

REEFER MADNESS: REVISITED.

## **Reefer Madness: Revisited.**

**By Doug Snead**

First published 2008

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Reefer Madness: Revisited.

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\*

Dedicated to my wife, Pat.

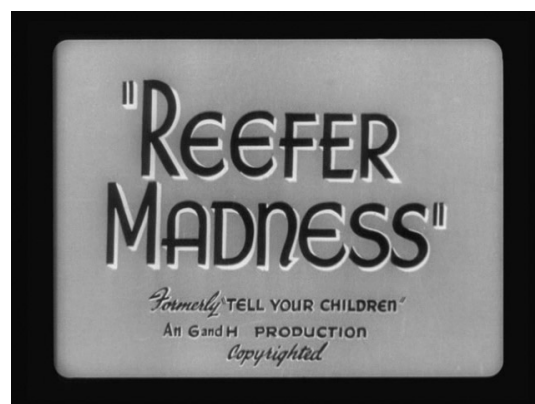


1. CREDITS

"Reefer Madness"



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



Reefer Madness

Formerly "TELL YOUR CHILDREN"

A G and H PRODUCTION

Copyrighted

The movie itself has long since passed into the public domain.

Original Story:  
Lawrence Meade



Reefer Madness

**"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.

Screenplay: Authur Hoerl

Additional Dialogue: Paul  
Franklin

Directed by: Louis  
Gasnier

Associate  
Producer: Sam Siegel

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)*

Josef Forte " Dr. Carroll

Produced by George A. Hirleman

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.*



**Beware! Young and Old—People in All Walks of Life!**

This  may be handed you   
by the friendly stranger. It contains the Killer Drug  
"Marihuana"—a powerful narcotic in which lurks  
**Murder! Insanity! Death!**



Courtesy of the U.S. Department of Justice

### WARNING!

Dope peddlers are shrewd! They may put some of this drug in the  or in the  or in the tobacco cigarette.

WRITE FOR DETAILED INFORMATION, ENCLOSED 12 CENTS IN POSTAGE—MAILING COST

**Address: THE INTER-STATE NARCOTIC ASSOCIATION**  
(Incorporated not for profit)  
**53 W. Jackson Blvd. Chicago, Illinois, U. S. A.**

ARTISTS/WRITERS/PAINTER: The poster is a parody of the famous 'The Great Escape' poster. It is a warning to the public about the dangers of marijuana. The poster is a warning to the public about the dangers of marijuana. The poster is a warning to the public about the dangers of marijuana.

Danger! Kids! Dope! (Federal Bureau of Narcotics poster, 1935)



## 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 !

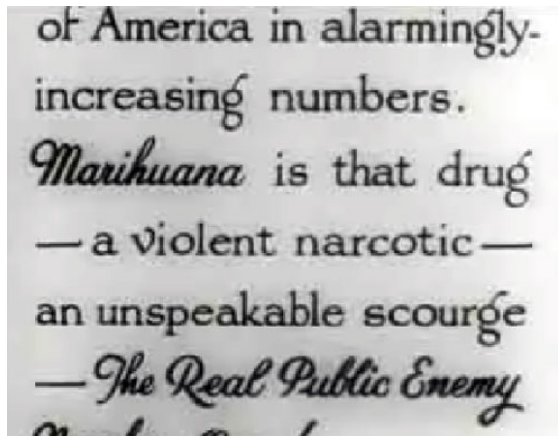
Its first effect is sudden  
violent, uncontrollable  
laughter, then come dangerous  
hallucinations -- space  
expands -- time slows down,  
almost stands still.... fixed  
ideas come next, conjuring up  
monstrous extravagances

## 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)*



society, kids in peril

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.

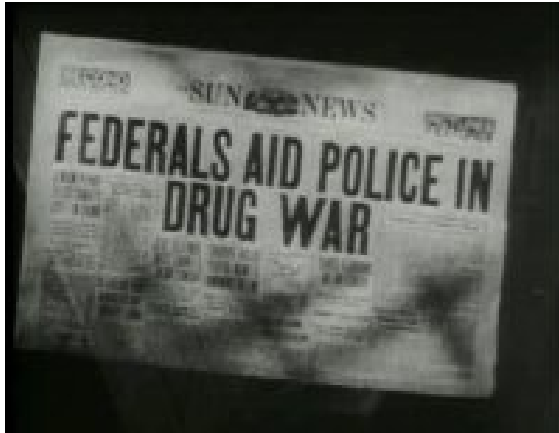
-- followed by emotional disturbances, the total inability to direct thoughts, the loss of all power to resist physical emotions leading finally to acts of shocking violence ... ending often in incurable insanity.

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!

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.



note the slogan 'drug war'

DOPE PEDDLERS  
CAUGHT IN HIGH  
SCHOOL... POLICE  
RAID MARIHUANA  
FLAT... FEDERALS  
AID POLICE IN DRUG  
WAR . . . POLICE  
SMASH DRUG RING...  
SCHOOL-PARENT  
ORGANIZATIONS JOIN DOPE  
FIGHT...

## 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)*

Fade in to newspaper classified ad.

"Come! Hear! Learn!  
MEETING TONIGHT  
8:30 P.M. School-  
Parents  
Association TRUMAN  
HIGH SCHOOL  
AUDITORIUM DR.  
ALFRED CARROLL  
Subject ... TELL  
YOUR CHILDREN

## Marihuana

### Extravagant Ideas, Insanity (1937)

"Then follow errors of sense, false convictions and the predominance of extravagant ideas where all sense of value seems to disappear."

"The deleterious, even vicious, qualities of the drug render it highly dangerous to the mind and body upon which it operates to destroy the will, cause one to lose the power of connected thought, producing imaginary delectable situations and gradually weakening the physical powers. Its use frequently leads to insanity."

*(H. J. Anslinger, Commissioner of Narcotics)*

"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.

3. INT. - CLASSROOM - NIGHT

Dr. Carroll is addressing a group of concerned parents.

DR. CARROLL  
It must be stopped.



expert/official/authority uses fear to get obedience

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.



Harry J. Anslinger, director of the  
Federal Bureau of Narcotics - in  
many ways the father of marijuana  
prohibition

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.



Dr Carroll - he has the real facts

## 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)*

(pause, rustles  
letter)

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

(rustles letter,  
reading)

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.



Kids in school are in danger from reefer. The Army too.

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.

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 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.



then: books with false centers



now: same old thing

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.



Anslinger inspects drug seizure, c1930. (from the DEA 'Target America' Exhibit, 2004) Compare with scene from the movie

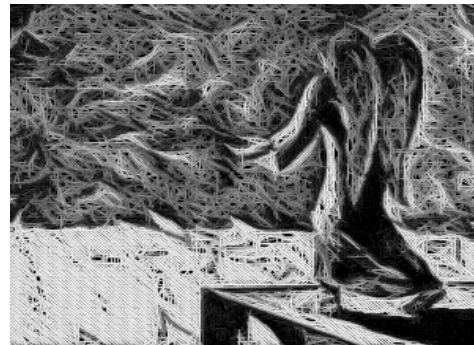


this scene from the movie Reefer Madness (1936) appears to be stock footage of a 1930 "big drug bust" photo-op staged by Anslinger/FBN

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

(voice rising,  
with emphasis)  
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



The Assassins! Mad Slayers of the East!, Killers, comic book (c.1950)

## 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..."

## MARIHUANA BUTCHERS

"... Sometime ago Florida had a horrible tragedy. A young boy butchered his entire family while under the influence of the drug. Florida acted. It hastily passed the Uniform State Narcotic Act which covers cannabis or marihuana; and peddlers there have been sent up for as long as 5 years. Florida is ruthlessly stumping out use of the drug..."