

## Scared Straight?

Maybe it's time to turn from warring against drugs to helping people to heal.

Hidden among the headlines about the Republican presidential campaign and Trayvon Martin are two seemingly dissimilar stories.

- The federal government is midway through a \$54 million campaign of graphically gruesome media ads aimed at scaring smokers into quitting. "We want to get 50,000 smokers to quit," says Kathleen Sibelius, Secretary of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.
- President Obama has met with heads of state from Central and South American countries that have been devastated by murderous drug cartels. Given our country's inability to reduce its lust for illegal drugs, the President will likely now have to weigh Mexico, Guatemala and Colombia's wish to discuss legalization as a solution against being seen as soft on drugs.

Since Prohibition didn't work, perhaps we'll soon see shots of cirrhotic livers on every booze bottle. Or, as obesity now equals smoking as a health risk, stapled stomachs will begin popping up on bags of potato chips.

When will we learn that declaring war on a substance can never do what's essentially an inside job?

We are a nation of addicts. We want what we want when we want it--and we want it now. When that doesn't happen, we are afraid and reach for something to make us feel better.

And fear fuels addiction like gasoline on a grass-fire.

I saw one of those shock ads at a friend's home. Camille is a college professor, and has a rational person's interest in maintaining her health—except that she smokes. We watched as a bald woman dying of throat cancer adjusted her wig at the end of the spot. "That was truly disgusting," Camille said with a shiver, then reached for her pack and lit up.

The irony is that Camille is right on the cusp of quitting. We attend the same meditation sessions, and I know she is learning to befriend her emotions, using them as a barometer for what she needs to change about herself—not what "out there" to manipulate or control. She's made the internal changes, but is finding it hard to take that final step.

Perhaps it would have been a better use of \$54 million in tax dollars to enroll Camille and 49,999 others in cessation support groups than to fan the flames of addiction with fear.