

Choose better idols

by Justine Reyes
Graphic Designer



What do Taylor Swift and Nicki Minaj have in common? They are both highly regarded female celebrities who are constantly under the public eye and often expected to behave as role models for millions of people around the world. Regardless of personal opinion, there is no doubt that they both are insanely talented in their own ways, as are most celebrities.

However, unlike Taylor Swift, celebrities like Nicki Minaj are under constant scrutiny for breaking the barriers of a typical female role in society. Although Taylor Swift is rightfully praised for empowering millions of teenage girls around the world through song and lyric, Nicki Minaj is constantly criticized for being outspoken and is usually just written off as a typical overbearing celebrity drama queen.

What many people don't realize is that most of the true role models in society today are extremely underrated and are put down for not embodying the typical cookie-cutter ideals. Celebrities such as Rihanna, Ke\$ha, and especially Minaj, are criticized for being outspoken about empowering women and girls without the help of a man, and giving women control of their own bodies. Minaj even recently lashed out at the media for calling her and other female celebrities "divas" for being assertive over the creative roles concerning their own music and image, while men who are assertive are often praised by the media for taking charge of their careers.

Minaj, someone who constantly challenges the traditional standards of beauty, is also a role model in the way she dresses. She defies the typical norms of "fashion" through loud and colorful clothes that she chooses for herself, while still maintaining a feminine demeanor and appearance. She symbolically challenges typically masculine symbols and clothing in her own feminine outfits, as well accessorizing with spikes and sharp edges.

While it is completely fine to choose role models based on your own personal values, it's especially important to reconsider celebrities who are put under constant heat just for being "different" and breaking the expected stereotypes of a woman by being independent, intelligent, and headstrong.

Broadway stars are talentless

by Rheagan Rizzio
Sports Editor



In December of 2012 the media revealed that Carly Rae Jepsen, known almost exclusively for her one-hit-wonder "Call Me Maybe," is set to make her Broadway debut in Rodgers & Hammerstein's "Cinderella" on Feb. 4 of this year. She is taking over this role from Laura Osnes

who completes her year-long run in January.

Many were less than thrilled with this decision and have harshly criticized the choice of Jepsen for the role. While this may seem harsh since Jepsen has not made her debut and cannot yet be judged, the criticism of these casting choices has quite a bit of justification. Broadway and Hollywood often cast for name alone, and not for talent, which leads to many less-than-stellar performances because of improper casting and misuse of talent (or significant lack thereof).

One recent example of choosing to cast for name over qualifications is Carrie Underwood in her performance in The Sound of Music as Maria von Trapp. It is true that Julie Andrews was near-perfect in her original portrayal of Maria and this is not an easy precedent to live up to. Critiques of Underwood therefore do have merit. The overall opinion seems to be that, while her vocals were amazing, her acting was atrocious and she did not fit the part of Maria at all. Kym Karath, who played the role of Greti von Trapp in the 1965 version live-tweeted while watching, stating that she was "mystified and disappointed so far by the [Sound of Music] special." She continued on, echoing the thoughts of many saying "[I] love Carrie Underwood but this role is just not right for her. She is lovely, her voice is beautiful, but acting is wrong." While Carrie Underwood's performance left much to be desired, she enticed many to tune

in to watch the program. Her name brought viewership, which is likely a main reason she was cast in this role over many other actresses who are much more capable and well-suited to play Maria.

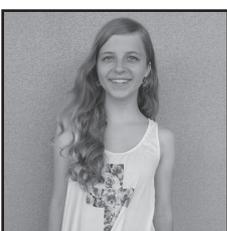
A similar choice of casting for name over talent was the decision to cast Kristen Stewart as Bella Swan in Stephanie Meyer's Twilight Saga. Stewart was widely criticized for her lack of emotion and boring, lifeless performance. At last year's Razzies (an awards show to honor the worst in film) in February, she was awarded the Worst Actress prize. While Stewart was not there to accept her award, Razzies founder John Wilson compensated for this by having a life-size cardboard cutout of Stewart to accept it in her stead, stating that "the cardboard Kristen Stewart... was at least as lively as the real one, so I'm not sure we lost out by much." While this was done in a joking spirit, these are widely shared feelings and beliefs about Stewart's acting abilities. However, as a fairly well-known actress before the Twilight Saga with leading roles in such films as Catch That Kid and Zathura, her name attracted many to the theater to watch the film, which benefited everyone except those who had to endure the multiple hours of bland, expressionless acting that comprised a majority of the five Twilight films.

While Jepsen is not set to premiere as Cinderella until next week, and therefore cannot be yet be judged, the complaints against her are not completely unfounded. Hopefully Jepsen can live up to the precedent Osnes has set, for if she fails to do so she will be just another example of a time show business has cast for name over talent simply to attract more viewers and make more money.

(Sources: NY Daily News, New York Times, Entertainment Weekly)

Weed should not be legal

by Lauren Fredericks
Web Editor



The legalization of marijuana is a growing and heated debate. Many people are beginning to favor legalization. After all, no deaths have occurred from marijuana alone, and America's prisons are overflowing. However, organizations in favor of changing marijuana laws are neglecting to mention the key facts surrounding this controversial drug.

After alcohol and tobacco, marijuana is the most popular recreational drug in America. Government surveys reveal that 25 million Americans have smoked marijuana in the past year alone, and 14 million of these smoke it regularly, even though the law forbids it. Many are caught;

about 86 marijuana arrests occur per hour. NORML.org, a popular marijuana legalizing site, stated that, "public policies should reflect this reality, not deny it." However, the government should not embrace the fact that hundreds of thousands people break our nation's laws. The fact that many Americans no longer respect laws is not a reason for us to give up; it is a reason to take charge.

Most people are unaware of the severe problems marijuana can cause. Marijuana is classified as a Schedule 1 drug by Congress, meaning it has an extreme potential for abuse. According to the Office of National Drug Control Policy, in 2011, 4.2 million people met the criteria to be declared addicted to marijuana. This is more than the number of people addicted to pain relievers, cocaine, tranquilizers, hallucinogens, or heroin combined. Marijuana's high can distort perceptions, impair coordination, cause trouble thinking or reacting, and it creates problems with learning and memory. Those who smoke marijuana are putting themselves and others in danger. People under the influence often make poor decisions, such as driving or trying more dangerous drugs without previously planning on doing so. Poor driving and judgement can and do cause accidents.

There are also long-term health issues associated with the drug. Research by the US National Library of Medicine suggests one of the most severe results is that marijuana use may lead to schizophrenia. High doses can also result in severe psychotic reactions.

Marijuana can affect the heart and respiratory system and increase the risk of heart attack fivefold in the first hour after use. A recent study revealed that those who smoke marijuana have more health issues than those who smoke tobacco, including respiratory problems.

Advocates for changing marijuana laws argue that keeping marijuana illegal overwhelms prisons, taxing marijuana would assist the economy, and legalizing of marijuana would eliminate the drug from black markets. In 2004 it was revealed that only 0.01 percent of state prisoners were in jail for marijuana charges alone. Overcrowding in jails is not influenced by the fact that possessing, transporting, and selling marijuana is a crime. Additionally, imposing a tax on marijuana would not benefit the economy in the long run. Although people in favor of marijuana legalization argue this is true, the Office of National Drug Control Policy disagrees, stating these assertions are, "based on a series of assumptions that are in some instances subject to tremendous uncertainty and in other cases not valid." Finally, legalizing marijuana would not remove it from the black market. Although the drug would no longer be illegal, drug dealers could still manufacture marijuana and sell it for less than the standard price.

There seems to be obvious benefits to legalizing marijuana. However, when one digs deeper into its role in the US and its effects on people's health, one can see that marijuana is a hazardous drug that should never become legal.

(Sources: The Office of National Drug Control Policy, NORML.org, US National Library of Medicine)

Pot isn't that big of a deal

by Aidan Adams-Campeau
Humor Editor



In 2013, voters in Colorado and Washington passed initiatives legalizing marijuana for recreational use within their states. On Jan. 1, the first recreational marijuana stores opened their doors throughout Colorado. The action of these states is a large step towards ending the federal war on marijuana, and citizens across the country are growing increasingly opposed to the criminalization of weed; according to a recent CNN poll, 55% of Americans want to see pot legalized. These citizens have reached the correct conclusion on the issue, for legalizing marijuana is the right move from an economic and moral perspective.

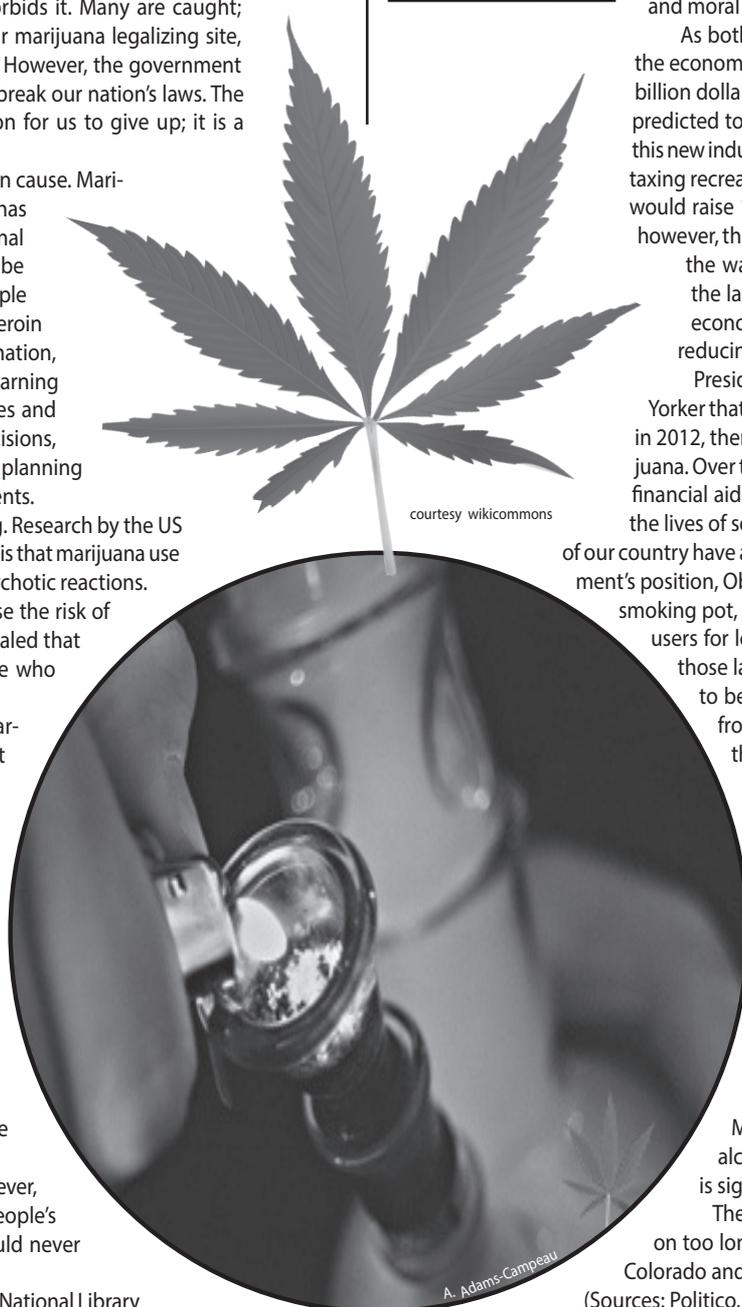
As both recreational and medical marijuana use becomes more popular, the economic benefits of this new industry become greater. An estimated 1.43 billion dollars of legal marijuana will be sold in 2013 alone, and that number is predicted to be 2.34 billion in 2014, a 64% growth rate. In addition to the jobs this new industry could create, state governments would benefit tremendously by taxing recreational marijuana. The Drug Policy Alliance estimates that California would raise 1.4 billion annually by taxing marijuana sales. Under current laws, however, the federal government spends over 51 billion dollars per year to fight the war on drugs, an effort which has cost nearly a trillion dollars over the last forty years. Legalizing marijuana would boost the United States economy and would generate government revenue while dramatically reducing drug war costs.

President Barack Obama recently stated in an interview with the New Yorker that he does not believe marijuana is more dangerous than alcohol. Yet in 2012, there were 658,231 arrests in the United States for possession of marijuana. Over two hundred thousand students have been denied access to federal financial aid because of a drug conviction. It is morally reprehensible to derail the lives of so many over the possession of a drug that the last three presidents of our country have admitted to using. Recognizing the hypocrisy of the federal government's position, Obama went on to say that "Middle-class kids don't get locked up for smoking pot, and poor kids do... We should not be locking up kids or individual users for long stretches of jail time when some of the folks who are writing those laws have probably done the same thing." Citizens cannot continue to be complacent about the imprisonment of hundreds of thousands, from which upper class white people are usually exempt, for a crime that we disregard when it comes to our highest elected officials.

Obama's belief in marijuana's relative safety is well-grounded in science. While drinkers often die from alcohol poisoning after binge drinking, users cannot overdose on marijuana. In fact, the short-term effects of marijuana are minor, and the harmful side effects result from the impairment in judgement that intoxicants create rather than adverse effects caused by marijuana's chemical makeup. Long-term effects of marijuana use seem to be relatively minor as well, though research is limited. However, concerns that marijuana smoking might lead to lung cancer have been debunked by numerous medical studies. Long-term health concerns caused by marijuana use pale in comparison to the long-term health risks of alcohol use, such as liver damage and cancer. Marijuana use does impair brain development in young users, but alcohol use does as well. Overall, the evidence shows that marijuana is significantly safer for personal consumption than alcohol.

The hypocritical treatment of marijuana possession as a crime has gone on too long and has ruined too many lives. States should follow the lead of Colorado and Washington in legalizing recreational marijuana.

(Sources: Politico, PolicyMic, Huffington Post, Daily Mail, LiveScience, Virginia.gov)



courtesy wikicommons

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