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MARIJUANA: A CARIBBEAN PERSPECTIVE  
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## Marijuana: A Caribbean Perspective



This presentation examines the situation in the English-speaking Caribbean regarding marijuana. It covers the following areas.

- i. Historical Perspective
- ii. Spread of Cannabis
- iii. Legislation
- iv. Production/Seizures
- v. Consumption
- vi. Traditional Beliefs, Customs and Values Influencing Consumption in Grenada and the Caribbean

### **Historical Perspective:**

- § Cannabis was first introduced to the Caribbean after the abolition of slavery in 1838, by workers from the India.
- § Early colonialists believed that the use of marijuana among East Indians increased productivity and overall morale. As a consequence smoking marijuana became a habit of the working class, not extremely popular but always available.

*Source: Barry Chevannes, "Back ground to Drug Abuse in Jamaica", 1988.*

§ Prohibitive legislation for marijuana production and consumption was introduced by Britain in Guyana and Trinidad, shortly after the first Opium Conference at The Hague in 1912.

§ When Britain ratified the Geneva Convention in 1931, 'Dangerous Drugs Legislation' was introduced throughout the Anglophone West Indies.

§ Legislation to prohibit the production, consumption and distribution of marijuana were retained, after political independence from Britain.

*Janice Cumberbatch and Neville Duncan, "Illegal Drugs, USA policies and Caribbean Responses: The Road to Disaster", Caribbean Affairs, Vol. 3, No. 4, 1990, p.152.*

### **Spread of Cannabis:**

The cannabis culture in the Caribbean can be traced to a series of important epiphanies that happened between the 1930's and 1960's.

i. Ideas of Marcus Garvey (1887-1940).

ii. Practices of Leonard Percival Howell.

iii. Founding of the Rastafarianism movement/religion in the 1930's in Jamaica.

iv. Coronation of Ras Tafari Makonnen, (2 November 1930 who became known as Emperor Haile Selassie. Some saw this as fulfillment of a biblical prophecy. (Second Advent)

- iv. Rise of reggae super Robert (Bob) Nestor Marley; linkage of marijuana use and music.
- iv. Writings of Dr. Walter Rodney, a Guyanese national, author, and professor at the University of the West Indies.
- v. Combination of the Black Power Movement and Rastafarian teachings, both philosophies spread rapidly to various Caribbean nations, including Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, Dominica and Grenada.

#### **Legislation:**

- § As indicated earlier, the Caribbean countries retained cannabis as a controlled product after political independence which commenced in the 1960's.
- § Possession of marijuana accounts for over 90 % of all drug-related offences. (Consumption)
- § Legislation prohibits possession of marijuana for personal use. (No decriminalization, no legalization)

### **Production/Seizures:**

- § The Caribbean is not a significant producer of marijuana.
- § Data from the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism (MEM) show while most Caribbean countries are unable to determine production rates of cannabis, similarly, most countries produce and eradicate less than two hectares of cannabis annually.
- § The Caribbean region accounted for 1% of cannabis seized worldwide (54,430 kg.) in 2007, a significant decline from estimates as high as 18% in the 1980's.

§ Jamaica is the largest producer of cannabis in the Caribbean.

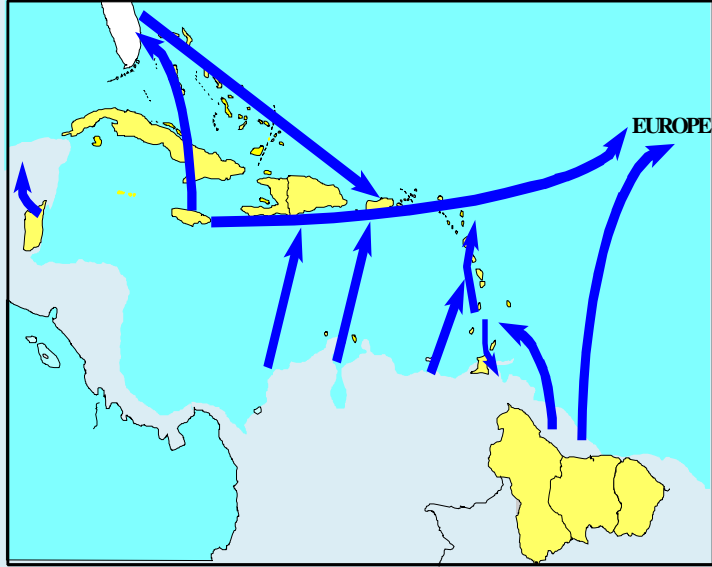
§ Proportion of cannabis seizures from Jamaica for the period 2005 to 2007 is 3%. Similar percentage to South Africa, Albania)

§ 0.7 % (34,440 kg) of the cannabis seized worldwide in 2007, came from Jamaica.

§ No indoor cultivation of cannabis in the Caribbean.

*Source: UN World Drug Report 2009/UNODC Annual Reports Questionnaire*

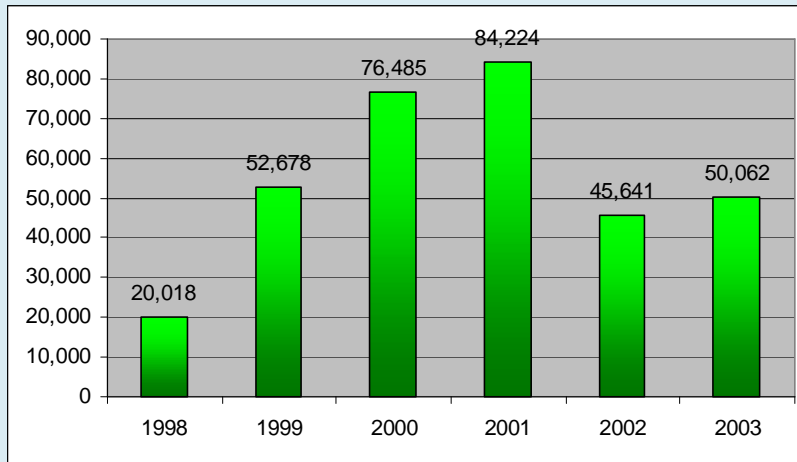
### Map Showing Export Routes For Marijuana In The Caribbean



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### Quantities of Cannabis Seized in The Caribbean, 1998 to 2003



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## Quantities of Cannabis Eradicated In Jamaica, 2006 to 2009

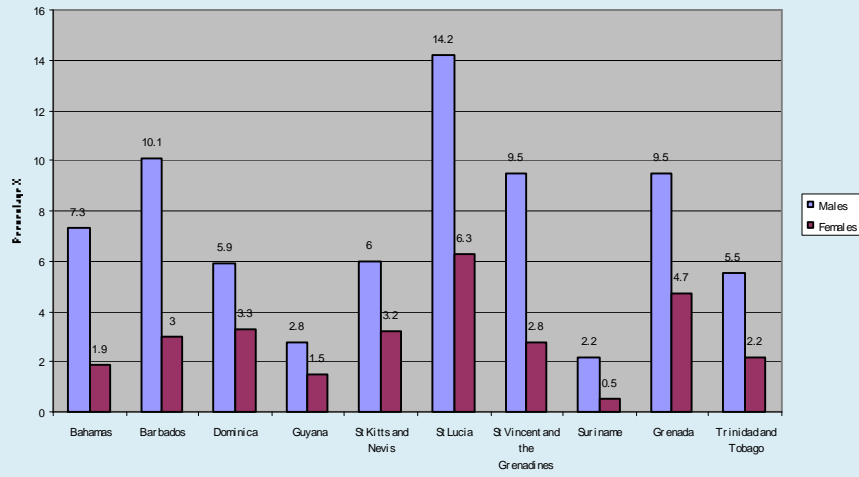
Year	Cannabis Eradicated (Ha)
2006	376.8
2007	490
2008	394.15
2009	257.69

### Consumption:

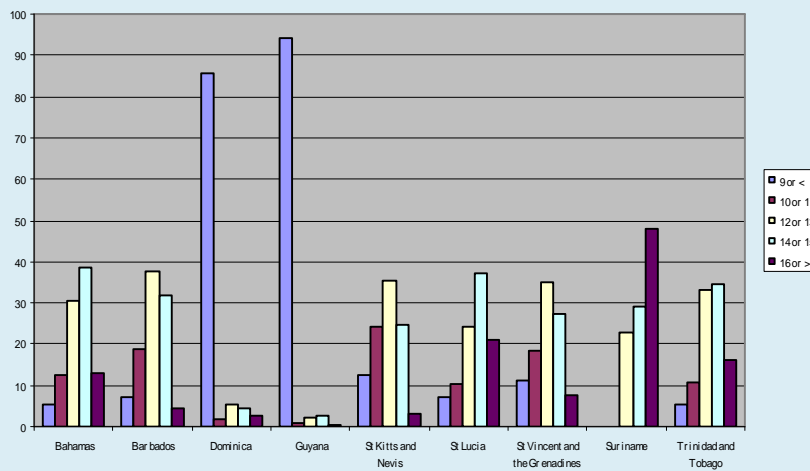
- § Marijuana is the drug of choice in the Caribbean.
- § The UN estimates that 1,110,000 persons (4.3%) in the Caribbean between ages 15 to 64 have used cannabis at least once.
- § In contrast to the declining trend in other regions, increases in cannabis use have been reported in Caribbean countries in recent years, notably in 2007.

Source: UN World Drug Report 2009.

## Prevalence Of Marijuana Use Among Secondary School Students (Data from 2005 – 2007)



## Age of First Use Of Marijuana Among Secondary School Students, 2005 – 2007 Data





### **Traditional Beliefs, Customs and Values Influencing Consumption in Grenada and the Caribbean:**

§Belief that marijuana is not a drug.

§Religious beliefs (holy herb).

§Home Influence-Early socialization.

§Social stereotyping.

§Coping mechanism; 'sufferers'

§Linkage between small-scale production, economics and use.

*A Sociological Analysis of Alcohol and Marijuana Use and Abuse among Young People in Grenada*

### **Summary:**

- While the Caribbean region is not a significant producer of marijuana, consumption is of concern.
- Need for fresh ideas and strategies to combat the beliefs and values which promote and sustain use of marijuana.