefore, from the standpoint of police work, it is a more dangerous drug than heroin or cocaine.'

(J. Edgar Hoover, Director of the FBI)

reefer pusher motif (I Was A Racket Girl, 1949)
4. INT. - MAE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Fade in to Mae's apartment, the bedroom. Jack enters. Mae is asleep in bed. The bedroom is slightly messy.

JACK
Hey! Come on Mae, get up!

MAE
What's time is it?

JACK
Time to get up and give this place a going-over. It looks like the Marines have landed.

MAE
Well, that bunch last night was high enough was to take over the Marines and the Navy.

JACK
You better get on the job. Some of the kids may be over this afternoon.

MAE
Oh Jack, we can get along without dragging those young kids up here.

JACK
Oh, why don't you button up your lip? You're always

MARIHUANA - 1934

'Marihuana is a dangerous drug and its abuse is growing. It is the same as HASHISH used widely in the Near East, derived from the Arabic word 'Assassin', which so aptly describes its powers. Its user is quickly reduced from valor and courage to fear and insanity...'