

Who's To Blame for America's Drug Problem?: The Search for Scapegoats in the "War on Drugs"

Susan Mackey-Kallis and Dan Hahn

This essay extends Burke's notion of victimage as a symbolic response to socially-created guilt to analyze six years of political debate and action in the U.S. drug war (1986–1991). We use a Burkean/metaphorical framework to explore the characteristics of guilt-based drug rhetoric and its ethical entailments. We argue that scapegoating rhetoric—the rhetoric of vilification in times of "war"—is "dialectically appealing" in Burkean terms because it provides for common enemies, invites a community united against these foes, morally justifies public opinion, and offers guilt relief to a large number of people. Scapegoating in the drug war was problematic, however, because it misplaced blame for the drug problem, it circumscribed drug policy debate about alternative solutions, and it contributed to a frustrated and sometimes apathetic citizenry more often the victims of racism, vigilantism, and unfair drug sentencing than the beneficiary of medical attention and drug education. The essay concludes with a discussion of the desirability and limits of guilt as a rhetorical strategy.

KEY CONCEPTS U.S. drug war, Burkean criticism, metaphorical analysis, guilt-based rhetoric, scapegoating/victimage

SUSAN MACKEY-KALLIS (Ph.D., Pennsylvania State University, 1988) is an Assistant Professor in the Communication Arts Department, Villanova University, Villanova, PA 19085. **DAN HAHN** (Ph.D., University of Arizona, 1968) is a Professor in the Communication Department, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL 33431. The authors wish to thank the editor and two anonymous reviewers for their invaluable advice regarding revisions of this essay. This study was funded in part by a research grant from Villanova University.

American adults may regularly dope themselves witless with pills, powders and liquids, but they balk at the suggestion that it's perfectly natural for the kiddies to do as they see the grown-ups do. Instead, they look for vicious criminals for whom the cruelest death would be too gentle. (Russell Baker, 1986, p. 27)

In 1986 both houses of the United States Congress passed a mandatory sentencing law for drug-related offenses. Known as the Anti-Drug Abuse Act, the law established mandatory sentences for all drug convictions. Under the law, for example, a first conviction for the possession of 50 grams of crack cocaine results in a mandatory 10 year prison sentence without parole. If the defendant has a previous offense the penalty is 20 years. According to the front page, lead article in the June 20, 1993 *Philadelphia Inquirer*, federal judges, lawmakers and politicians are beginning to argue that the mandatory sentences are unfair and unjust. Because of the law, a number of senior federal judges have refused to preside over drug cases, many have spoken out against the law, and some have even quit in protest. Says one federal judge who quit, "Some of these drug sentences are longer than murder sentences. . . . It's crazy" ("More Judges," p. 1).

The 1986 Anti-Drug Abuse Act was the direct result, the article argues, of a growing anti-drug political climate sparked by the cocaine-related death of University of Maryland basketball player Len Bias and fueled by election hysteria over drugs, particularly "crack" cocaine, as a popular "get tough" issue. The law's purpose "was to insure equal sentencing across the country and to serve as a deterrent and punishment in the war on drugs" ("More Judges," 1993, p. A12). The article concludes, however, that it has done neither. The law has become so controversial that Attorney General Janet Reno ordered it reviewed and Congressional hearings on the law were to be held by the end of 1993.

On September 16, 1993, a Clinton Administration drug policy review declared Defense Department interdiction efforts a failure that had "largely failed to stem the flow of cocaine into the United States" ("U.S. Considers Shift," 1993, p. A1). The National Security Council concurred, claiming that drug interdiction has "wasted hundreds of millions of dollars" ("U.S. Altering Tactics," 1993, p. A12). Says Attorney General Janet Reno, "General interdiction, which has been very costly, does not work" ("U.S. Considering Shift," 1993, p. A1).

The responses of judges, lawmakers, journalists, and Clinton Administration officials in 1993 to U.S. drug interdiction policies and the drug-abuse act of 1986 anecdotally highlight the central argument of this essay: from 1986–1991 American policy debate about drugs, relying on victimage rhetoric, was more successful at (mis)placing blame for the drug problem than at finding solutions for it. Fighting a "war against drugs" meant getting "tough" and getting tough meant finding someone to blame and punish for drug use in America. Although appealing as a rhetorical strategy, guilt-based rhetorics like victimage are problematic. While simplified solutions may emerge from them, a significant result of misplaced blame is that, despite the mis-identification of the problem, the rhetoric takes on a life of its own, creating victims, a citizenry immune to the effects of the rhetoric, and a political climate which may hamper future rhetorical efforts. In the American drug war waged from 1986–1991, the enemies—drug lords, drug pushers, and corrupt or inefficient politicians—became the scapegoats successfully but inappropriately blamed and symbolically sacrificed for our guilt regarding drug use and our failure to stop drug use in America. These victims not only offered guilt-relief for the drug problem and our inability to solve it, they also acted as common enemies against whom a "consubstantial" community could potentially emerge. As a result, however, the war against drugs circumscribed drug policy debate while creating a frustrated and sometimes apathetic American citizenry, more often the victims of racism, vigilantism, and unfair drug sentencing than the beneficiary of medical attention and drug education.

We use a Burkean/metaphorical framework to explore the characteristics of guilt-based drug rhetoric and its ethical entailments. Specifically, we extend Burke's notion of victimage as a symbolic response to socially-created guilt to analyze six years of U.S. political debate regarding the drug war waged in America from 1986–1991. We start with a brief discussion of Burke's writings on mortification and victimage in the guilt-redemption cycle to explain both the shape and rhetorical appeal of scapegoating rhetoric. We then demonstrate how the use of the "war" metaphor in domestic policy debate, by its reliance on vilification, consensus, and moral justification, heightened scapegoating in the fight against drugs. We then extend this Burkean/metaphorical framework in an analysis of drug rhetoric from 1986–1991. The essay concludes with a discussion of the problems with waging a domestic war on drugs, the ethical ramifications of guilt-based drug rhetoric, and the limits of guilt as a rhetorical strategy.

The Guilt-Redemption Cycle

According to Burke, language, or symbolic action in broader terms, creates the conditions for a guilt-ridden society. In nature the negative does not exist, "every natural condition being positively what it is" (Burke, 1961, p. 19). Language, by introducing the possibility of the negative, ultimately works to separate us from nature. "Man (sic) is the symbol-using inventor of the negative/separated from his natural conditions by instruments of his own making" (Burke, 1961, p. 16). Language not only separates us from nature, it also divides us from each other. Language, built on the linguistic "no" and its various moral commands, sets up the conditions for hierarchy—a laddered society. However, since we are always uncomfortable with our place in the hierarchy ("Those 'Up' are guilty of not being 'Down,' those 'Down' are guilty of not being 'Up' " [Burke, 1966, p. 15]), and since we are incapable of obeying all commandments—the "thou-shalt-nots" of societal injunction—this creates a guilt-ridden society.¹ In Burke's words, "Order leads to Guilt/ (for who can keep commandments!)" (1961, p. 4).

According to Burke, our attempts to absolve guilt, or what he calls "hierarchal psychosis" (1965, p. 279), become a permanent tension in the human condition: "Guilt needs redemption (for who would not be cleansed!)" (Burke, 1961, p. 4–5). Equating relief from guilt with excretion, Burke notes that "only by excretion can the body remain healthy" (1966, p. 341). Excretion, a physical cleansing of the body, is compared with guilt redemption, a moral cleansing of the soul.² Moral cleansing is necessary, Burke explains, for the individual to maintain spiritual and psychological health.

According to Burke, language, or symbolic action, is the means by which society purges itself of collective guilt. Therefore, just as language creates guilt by providing the "thou-shalt-not's" of moral command, it is also the vehicle by which we relieve ourselves of ever-present guilt (Burke, 1961, p. 231). Symbolic action provides two ways to relieve guilt: victimage and mortification.

Mortification, or self-blame, involves suffering for our sins through "self-inflicted punishment, self-sacrifice or self-imposed denials and restrictions designed to slay characteristics, impulses, or aspects of the self" (Foss, Foss, & Trapp, 1991, p. 197). Mackey-Kallis and Hahn (1991), for example, demonstrate that mortification was the preferred rhetorical strategy of the Reagans' "Just Say No" to drugs campaign. Although the "Just Say No" campaign created many victims, the predominant message to the American public was that we should blame ourselves for the drug problem and accept the responsibility to solve it by saying "no" and denying ourselves that which, although seductive—like most sin—is destructive. The mortification message of the "Just Say No" campaign was that "only through a repudiation of drugs and a moral cleansing of our collective body from this evil [would] we be truly free" (Mackey-Kallis & Hahn, 1991, p. 4).

In victimage, as opposed to mortification, we purge ourselves by transferring our guilt to an outside agent or agents who are made to suffer in our place. In Burke's words, "the 'guilt' intrinsic to hierarchal order . . . calls correspondingly for 'redemption' through victimage" (1965, p. 284). The victim becomes the scapegoat—the carrier of our sin—and the one, therefore, who must suffer or be punished. In this transfer of guilt the scapegoat is either symbolically or actually killed; "Redemption needs Redeemer (which is to say, a Victim!) /Order/Through Guilt/To Victimage/ (hence: Cult of the Kill)" (Burke, 1961, p. 5).

According to Burke, victimage, rather than mortification, is the preferred method for purging guilt because "if one can hand over his (sic) infirmities to a vessel, or 'cause', outside the self, one can battle an external enemy instead of battling an enemy within. And the greater one's internal inadequacies the greater amount of evils one can load up on the back

of the 'enemy' " (1957, p. 174). In other words, the other provides the "vessel" into which can be poured our sins, particularly guilt over our shortcomings and weaknesses. Scapegoating thus provides a more palatable redemption than that offered by self-blame or mortification. Additionally, Burke explains that:

The scapegoat is dialectically appealing, since it combines in one figure contrary principles of identification and alienation. And by splitting the hierarchic principle into factions, it becomes ritually gratifying; for each faction can then use the other as *katharma*, the unclean vessel upon which can be loaded the dyslogistic burdens of vocabulary. . . . When this state of affairs prevails, it is not merely men's differences that drive them apart, it is also the *elements they share*, "vices" and "virtues" alike, since the same motives are capable of both eulogistic and dyslogistic naming. (1969, pp. 140–141)³

Defining ourselves in opposition to a scapegoat allows for common participation in victimage and, as unsavory as it may be, provides a basis for shaping a community. Through shared participation in the alienation of the other we create identification among ourselves: "Is it possible that rituals of victimage are the 'natural' means for affirming the principle of social cohesion above the principle of social division?" (Burke, 1965, p. 286). "Is it not a terrifying fact," Burke asks, "that you can never get people together except when they have a goat in common? That's the terrifying thing that I begin to see as the damnation of the human race. That's how they have to operate; they get congregation by segregation" (Aaron, 1966, p. 499).

Burke explains that once we achieve redemption, either through victimage or mortification, we can again unify and find the consubstantiation with all humanity that hierarchy defies: "We cannot deny that consubstantiation is established by common involvement in a killing" (Burke, 1969, p. 265). Thus, a significant motive for human symbolizing is guilt-relief or redemption from sins in order to achieve the identification or consubstantiation with all humanity that hierarchy defies.

Victimage, or scapegoating, offers both release from guilt and identification with humanity. Whether or not the scapegoat is accurately blamed for the difficulty, however, the rhetor's success at proposing solutions is furthered. This is because scapegoating rhetoric, as we will argue, takes on a life of its own. If blame is misplaced this only furthers solutions that are equally misplaced, as happened in the war on drugs. Not only did it target the wrong cause but its success has led in the 1990s to discriminatory treatment of specific populations in the United States as well as circumscribed debate on alternative solutions to the drug problem in America.

Guilt-Relief and Consubstantiation in "War"

The rhetoric of war is often a rhetoric, in Burkean terms, of guilt-relief and consubstantiation. One of the central purposes of war rhetoric is to motivate and manufacture the consent of the domestic community (Gustainis, 1993). This is often achieved through vilification of the external or foreign enemy. The enemy not only provides the rallying point for the community, the reason for war being waged in the first place, s/he is also the source of the problem and the one to be blamed for it. In other words, in fighting a real or perceived threat, such as in a war, someone or something must be the embodiment of that threat. The rhetoric of war often (but perhaps not always) requires an enemy as scapegoat. For example, in Burkean terms, America's guilt over slavery may have been relieved by blaming the Confederacy for sustaining the institution of slavery. Vilifying both slavery and the Southern slave holder as the enemy may have created a rallying point for Northern troops and society.

To defeat slavery and America's guilt over it, the North had to defeat the Confederacy, the embodiment of that guilt. Only then could we have a "United" States. Burke (1957) makes a similar argument about Hitler's campaign against "the Jew." Rather than seek social, economic, or political causes for Germany's collapse, it was more appealing and profitable for Hitler and the German people to vilify and blame "the Jew" as the source of the country's problems. Waging a war against "the Jew" would eradicate both the problem and its attendant guilt. Ideally, for Hitler, this would create a redeemed and consubstantial community—a united Aryan nation. Thus, the naming and vilifying of an enemy as scapegoat unites a community against this common foe at the same time that it offers guilt-release.

Creating consensus and motivating the domestic community against a foreign enemy in a war seems commonsensical, necessary, and often natural. The active support of many Americans for America's involvement in many wars and the strong sense of patriotism, nationalism and unity fostered by wartime is well-documented and, for many, laudable. Even America's vilification and ethnic stereotyping of, for example, the Japanese in World War II as "slanty-eyed bastards" and the North Vietnamese in the Vietnam War as "gooks" and "yellow bastards" was justified, for some, in the name of national defense and/or strategic national interests. However, the reliance on the "war" metaphor in discussion of an issue of domestic concern,⁴ as in Hitler's "Jewish problem," becomes more problematic and the entailments of that metaphorical choice becomes less justified.

Moral Justification through Consensus in "War"

Morales (1989) argues that the drug rhetoric used by both Reagan and Bush was informed by a rhetoric of national security. According to Morales, a discourse of national security, when it is invoked, promotes a unified stance against a perceived enemy—a call to "rally 'round the flag!" This type of rhetoric, however, by attempting to identify and label potential threats, invites a political jingoism and blind defense of any or all policy proposals in the name of the greater national good. The rhetoric of national security closes down the potential for debate or examination of the proposals at hand. As a rhetorical choice it also assumes a bipartisan stance; if the individual or group challenges a policy proposal they risk being labeled as outside political consensus. In this sense, to oppose a policy or position couched in the language of national security is tantamount to committing treason.

While the rhetoric of national security may not be identical with the rhetoric of war, we would argue that the use of "war" as a metaphor in domestic policy discourse, as in the rhetoric of national security, relies on an "us-them" mentality. It invites solidarity against a vilified external enemy while assuming the moral justness of both the cause and the "call to arms." It may be that invocation of the "war" metaphor in domestic policy deliberation and action, by demanding patriotic consensus, closes down healthy democratic debate over the best course of action. Booth, for example, argues that metaphors about weaponry used to destroy a foe are exceptionally hazardous because "the worst distortions occur when we think we have arrived at absolute truth through univocal, simple, economic clarities" (1988, p. 300). It may be that using "war" as the metaphor of choice to respond to a domestic problem inflames national sentiment against an easily scapegoated enemy, justifies that sentiment, and creates a politics of jingoism. Moreover, it may be that blaming a nation's problems on some external enemy allows a public to vilify and destroy that enemy rather than acknowledging the "enemy" within, i.e., a problem's potential domestic roots. And, finally, it may be that assuming a domestic problem has a simple external cause leaves the problem intact and the citizenry disheartened and uncomprehending why treating a problem's symptoms does not make the problem go away.

According to Burke, we seek unity because there is division among us. Paradoxically, however, it is through sowing discord—creating victims—that we reap harmony. From 1986–1991, the Reagan and Bush Administrations, with their focus on interdiction and stiffer penalties for pushers and drug users, George Bush in his 1989 national drug control policy speech, and the U.S. mass media, in their coverage and discussion of drugs, used the language of war when telling the tale of drug abuse in America. The “war” metaphor’s popularity is explainable in Burkean terms because waging war against drug lords, drug dealers, and inept or corrupt politicians provided common enemies. These foes became the victims sacrificed, the scapegoats blamed for the drug problem in America. We were guilty of polluting our bodies with drugs and/or allowing our public “body”—the community—to be polluted with drugs. To relieve the guilt of this public pollution we found an “unclean vessel,” “katharma,” “upon which [could] be loaded the dyslogistic burdens of vocabulary” (Burke, 1969, p. 141). By relieving our guilt we could once again find consubstantiation with a community of Americans united against these common foes.

We now turn to an analysis of how this consubstantial union, expressed in terms of a “war on drugs,” targeted foreign cartels, foreign and domestic dealers, and corrupt or unsupportive politicians. This victimage rhetoric successfully offered guilt-relief to many Americans, defined and motivated a community by identifying common enemies, strengthened consent and marginalized dissent, created consensus about solutions, and weeded out corruption in the ranks by identifying those who were “soft” on drugs. Our purpose is not merely to illustrate the success of the venture, however, but to demonstrate the impact of victimage rhetoric gone astray. We conclude, therefore, by discussing both the implications of victimage rhetoric and its political entailments.

Scapegoating in the “War” Against Drugs

Guilt-Relief through Symbolic Action: Establishing the Terms and the Turf

From 1986 onward, the U.S. drug problem was often presented in discourse and specific actions in ways that were mutually supportive. The message was unmistakable: drug use in America was a national security issue. Although the “war on drugs” slogan favored by the Bush Administration was not officially employed by the Reagan Administration, Reagan’s policies inferred that he was also fighting a war against an external enemy. For example, the Reagan Administration’s focus on drug interdiction at the borders and in foreign countries implied that the foreign drug cartels were a major security threat as well as the cause of the American drug problem. Although the public outcry that attended the sending of the U.S. Army into Bolivia in “Operation Blast Furnace” in 1986 is perhaps more memorable than the less familiar “Operation Bat,” a 3-year Army, Air Force and Navy Operation in the Bahamas, or “Hat Trick 1,” a Coast Guard operation in the Caribbean (DeMott, 1986), or “Operation Alliance,” a cooperative venture with the Mexican Government (Brinkely, 1986), all of these actions were Reagan Administration attempts to stop drugs either at their point of entry into the country or before they reached the borders.

These interdiction operations were also consonant with President Reagan’s 1986 signing of a National Security directive which declared “drug traffic into the U.S. to be a national security risk” (DeMott, 1986, p. 13). Nearly two years later, in March of 1988, *The New York Times* editorializes, “Drug trafficking, no longer just a regrettable social problem, now threatens national security. . . . The Latin drug issue not only deserves more priority but top priority for the Secretary of State and the National Security Council. . . . America has to start resisting the drug empire as angrily as any other foe” (“For Drugs,” p. A22). A discourse

of national security, according to Morales, assumes an external enemy, a perceived foreign threat. For American policy makers, at least during the late 1980s, Latin drug dealers and drug lords were that threat.

The 1987 capture of one of the leaders of the Medellin drug cartel, Carlos Lehder Rivas ("Crazy Charlie") offered the ideal enemy for the Reagan Administration, the American public, and the mass media in the war against drugs. According to Sciolino, "Crazy Charlie" stimulated American revulsion with, and fear of, foreign born enemies with his "half-baked revolutionary rhetoric, larding" as he did, "his speeches and interviews with talk of cocaine as the 'Achilles heel of American imperialism', and the 'Latin American atom bomb' aimed at the United States" (1987, p. 204). Sciolino herself notes that "the cocaine industry is . . . a closed society of foreign-born criminals" (pp. 203–204). The implication was clear: criminals like Rivas were a national security threat.

In May of 1988, despite opposition by the Pentagon, both houses of Congress voted to give the military anti-drug trafficking powers (Rasky, 1988). A *New York Times* poll published just one month prior to the Congressional vote might have been a source of support for the action. According to the poll, the majority of Americans felt drugs were "a more important foreign policy issue than terrorism and Central America" (Dionne, 1988, p. A25). By 1988, the majority of Americans, like Ronald Reagan and the U.S. Congress, proclaimed drugs an important foreign policy issue. In the war against drugs the front line was the United State's border and the major threat to national security was the foreign-born drug pusher. To stop the drug problem we had to stop the drug lords.

George Bush's approach to the U.S. drug problem continued Reagan's targeting of foreign drug lords while also officially declaring the Reagan Administration's unofficial war on drugs. Bush's national drug control strategy, televised nationally on September 5, 1989, uses the "war" metaphor to shape the drug problem as an issue of national security and to label drug lords, drug dealers, and partisan politicians as the enemy threatening that security.

Bush opens his address by saying, "This is the first time since taking the oath of office that I felt an issue was so important, so threatening, that it warranted talking directly with you, the American people" ("Text," 1989, p. B6).⁵ In "talking *directly with you*," Bush emphasizes the pressing need for direct contact with the American people and the compelling need for our personal response. Bush continues: "All of us agree that the gravest domestic threat facing our nation today is drugs." Although the threat may be domestic, and we soon learn the internal enemies we must face in what Bush calls a "war on drugs," some of these enemies are external: the drug producing countries, the smugglers, and the drug lords, or, as Bush calls them, the "cocaine killers" that are murdering America.

Bush's speech invokes the language of war throughout, not only to motivate Americans in the "battle" against our enemies, but to define the stakes in this "war," to stake out the "turf," and to describe our "weapons." According to Bush, in this war against drugs we must be prepared to fight fire with fire. Drugs are waging a war in our inner city areas, with our children, and with America. After holding up a vial of crack cocaine which had supposedly been seized at a park across the street from the White House, Bush notes, "It's as innocent-looking as candy, but it's turning our cities into battle zones, and it is murdering our children. Let them make no mistake, this stuff is poison. Some used to call drugs harmless recreation. They're not. Drugs are real and a terribly dangerous threat to our neighborhoods, our friends, and our families." By referring to cities as "battle zones" where drugs—"a terribly dangerous threat"—are "murdering our children," Bush has sounded the call to arms.

Although some of Bush's language choices, "murder," "teamwork," and "cocaine killers," are not directly within the language of war, they are used as subordinate terms in service of the dominant war metaphor: war requires teamwork to effectively counter threats; war is necessary to eliminate criminals from our midst; ordinary police response is no longer sufficient to stop "cocaine killers." Just as Johnson took refuge in a war on poverty, so too Bush finds utility in a similarly defined war. The metaphor suggests a level of commitment and challenge, especially when moved to the domestic scene, that cannot be reached without resort to war. War sets up a different sense of teamwork—it demands action in accordance with directives, whereas normal teamwork does not. Because drugs are making war on our country we must fight back by waging our own war. And so Bush's speech lays out four policy proposals to deal with the problem of drugs, policy proposals which he actually refers to as "weapons in this strategy." These weapons are law enforcement, making war on inter-American cartels, expanded drug treatment, and prevention. Bush calls these "weapons" "our offensive against drugs," which will offer "an assault on every front."

Consensus through Victimage: Defining the Enemy/Shaping the Community

According to Bush, the primary enemy in America's drug war is the "cocaine killers" and "drug lords" of Central and South America. They are an identifiable foreign threat directly challenging America's national security and integrity as a nation. Bush directly addresses these enemies in his drug control strategy speech:

Our message to the drug lord cartels is this: the rules have changed, we will help any government that wants our help when requested, we will for the first time make available the appropriate resources of America's armed forces. We will intensify our efforts against drug smugglers on the high seas, in international airspace and at our borders. We will stop the flow of chemicals from the United States used to process drugs. We will pursue and enforce international agreements to track drug money to the front men and financiers. And then we will handcuff these money launderers, and jail them—just like any street dealer. And for the drug kingpins, the death penalty.

It is not surprising that Bush uses such vitriolic language to describe the drug lords' punishment. The phrase "drug kingpins" provides a particularly vivid embodiment of the enemy. In Burkean terms, they represent "the unclean vessel" into which America could pour its sins as a drug-imbibing nation. Bush's promised death penalty for the drug lords can be read as the symbolic "kill"—a "burning in effigy" standing in for the actual kill that would come with the drug lords' apprehension and conviction. According to Burke, in scapegoating rhetoric, even if there are "a number of essentially different enemies" they "must always be regarded as one in such a way that in the opinion of the mass of one's own adherents the war is being waged against one enemy alone. This strengthens the belief in one's own cause and increases one's bitterness against the attacker" (1957, p. 166). Drug lords as scapegoats were "dialectically appealing" because they provided the ritualistic gratification of "the kill." As sacrificial victims they also offered redemption for our sin of drug use and identification with a community of other Americans arrayed against this evil. Fighting a war "against drug smugglers on the high seas, in international airspace and at our borders" we could be united in our opposition to the drug lords and united in our conviction to capture, kill, and stop them from polluting our minds and bodies with drugs.

Bush reminds the audience that in Central and South America the metaphoric war against drugs becomes a literal war:

In Columbia alone, cocaine killers have gunned down a leading statesman, murdered almost 200 judges and seven members of the Supreme Court. The besieged governments of the drug-producing countries are fighting back, fighting to break the international drug rings.

Bush's language paints the picture of a besieged nation under attack by heavily armed "cocaine killers" literally attempting to kill justice. According to Bush, the drug lords not only challenge our future status as a drug-free nation, they also put democracy itself at stake.

Drug lords and drug dealers threaten America's national security, our drug-free status, and our integrity as a democracy. As such, only a determined and angry America will win the battle against these foes. Bush explains that if we fight back in this war, "There is no match for a united America, a determined America, an angry America. Our outrage against drugs unites us, brings us together behind this one plan of action, an assault on every front." The war on drugs, an urgent issue of national security, requires the consensus of the American people. Bush goes further to remind us that in our opposition to drugs "Turf battles won't win this war. Teamwork will." We must act as a team or an "army" united together for a "just" cause; only then will we win this war. Bush creates and motivates a community of outraged Americans by defining the enemy and inviting our participation; in Burke's words, our "common involvement in [the] killing" (Burke, 1969, p. 265) of that enemy.

Moral Justification through Consensus: Strengthening Consent and Marginalizing Dissenters

Bush also calls upon his drug policy's bi-partisan appeal, saying, "this is the toughest domestic challenge we've faced in decades. And it is a challenge we must face—not as Democrats or Republicans, liberals or conservatives—but as Americans. The key is a coordinated, united effort. Our citizens deserve cooperation, not competition, a national effort, not a partisan bidding war." He admonishes those members of Congress who have shamefully engaged in "partisan bidding wars" in order to marginalize them as dissenters. He also directly warns them that Americans deserve better from them. The implicit enemy are those who do not agree with Bush; doubtful Americans and "partisan" politicians who want a "bidding war" rather than an "anti-drug war." "Partisan bidding wars" is an alternative metaphor from a business context. As such it does not have the same rhetorical force as the central "war" metaphor. Because of the unity expressed within a "war" metaphor frame, partisan bidding and other acts can be rejected as not fitting within the frame—they are divisive, not unifying. Bush has claimed the territory, and in so doing, defines what phrases will support the war effort. By naming the possibility of partisan disunity Bush may have risked the repercussions of his rhetoric. By affirming his belief in the powers of unity over disunity, however, he avoids these repercussions.⁶

Bush's language choices imply that some types of wars are divisive and damaging, such as "partisan bidding wars," or the drug wars being waged in Central and South America, or the war that drugs themselves are waging with young people in the city streets. However, the war he will wage, with our help, will be a constructive, consolidated and just war that not only avoids the casualties of the other types of war, but also has the consensus of the American people and the Congress behind it. Bush reinforces the importance of consensus

in the fight against drugs by saying:

The war on drugs will be hard-won, neighborhood by neighborhood, block by block, child by child. If we fight this war as a divided nation then the war is lost. But if we face this evil as a nation unified, this [he holds up the vial of crack cocaine] will be nothing but a handful of useless chemicals. Victory. Victory over drugs is our cause, a just cause, and with your help, we are going to win.

This is Bush's strongest appeal to the American people to join him in this war against drugs. It exhibits the assumption that Bush's war, a just war, has the blessing of both the Congress and the people. The drug war, an issue of national security, requires and invites consensus, but it also requires "teamwork" and a "united assault" against a common enemy, the one who is to blame for America's drug problem. Thus, Bush not only reinforces the consensus for his war, he also marginalizes those who would oppose him.

Once consensus is reached that drug use is "the greatest domestic threat facing our nation" and is a problem for which Americans have "zero tolerance," Bush can act as spokesperson for the American people concerning solutions to the problem of drug use. He says "You and I both know the Federal Government can't do it alone." By saying "You and I," he assumes we understand the importance of state and local involvement. This comment also refers to an earlier mention of the critics who are not part of the consensus, those who "will say we [the Federal Government] are not spending enough money." Bush explains, however, that these critics "who judge our strategy only by its price tag" are ignorant, they "simply don't understand the problem." The assumption is, of course, that Bush and we, the American people, are not ignorant; we understand it and therefore will not balk at a perceived lack of money to fund the programs Bush wants put into place. (A claim made repeatedly by Democrats and other critics of Bush's program before and after his speech, despite Bush's insistence of his program's bi-partisan appeal.)⁷

In sum, the war metaphor in Bush's 1989 national drug control speech created scapegoats of the foreign drug cartels, their leaders and their political supporters. These scapegoats were rhetorically appealing because they provided a common enemy against whom Americans could join together. America had to wage a united international war against drugs, drug lords and drug dealers. We had to defeat these enemies on all fronts. To release ourselves from the guilt of drug use and/or the guilt of failing to stop drug use in this country we needed to find an "unclean vessel" to receive our sins. These foes became the victims sacrificed, the scapegoats blamed for the drug problem in America. Through their sacrifice we could then be reunited as a community. We gain unity with Bush and (comm)unity with America in the fight against the "cocaine killers."

Consensus in the "Kill": Striking at the Enemy

Since the "war" metaphor, which invites a "rally 'round the flag" spirit, had already been placed in the minds of Bush's audience it was a small step from nationalism to unilateral support for Bush's proposed policies to win the war against drugs. George Bush's military invasion of Panama, occurring just two months after his national drug control speech, not only provided another example of how the drug problem was blamed on foreign enemies, it seemed to carry out Bush's rhetorical threats against drug lords and their political friends. Bush's military actions, enthusiastically supported by a majority of Americans, also seemed to rely on the political consensus he had created with his "war against drugs" rhetoric. "Men (sic) who can unite on nothing else," Burke explains, "can unite on the basis of a foe shared by all." (1957, p. 165). For George Bush and other politicians the "foe" was Manuel Noriega.

The mass media's coverage of the December 20, 1989 invasion of Panama and the subsequent capture and trial of Manuel Noriega seemed to offer proof that Bush's rhetorical investment had paid off. The mainstream media, by and large, painted Noriega as a foreign criminal supporting drug trafficking through Panama to the States. The military action against him, the media implied, was justifiable. This was the case, according to Ehrenreich, despite the fact that "the U.N. General Assembly swiftly denounced the [U.S.] invasion as a 'flagrant violation of international law,' . . . for most Americans, the lofty ends justified the brutal and lawless means. We had to stop the drug traffic" (1991, p. 74).

This emphasis on an external enemy or scapegoat in American drug rhetoric is striking in the face of commonsensical awareness that the problem is created by domestic consumption. This is not to deny that demand requires supply in order to exist as such, but supply without demand is a meaningless concept. According to Russell Baker, however:

Nobody really wants to strike at the party creating the drug problem. It might be your neighbor, your child, yourself. Better to finesse the question of responsibility, cluck about the horror of it all, and blame it on the Latino black hats.

So let's talk nonsense, and while we're at it, let's hang the black hats, too. Coming up here from Latin America and forcing those monstrous drugs up our noses, into our veins, down our gullets. (1988, p. 27)

American television, particularly shows like "Miami Vice," an extremely popular action-adventure series during the 1980s, invited many Americans, according to one editorial in the *New York Times*, to confirm "their perception of Columbia as a violent, sordid and corrupt nation" (Samper, 1987, p. E3). Colombians who watched the series, however, often drew the opposite conclusion, that it was "the drug-consuming culture of the United States that creates the monsters of greed and violence depicted on the show" (p. E3).

From 1986 onward, America's drug problem was presented as an issue of national security requiring a unified response to an external enemy. Manuel Noriega or media-fabricated "Latino black hats" easily fit the requirements of that role.

The Generalized "Kill": Weeding Out Corruption in the Ranks

Political leaders were another major scapegoat in the war against drugs during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Starting in the mid 1980s, the mass media began identifying many who were in positions to solve the drug problem as either corrupt or unsupportive of the war efforts.

Political leaders, for example, found it hard to escape the taint of corruption that seemed to spread out from Manuel Noriega and foreign drug lords. Journalists hinted that many officials were in collusion by their failure to do anything about drug importing into the United States. There was evidence, according to one journalist, that "Federal Government officials [were] aware of General Manuel Noriega's involvement in drug trafficking for more than ten years" before they moved against him, and that this move "came not because of any sudden discovery of his longstanding involvement with drugs but because of the perception of his diminished utility in the pursuit of the Administration's Central American policy" (Bourne, 1988, A39). Additionally, it was alleged by the media that the U.S. government tolerated drug trafficking by the families of heads of state of Antigua, the Bahamas, Columbia, El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico and Paraguay (Bourne, 1988). More significantly, there was evidence that U.S. officials not only tolerated drug trafficking but may have actually aided it. Convicted Columbian drug dealer Carlos Lehder, for example, testifying at Manuel Noriega's November 1991 trial, claimed to have been given U.S. government approval to smuggle cocaine into the U.S. in exchange for the use of

his Bahamian island as a base for shipping weapons to the U.S.-backed Nicaraguan Contras (Isikoff, 1991, p. A11).

The charge of corruption in the ranks was also leveled by politicians at one another in the war against drugs. The political climate of the late 1980s was marked by a drug hysteria in which it was both politically safe to cast the first stone at drug dealers and politicians who were "soft" on drugs and politically dangerous not to, lest others, with stone in hand, labeled you as "soft." As early as 1986, *New York Times* columnist Jonathan Fierbringer wrote: "The drug issue has preoccupied the House and Senate and the White House two months before the crucial off-year elections. All three are scrambling to put their imprint on the issue, and the politics have become as important as the substance" (1986, p. A24). According to one journalist, "Members of Congress rushed to introduce bills with the harshest penalties possible. 'Everybody was trying to out-tough one another', recalled Rep. William J. Hughes (D., N.J.) who was chairman of the House subcommittee on crime" ("More Judges," 1993, p. A12). After the election was over, and drugs disappeared from the political agenda, columnist Patricia Limerick notes, "The president and many other drug crusaders were, of course, serious in their own way—seriously concerned about the 1986 congressional elections, seriously pleased by the opportunity to take a 'courageous' and 'forceful' stand that no sensible person could conceivably oppose" (1987, p. A10). Railing against politicians and drug dealers was a politically safe and easy move for politicians. More importantly, it was often a necessary move since failure to join the chorus of "finger pointers" often resulted in being labeled as part of the problem.

As the 1988 presidential campaign started to heat up and drugs once again surfaced as an issue, there was evidence, according to one *New York Times* article, that the drug issue filled a vacuum caused by the dearth of other issues in the 1988 election campaign (Dionne, 1988, p. D26). *The Progressive* magazine explains the political appeal:

Physicians used to say that dermatology was the ideal medical specialty; the patients didn't die and they didn't recover. For politicians, the war on drugs is the ideal issue; they can't win it, but they don't have to take the rap for losing it. The war against drugs is an all-purpose crusade that provides an opportunity to engage in tough talk against foreign adversaries, spout empty rhetoric about the sanctity of the American family, and display deep devotion to the preservation of law and order. Who could ask for anything more? ("Oh What," 1988, p. 7)

Anthony Lewis, columnist for *The New York Times*, charges that "what most U.S. drug policies have in common is their appeal to the image desired by Washington politicians: toughness. They are all for Getting Tough on Drug Dealers, on Striking at the Source. They do not seem to care that as such policies are intensified, the drug problem in this country grows visibly worse" (1989, p. E23). According to Representative John Conyers, Chair of the House Committee on Government Operations which monitors the drug policy office, President Bush opted for "the political rather than the scientific approach" to the drug problem. Bush focused on law enforcement and interdiction because "Drug education and treatment have gained a name as a wimp activity. If you favor these things you're a softy" (Treaster, 1992, p. A1).

In sum, in both the 1986 and 1988 elections it became politically appealing and expedient to jump on the bandwagon of those who were calling for tougher laws against drug dealers and increased efforts at drug interdiction. Since victimage rhetoric has the effect of distancing the rhetor from the problem, once the cause of the drug problem was successfully identified as "other," politicians could be seen as simultaneously dealing aggressively with the problem while removing themselves from responsibility for its existence. If you wanted to play politics in the late 1980s, however, you also had to roundly

condemn opponents who were not tough on drugs. The specific symbolic “kill” of drug dealers and drug kingpins quickly became the generalized “kill” of unsupportive politicians. Although we would not go so far as to claim that the drug scapegoating of the late 1980s reached the fevered pitch of the McCarthy witch hunts of the 1950s, the tone of the anti-drug rhetoric was certainly similar as were the social and political implications.

Ethical Entailments of the “War” Against Drugs

Although rhetorical critics have investigated how metaphors work in different forms of discourse (Ivie, 1980, 1982, 1987; Osborne, 1967; Stelzner, 1967, 1977), they have often failed to discuss the ethical implications of the metaphors chosen. Carpenter, quoting Booth, claims that metaphorical analysis:

often skirts “moral” judgements, for as Wayne Booth laments, scholars seeking “facts” more than “values” typically favor “safer territory, showing how individual metaphors work in themselves” or “how they function in given contexts. . . . We find today hardly any serious appraisal of how particular metaphors might be good or bad for those who embrace them.” (1991, p. 1)

Carpenter implies that rhetorical critics, in their analysis of how metaphors shape attitudes, need to account for how these same metaphors shape action. Klumpp and Hollihan extend a similar criticism when they discuss rhetorical criticism as “moral action,” arguing that although “critics have adopted new theories of rhetoric . . . they are captive to a perspective on the critical act that leaves them naive to the very force of the rhetoric which they purport to study” (1989, p. 84).

Naming victims is not an idle act; it has moral implications. Burke (1957) is clear on this point, claiming that “the mere act of naming an object or situation decrees that it is to be singled out as such-and-such rather than as something-other” (p. 5). Blankenship underscores Burke’s point by observing that, for Burke, “ ‘Naming’, . . . is an ‘interpretive act’ and thus a guide to act in one way or another towards the thing named . . . the ‘command’ that one act one way rather than another is ‘implicit in the name’ ” (1972, pp. 321–322). The “prescription for action,” to use Carpenter’s (1991, p. 2) phrase, implied by drug war rhetoric is problematic. The consensus that emerged from successful attacks on cartels, drug pushers, and irresponsible politicians led to equally irresponsible decision making. In reviewing the implications of the war on drugs we suggested at the outset that the blame was misplaced. In what follows we discuss four detrimental consequences of this misplaced war on drugs; consensus at the expense of dissent, moral justification at the expense of civil liberties, guilt-relief at the expense of racial equality, and symbolic action at the expense of justice.

Consensus at the Expense of Dissent

Invoking war rhetoric as a response to a domestic problem, such as drug use in America, created a consensus atmosphere that may have been detrimental to responsible decision making. Bush’s war against drugs was problematic, for example, in its implication that drugs were an issue of national security and a problem for which the enemy—drug kingpins, dealers, and politicians—could be blamed. War rhetoric, by inviting unilateral defense of any or all policy proposals in the name of the greater national good, made any challenges to Bush’s war seem partisan, possibly treasonous, and outside of the realm of consensus.

The rhetoric of national security not only invites consensus while discouraging opposition, it also places the speaker in the position of spokesperson. If consensus about the best

course of action is supposedly reached, the orator demonstrates what the audience would want to have said for them. Burke, in his analysis of the rhetoric of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, notes that once Hitler had "essentialized his enemy" as the "international Jew," "all 'proof' henceforth" was "automatic." The German masses, Burke continues, desired "to be led by a dominating male. This male, as orator, woos them—and, when he has won them, he commands them. The rival male, the villainous Jew, would on the contrary 'seduce' them. If he succeeds, he poisons their blood by intermingling with them" (1957, p. 167). In Bush's "war," drugs are seductive, but the true seducer is the drug pusher who pollutes our bodies and minds with dangerous foreign substances. Bush assures the American people he would protect us against this foreign adversary if we consented to his leadership in the war against drugs.

Bush's right, as spokesperson, to express America's consensus in the fight against drugs is illustrated throughout his 1989 drug control strategy speech. In the opening of his speech he says, "All of us agree that the gravest domestic threat facing our nation today is drugs." Opinion polls at that time suggested that many Americans felt drugs were their number one domestic concern, allowing Bush to invoke this consensus. Later he adds, "You and I agree with the courageous President of Columbia, Virgilio Barco, who said that if Americans use cocaine, then Americans are paying for murder. American cocaine users need to understand that our nation has zero tolerance for casual drug users." By saying "You and I agree," Bush, as spokesperson, is once again invoking the consensus that Americans have "zero tolerance," not only for frequent drug use, but casual drug use as well.⁸

By itself, these examples of consensual language might simply appear to be a good rhetorical strategy to involve one's audience. These language choices, however, woven into a discourse of national security, invite unilateral acceptance of a proffered policy and faith in its effectiveness. The choice of "you and I" calls us to respond to a national security threat in an act of patriotism and unity. If we fail to respond we risk standing outside of the supposed bi-partisan consensus and adopting what amounts to a treasonous stance against a just cause—a war against drugs the way Bush wants to fight it. "Zero tolerance" for drug use was the new buzzphrase and Americans were invited to accept nothing less.

Moral Justification at the Expense of Civil Liberties

A second entailment of the war on drugs, possibly resulting from the jingoism engendered by scapegoating rhetoric, was the violation of civil liberties and an increased tendency towards vigilantism. The mass media often reported that U.S. citizens, fed up with the seeming inability of Washington to handle the drug problem, and driven by moral outrage, engaged in neighborhood "policing" actions that some feared smacked of vigilantism, or they condoned government policies that some feared threatened civil liberties ("A Threat," 1989, p. 28). In a September 1989 *Washington Post/ABC* news poll, for example, 62% of the people questioned said they would be willing to give up "a few of the freedoms we have in this country" to bring about a major reduction in drug use ("A Threat," 1989, p. 28). What would these forfeits look like? According to *Time*, "majorities said they favored mandatory drug tests for all citizens, police searches of the homes of suspected drug dealers without a court order, and random police checks of cars on the highway" ("A Threat," p. 28). "The real victim [in the fight against drugs] is going to be the constitutional rights of the majority of citizens," claims Harvey Gitter, executive director of Ohio's A.C.L.U. ("A Threat," p. 28).

Legal experts talked about a "drug exception" to the Fourth Amendment right that would allow unreasonable search and seizure of the houses and properties of suspected drug users and drug dealers. According to *New York Times* critic Dannie Martin, "The drug

war has whittled away at civil rights. Police, prosecutors and the courts have been given an increasingly wide berth in going after people accused of trafficking in drugs . . . under pressure of public outrage, Federal courts have been more willing to permit convictions on the basis of informant testimony. It is not unusual for a judge to tell a jury that the uncorroborated word of an accomplice, if they believe it, is enough to convict" (1993, p. A21). Some even argued that the approaches Bush advocated in his September 5, 1989 nationally televised drug address were "likely to fuel further debate over whether constitutional guarantees [would] be a casualty of the war against drugs" ("A Threat," p. 28).

Guilt-Relief at the Expense of Racial Equality

Another entailment of war rhetoric and the scapegoating of drug-pushers for the drug problem was racism. The drug criminal that the media reported on during the late 1980s and that the U.S. Government attempted to take action against was quite often the American-based drug pusher. Russell Baker claims that in the war on drugs, Americans all too often looked "for vicious criminals for whom the cruelest death would be too gentle" (1986, p. 27). These "vicious criminals" often turned out to be the ethnic drug pushers, foreign, not just to America, but to middle-class communities and to the white middle-class way of life.

Critics have argued that there is a history of racism in U.S. drug policy and law enforcement. According to Levine and Reinerman (1987), for example, racism ushered in the prohibition of opium, cocaine and marijuana:

In the 1870s a movement that raised the specter of Chinese men drugging white women into sexual slavery prompted California to pass the first law against smoking opium. . . . During the first cocaine scare, at the turn of the century, some Southern sheriffs claimed they had switched from .32 to .38 caliber pistols because their old guns could not stop the "coke-crazed" black man. In the 1930s the Federal Bureau of Narcotics popularized an image of marijuana as the "killer weed," which made smokers, especially Mexicans, violent. (p. 388)

While we did not do a careful statistical survey, our impressionistic conclusion—after reading hundreds of articles about drugs during the 1980s—is that the descriptions became more lurid when non-whites were involved. In the *New York Times*, for instance, when the location being depicted was "Upper Manhattan" (a code phrase for "Black and Hispanic Neighborhoods"), the copy tended to hyperbole: "Young and violent drug gangs, in brutal territorial battles and in calculated campaigns to terrorize neighborhoods, are believed to be responsible for as many as 523 slayings in Upper Manhattan" (Raab, 1988, p. B1). The enemy in the war on drugs was within the U.S. borders, and s/he was not a white middle-class enemy.

While racist intent in U.S. drug policy and media coverage of the drug problem may be difficult to prove, the racist effects of America's war on drugs seems more verifiable. Black community leaders in River Park, Florida, for example, called a undercover drug operation in this predominantly black neighborhood racist because officers wore blackface makeup to apprehend drug dealers. In defense of this action, Police Captain Kevin Rambosk claims that "Because sales are made predominantly by blacks, detectives could not get out there and sell drugs standing on the corner looking the way they do." The police force of 75 has only one black officer ("Florida Police," 1990, p. A9).

An August, 1993 *USA Today* poll found that blacks are four times more likely to be arrested on drug-related charges than whites in America. In major cities the ratio is even higher. In Lavonia, Michigan, for example, where the black population is zero, blacks are

likely to be arrested 43 more times than whites. In Pasadena, Texas, with a 1% black population, the ratio is 27-1. In Minneapolis, Minnesota, which is 7% black, the ratio of blacks arrested to whites is 22-1. This is the case despite statistics that the percentage of drug use among blacks and whites is about the same.⁹ Alan Webster, former president of the National Bar Association, explains these startling drug arrest statistics as “unequivocal racism.” He calls the U.S. drug war a “war against minorities.” According to Webster, blacks “are an easier target . . . than whites in corporate America and government America and the suburbs. Because of that . . . police basically prey on them.” Lt. Noble Ray, Assistant Police Chief in Madison, Wisconsin (with a black-to-white arrest ratio of 21-1), argues that U.S. drug policy, while possibly not racist in intent, is certainly racist in effect. He explains that in law enforcement “there has been more of an intentional emphasis placed in many neighborhoods where we see a lot of dysfunction, we see a lot of violence occurring . . . and I think we are seeing the arrests as a result of that.” He adds, however, that “if there is a criticism” it is that over “the last 10–12 years we should have had a broad-based more comprehensive approach [to the drug problem]. We’ve dealt with this primarily with law enforcement.”

Whether by intent or effect, U.S. drug policy’s focus on law enforcement in the war on drugs has resulted in the targeting of inner city and black neighborhoods. While we are not arguing that the black Americans arrested in these neighborhoods are innocent of drug crimes, it does seem that as a result of the U.S. focus on law enforcement to solve the drug problem, and its need to place politically expedient blame, black Americans have been disproportionately victimized in what amounts to a racist war on drugs.

Symbolic Action at the Expense of Justice

The responses of judges, lawmakers, and journalists in 1993 to the 1986 Anti-drug abuse law also point to the political victimage entailed by fighting a domestic drug war in drug sentencing. Says U.S. District Judge Harold Greene, who refused to impose a 30 year sentence on a 25 year old repeat drug offender, “We cannot allow justice and rationality to become casualties of a war on drugs being waged with Draconian, politically expedient sentences” (“More Judges,” 1993, p. A12). Says another federal judge, “There is no reason whatsoever to believe severe punishment has had an impact on the prevalence of drugs. There is no evidence at all that Draconian law enforcement does any good” (p. A12). One senior federal judge refused to hear any more drug cases after two particularly troubling ones required him to impose the mandatory sentence, he felt, unjustly. In a memorandum to his fellow judges he writes, “These two cases confirm my sense of depression about much of the cruelty I have been party to in connection with the ‘war on drugs’ that is being fought by the military, police and courts, rather than by our medical and social institutions. I need a rest from the oppressive sense of futility that these drug cases leave. . . . I simply cannot sentence another impoverished person whose destruction has no discernible effect on the drug trade” (p. A12). Concludes another federal judge regarding the victims created by the 1986 Anti-drug abuse act, “it may profit us very little to win the war on drugs if, in the process, we lose our soul” (“More Judges,” 1993, p. A12). Harsh sentencing in drug cases, although politically expedient, creates victims of defendants unjustly sacrificed for America’s guilt over our drug habit and/or inability to solve the drug problem in America.

Conclusion

We have argued that the victimage rhetoric marking America’s war against drugs was politically and socially appealing but ultimately problematic. It was appealing because it

offered guilt-relief to many Americans, it defined and motivated a morally justified community, it identified common enemies, it created consensus about the problem and its solutions, and it strengthened this consensus through marginalizing dissenters and those "soft" on drugs. There were, however, several ethical entailments of this rhetorical war on drugs. Consensus in drug policy was often reached at the expense of dissenting voices, moral justification for "search and seizure policies" may have challenged individual civil liberties while making Americans immune to victimization rhetoric, guilt-relief for drug use may have been attained despite racist results, and judicial actions against those convicted of drug crimes were often carried out at the expense of justice. Ultimately, the most significant effect of the war on drugs may have been its mis-diagnosis of the problem and hence its proposing solutions that were wrong because the blame was misplaced.

The "war against drugs" rhetoric, a guilt-based rhetoric of victimage or other-blame, seemingly marked a shift away from the Reagans' "Just Say No" to drugs—also a guilt-based rhetoric of mortification or self-blame (Mackey-Kallis & Hahn, 1991). Although we cannot definitively claim this shift without a comprehensive analysis of more than a decade's worth of drug rhetoric, if the shift exists, we can at least speculate on its causes. It may be that by 1986, when the force of Ronald Reagan's mortification program embodied in his "Just Say No" campaign had run its course, Americans, tired of "taking the rap" for the drug problem, were willing to hand over their infirmities to another and thus were ready for the victimage campaign offered by a war on drugs. It may be that our failure to obey the "thou-shalt-not" injunction of the "Just Say No" to drugs campaign or our unwillingness to accept this judgment (which requires mortification), added to society's collective guilt and predisposed us to purge this guilt through sacrifice of others—the politicians, drug lords, and drug dealers whom we blamed for the drug problem in America.

The unfortunate result of this political scapegoating, however, was that political debate on drugs in America, couched in the language of war, created an unsavory consensus of politicians and the media much better at (mis)placing blame for the drug problem than at finding possible solutions. Whether this was a result of privatization of the drug issue, as occurred in the Reagans' "Just Say No" to drugs campaign, (Mackey-Kallis & Hahn, 1991) or militarization, as is the case in Bush's drug policy, the result was the same.

Burke (1961), himself, notes the limits of scapegoating rhetoric and seems to prefer rhetorical strategies born of the comedic rather than the tragic mode. He proposes replacing "the present political stress upon men (sic) in rival international situations" with a "logological reaffirmation of the foibles and quandaries that all men (in their role as 'symbol-using animals') have in common" (1961, p. 5). It may be that the central problem of drug rhetoric over the decade of the 1980s and into the 1990s was not that it sought causes for the problem in either the individual (mortification) or some "external" enemy (victimage), but that the tone or attitude of the address was wrong. While identifying solutions to any problem requires establishing causes, drama in the tragic mode seeks solutions by establishing moral transgressions as sources of blame. Guilt may be relieved through self-punishment (flagellation) or other-punishment (sacrifice). Although guilt is relieved the problem may still remain. Burke talks about scapegoating as a never-ending cycle where guilt is "processed" rather than "resolved" (1961, p. 236). By contrast, drama in the comedic mode replaces guilt with strategies which warn against the dangers of pride (a form of stupidity) and seeks solutions which acknowledge an agent's imperfections and limitations. These acknowledgments may allow a society to focus on new systems, new options, and new choices that invite improvement rather than perfection, betterment rather than sin-penance. In the comedic mode, solving the drug problem in America may require changing our perception of drug education and treatment as a "wimp activity" (Treaster, 1993, p. A12). This would

allow us to accept our frailties and weaknesses as human beings and acknowledge that the "feverish, media-hyped 'drug war' seen in the 1980s," is, in the words of drug policy expert Mark Kleiman, "not a Desert Storm," but "what President Kennedy called a 'long, twilight struggle' " that "calls for patience rather than enthusiasm, endurance rather than animation, stamina rather than speed" (Dillon, 1993, p. 3).

NOTES

¹For further elaboration of the application of Burke's notion of the negative in language and political discourse see Appel, 1993; Mackey-Kallis & Hahn, 1991.

²Burke also equates physical excretion with emotional catharsis (see 1966, pp. 308–343).

³For an extended discussion of unity through victimage see Burke's discussion of "The Rattlesnake Club" (1969, p. 266) and "Rhetoric of Hitler's 'Battle' " (1957, pp. 164–189).

⁴There is a history of the use of "war" as a metaphor in domestic policy discourse. Leuchtenburg (1964), for example, argues that much of Roosevelt's new deal policy was accomplished by the use of "war" as a figure of speech and that Roosevelt frequently used the "war" metaphor to talk about domestic social and economic problems. President Gerald Ford's "war on inflation" and President Lyndon Johnson's "war on poverty" provide other examples of the use of the "war" metaphor to shape our understanding of a domestic problem (Stelzner, 1977).

⁵Future references to Bush's speech are from this source.

⁶According to Burke, "People so dislike the idea of internal division that, where there is a real internal division, their dislike can easily be turned against the man or group who would so much as name it, let alone propose acting upon it. Their natural and justified resentment against internal division itself, is turned against the diagnostician who states it as a fact. This diagnostician, it is felt, is the cause of the disunity he named" (1957, p. 176). In other words, Burke provides an explanation for why society so often wants to "kill the messenger."

⁷Burke makes a similar argument in his analysis of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. He argues that Hitler blamed "the Jew" as the source of Germany's problem in order to provide a "noneconomic explanation of economic phenomena" (1957 p. 173). Burke explains that in *Mein Kampf* Hitler insists that economic factors are "only of second or even third importance" for explaining Germany's collapse while "political, ethical, moral, as well as factors of blood and race, are of first importance" (p. 175). Scapegoating "the Jew" was the equivalent of offering a noneconomic explanation for Germany's ills. Scapegoating the drug lords provided both a noneconomic explanation of, and a noneconomic solution for, America's drug habit.

Journalists were quick to label Bush's drug control strategy as a "noneconomic explanation of economic phenomenon." One journalist declared that the "much trumpeted war on drugs was more an underfinanced skirmish" ("Can't Do," 1989, p. 31). Hugh Sidey claimed that the Bush Administration's metaphor of choice, "drug war," "does not . . . work very well. War implies an adversary that can be identified and attacked. It requires a traditional assault with money and power of some sort" (1989, p. 32). This is an assault which most politicians, from 1986–1991, did not seem to be prepared to make on drugs, nor which entered policy debate at any level—federal, state, local, or citizen group. However this is a fight, according to some Administration officials, as quoted by *Time* magazine, that must be waged eventually and is something that may "require nothing less than a new war on poverty." Politicians may need to begin addressing the "social and economic conditions in the ghettos, which fosters drug addiction" in the first place. "A war on poverty," according to *Time* magazine, is a battle that "middle class public opinion would not favor," involving, as it does, "spending tens of billions for that purpose" ("Fighting Back," 1989, p. 13). Middle-class public opinion would not favor it; therefore, it is undebatable.

⁸These comments, ironically enough, follow Bush's quoting of a household survey by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, from which the "good news," as he calls it, is the decline in casual drug use—nine million fewer users—and the "very bad news" is that "in spite of the fact that overall cocaine use is down, frequent use has almost doubled in the last few years." Despite the good news, Bush's policies, we are told, will continue to target casual drug use. Because of this critics think Bush's war on drugs seems to be aimed at the wrong target; several measures are designed to cut casual use of cocaine by the middle class, although such use is already declining sharply. The money Bush proposes to spend is, according to critics, inadequate compared with the size of the problem.

⁹Statistics from the August 1993 *USAToday* poll, along with the comments of Madison, Wisconsin

Assistant Police Chief Lt. Noble Ray, and former President of the National Bar Association, Alan Webster, are taken from the August 9, 1993 NBC *Today Show*.

REFERENCES

- A threat to freedom? (1989, Sept. 18). *Time*, p. 28.
- Appel, E. (1993). Implications and importance of the negative in Burke's dramatic philosophy of language. *Communication Quarterly*, 41, 51-65.
- Aaron, D., mod. (Summer 1966). Thirty years later: Memories of the First American Writers' Congress. *American Scholar*, 35, 495-516 (With Malcolm Cowley, Granville Hicks, William Phillips, and Kenneth Burke).
- Baker, R. (1986, July 26). Same old junk. *The New York Times*, p. 27.
- Baker, R. (1988, June 18). Round up the usual noose. *The New York Times*, p. 27.
- Blankenship, J. (1980). The search for the 1972 Democratic presidential nomination: A metaphorical perspective. In B. Brock and R. Scott (Eds.), *Methods of rhetorical criticism*, 2nd ed., rev. (pp. 321-345). Detroit: Wayne State University Press.
- Booth, W. (1988). *The company we keep: An ethics of fiction*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Bourne, P. (1988, March 25) U.S. schizophrenia on drug runners. *The New York Times*, p. A39.
- Brinkely, J. (1986, August 14). U.S. details plan to combat drugs at Mexico border. *The New York Times*, p. A1.
- Burke, K. (1945). *A grammar of motives*. New York: Prentice Hall.
- Burke, K. (1957). *The philosophy of literary form*. NY: Random House, Vintage Books
- Burke, K. (1961). *The rhetoric of religion: Studies in logology*. Boston: Beacon.
- Burke, K. (1965). *Permanence and change*. New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co.
- Burke, K. (1966). *Language as symbolic action*. Berkeley, CA: University of California, Berkeley.
- Burke, K. (1969) *A rhetoric of motives*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- The can't do government. (1989, Oct. 23). *Time*, p. 31.
- Carpenter, R. (1991). America's tragic metaphor: Our twentieth-century combatants as frontiersmen," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 76, 1-22.
- DeMott, J. (1986, July 28). Striking at the source. *Time*, pp. 12-13.
- Dillon, J. (1993, May 3). U.S. drug fight: The focus shifts to home front. *The Christian Science Monitor*, p. 3.
- Dionne, E. Jr. (1988, April 13). Democrats get lift from issue of drugs. *The New York Times*, p. A25.
- Dionne, E. Jr. (1988, May 24). Drugs as 1988 issue: Filling a vacuum. *The New York Times*, p. D26.
- Ehrenreich, B. (1991, Jan. 21). Who wants another Panama? *Time*, p. 74.
- Fighting back. (1989, Sept. 11). *Time*, p. 13.
- Florida police are criticized for tactics using blackface. (1990, Oct. 8). *The New York Times*, p. A9.
- For drugs: A Monroe Doctrine. (1988, March 1). *The New York Times*, p. A22.
- Foss, S., Foss, K. & Trapp, R. (1991). *Contemporary perspectives on rhetoric* (2nd Ed.). Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland.
- Fuerbringer, J. (1986, Sept. 11). Wide bill of drugs pressed in House. *The New York Times*, p. A24.
- Gustainis, J. (1993). *The rhetoric of the Vietnam war*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Isikoff, M. (1991, Nov. 22). Noriega trial is told U.S. officials offered to aid drug smuggling. *The Washington Post*, p. A11.
- Ivie, R. (1980). Images of savagery in American justifications for war. *Communication Monographs*, 47, 279-294.
- Ivie, R. (1982). The metaphor of force in prowar discourse: The case of 1812. *The Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 68, 240-253.
- Ivie, R. (1987). Metaphor and the rhetorical invention of cold war 'idealists'. *Communication Monographs*, 54, 165-182.
- Klumpp, J. & Hollihan, T. (1989). Rhetorical criticism as moral action. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 75, 84-96.
- Lempert, R. (1988, June 25). Death for drug killings means politics as usual. *The New York Times*, p. 26.
- Leuchtenburg, W. (1964). The New Deal and the analogue of war. In John Braeman (Ed.), *Change, Continuity, in Twentieth Century America* (pp. 81-143). Columbus, Ohio.
- Levine, H. & Reinerman, C. (1987, March 28). What's behind 'jar wars'. *The Nation*, p. 388.
- Lewis, A. (1989, August 13). Dr. Feelgood prescribes. *The New York Times*, p. E23.
- Limerick, P. (1987, Jan. 14). Making Chicken Little look good. *USA Today*, p. A10.

- Mackey-Kallis, S. & Hahn, D. (1991). Questions of public will and private actions: The power of the negative in the Reagans' "Just Say No" morality campaign. *Communication Quarterly*, 39, 1-17.
- Martin, D. (1993, April 17). Just say no to informer testimony. *The New York Times*, p. A21.
- Morales, W. (1989). The war on drugs: A new U.S. national security doctrine? *Third World Quarterly*, 11, 147-169.
- More judges balking at mandatory drug sentences. (1993, June 20). *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, p. 1, A12.
- Oh, what a lovely war. (1988, July). *The Progressive*, p. 7.
- Osborne, M. (1967). Archetypal metaphor in rhetoric: The light-dark family. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 53, 115-126.
- Raab, S. (1988, March 15). Brutal drug gangs wage war of terror in Upper Manhattan. *The New York Times*, p. B1.
- Rasky, S. (1988, May 14). Senate votes 83-6 to give military anti-drug powers. *The New York Times*, p. 1.
- Samper, D. (1987, Jan. 25). Who created the drug trafficking monster? *The New York Times*, p. E3.
- Sciolino, E. (1987, Feb. 21). Crazy Charlie. *The Nation*, pp. 203-204.
- Sidey, H. (1989, Sept. 18) The struggle with ourselves. *Time*, p. 32.
- Stelzner, H. (1967). Analysis by metaphor. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 51, 52-61.
- Stelzner, H. (1977). Ford's war on inflation: A metaphor that did not cross. *Communication Monographs*, 44, 284-297.
- Text of the President's speech on national drug control strategy. (1989, Sept. 6). *The New York Times*, p. B6.
- Treaster, J. (1992, July 28). Four years of Bush's drug war: New funds but an old strategy. *The New York Times*, pp. A1, A12.
- U.S. altering tactics in drug war. (1993, Sept. 17). *The New York Times*, p. A12.
- U.S. considers shift in drug war: Military interdiction called a failure. (1993, Sept. 9). *The Washington Post*, pp. A1, A14.

Copyright of Communication Quarterly is the property of Eastern Communication Association and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.