

Newark Mayor Blasts the Drug War

Newark Star Ledger, June 24, 2007
by Tom Moran

For Cory Booker, it has been a sobering first year as mayor. He is an angrier man now. And the focus of that anger is a public policy that he believes is ruining his city and threatening his hopes to change it.

The problem, he says, is New Jersey's tough tactics in the drug war. The result is to turn thousands of young men into economic cripples and to give the crime wave in Newark a flood of fresh recruits. Booker describes it as almost an economic genocide against African American men in his city.

And if it doesn't change, he says, he's ready to go to jail in protest, in the tradition of the civil rights movement. "I'm going to battle on this. We're going to start doing it the gentlemanly way. And then we're going to do the civil disobedience

way. Because this is absurd."

He wants to reserve prison cells for those who do violence and divert the nonviolent drug offenders into treatment programs and halfway houses. He wants to change the



New Jersey laws that bar many ex-cons from getting a driver's license. He wants a black kid from Newark who sells marijuana to clear his record as easily as the white kid from the suburbs who buys it.

About 1,500 convicts are released

from state prison to Newark each year, and 1,000 of them will likely be arrested again within three years mostly for drug crimes.

"The drug war is causing crime," Booker says. "It is just chewing up young black men. And it's killing Newark."

Common Sense for Drug Policy

www.CommonSenseDrugPolicy.org www.DrugWarFacts.org

www.ManagingChronicPain.org www.MedicalMJ.org

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