

The Horror in Jamaica

Michael Sean Winters | May. 26, 2010 NCR Today

This week, the city of Kingston, Jamaica was turned into a war zone. In an effort to apprehend a narco-trafficker, Christopher "Dudus" Coke, and extradite him to the United States, the Jamaican security forces have encountered those who have been bought off or scared off by this criminal and have taken up arms to defend him. More than thirty people have been killed in the fighting so far, which is ravaging neighborhoods, killing innocent bystanders as well as security forces and the drug kingpin's bodyguards.

This weekend, in clubs along the East Coast, affluent, intelligent successful men and women will party with illegal drugs that come from Coke's network. They are out to have a good time, but I hope they realize that whatever risks they wish to take with their own lives, they have no right to turn a neighboring country into a narco-state. Yet, the insatiable appetite of Americans for cocaine and marijuana is directly, indelibly responsible for the violence in Jamaica. The blood being spilt in the streets of Kingston is on the hands and on the consciences of the partyers in Midtown and Dupont Circle.

I am sure that many of the drugs exported to the U.S. by Coke make their way into the ghettos of the Northeast where poor people, enslaved by circumstance, see now path out of their misery and opt instead for a quick escape. Their choice is a bad one, but its moral culpability is lessened by the limited circumstances of their lives. The affluent club set has no such excuse. They should know better. They choose not to notice. Like Tom and Daisy Buchanan in "The Great Gatsby" they move through life unconcerned by those whose bodies they leave by the side of the road.

For much of my adult life, I managed a bookstore café in Washington, D.C. that was open for twenty-four hours on the weekends. I saw the club crowd come in during the wee hours, their dilated pupils betraying their condition. These were lawyers, Hill staffers, lobbyists. They were well dressed and well educated. I am sure that during their work hours many of them were well meaning. But, their appetite for drugs is a great evil. I hope they feel the same chill down their spine when they see the pictures of the dead in Jamaica that I feel. Those innocent people did not die for nothing. They died so others could snort some cocaine. I hope they stop and I hope our culture increases its intolerance of drug abuse. The people of Jamaica and of Colombia and Mexico should not have to pay with their lives for our filthy habits.

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