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1/ When we see stories like these, there are comments saying, "That's why we have the **#deathpenalty** for drugs!" The frustrating thing is that these stories are weaponised solely to justify state violence. No one actually talks about the well-being of the drug user in the story. <https://t.co/n39E2nEsPw>

'A heart-wrenching scene': Heavily pregnant woman climbs out window of 11th floor flat to escape CNB

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By MELISSA TEO



2/ There's no evidence proving that the death penalty is effective in deterring drugs. And hanging someone on death row does not improve the situation of someone like this pregnant woman.

3/ If we really cared about her well-being, as well as that of others who have an addiction to drugs, we should be asking ourselves whether there are safe spaces and structures that allow them to recover and change their lives in Singapore.

4/ Right now, doctors are legally required to report people they suspect of using drugs to law enforcement within seven days.

5/ This means that, if you are a drug user who actually does want to seek treatment to stop using drugs, you can't go to see a doctor without having to accept that you're likely going to be arrested, and might be thrown into DRC (which is like prison), if not prison itself.

6/ Obviously, this deters people from seeking treatment, even though research says that it's more effective when people *voluntarily* seek help.

7/ Note: There is a strong class element here. If you are rich, there are options like going abroad to seek treatment and rehabilitation. See: <https://tnp.straitstimes.com/news/singapore-news/more-addicts-seek-help-overseas-get-clean>

8/ This is part of the extremely punitive policy against drug users that Singapore currently adopts. It arrests, detains, jails, shames. State-run Drug Rehabilitation Centres (DRCs) aren't actually rehabilitation centres; they are prisons that have a bit of a counselling element.

9/ People who have been through this system tell Transformative Justice Collective that they did not find it helpful, or connected to their lived experiences and why they ended up using drugs in the first place.

<https://transformativejusticecollective.org/2021/09/29/james-story-its-a-one-size-fits-all-approach-which-does-not-work/>

10/ There is stigma that makes it difficult for someone who has been identified and punished as a drug user to obtain decent employment that pays well enough for them to take care of themselves and their families.

11/ People who have been to DRG and prison are acutely aware of society's judgement and scorn. Strong relationships and community ties are important for recovery, but once branded a "drug addict", people feel rejected and looked down on.

12/ As Nazeri Lajim once told his sister — years before he was arrested for the offence for which he was killed yesterday — he felt that he was seen as "sampah masyarakat", or "trash of society".

<https://www.wethecitizens.net/wtc-long-read-a-life-marked-by-drugs-incarceration-and-the-death-penalty/>

13/ When people end up with such low self-esteem, it affects their mental health, their motivation, their relationships, their stress levels, their overall well-being, which of course has an impact on their recovery.

14/ While we continue to claim that we are hanging people because we have to "think of the victims" that we need to protect, we should reflect upon how we really look at and treat people who use drugs.

15/ We only celebrate the ones who managed to recover despite all the odds. For the many others who continue to struggle and suffer, we only have scorn, treating them like criminals, like "failures".

16/ "Look at this pregnant woman!" people say to me on social media. "Look! And you still want to say that we shouldn't hang drug traffickers?"

Yes, look at this pregnant woman. But not just as a tool to justify hangings.

17/ Look at her as the full person that she is: why did she turn to drug use? Were there factors in her life that led to her doing that? [cont.]

18/ Was she trying to dull pain, escape trauma, deal with stress? If so, are the sources of this pain, trauma, or stress things that we as a society can alleviate, so that people like her will become less likely to end up in those situations that affect their choices? [cont.]

19/ Now that she's already using drugs, what infrastructure is in place to ensure that harm is kept to a minimum? What structures are in place that would allow her to recover safely? What structures are in place that can provide safety and care for her children?

20/ How can we, as a society, change the way we look at and talk about people who use drugs, so that we see them as people, not as archetypes that we employ for whatever anti-drug or pro-death penalty narrative we want to propagate?

And like clockwork, this comment on my Facebook post that turned out to be a perfect Exhibit A:

<https://t.co/bO6zz0yTzh>

 
dont make it seem like its society fault when one chooses to use drugs. as nuanced as ur argument tries to be, ultimately it's someone's choice and no one is to be blamed for it. and why should the government be responsible for someone's bad decisions? u're saying - look, i took drugs, now take care of me or give me rehab because i deserve it? then don take drugs in the first place, simple. im sure many of life's problems and issues can be alleviated without the usage of drugs (i mean those that causes the undesirable addiction we see), if only one seeks for it.

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On death penalty: "We must hang drug traffickers! Think of all their victims!"

On drug users (i.e. the "victims" we're supposed to think of):
"It's someone's choice and no one is to be blamed for it."

Thank you for your comment. It perfectly illustrates the point that I was trying to make in this post: that we only think of drug users as "victims" to protect when we are trying to justify killing, but we don't actually give a shit about their well-being in any other circumstance. Ultimately it's all about power, punishment, and deservedness, not actually about wanting to address harm and suffering.

Like Reply 1 m