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## **Ethical Decisions and Law Enforcement. Professional Ethics and Personal Values At War.**

**By Kathy Lou Mancini, Saint Leo University**

*"My girlfriend has had a hard life and well focuses on drinking. She is a alcoholic and recently (last night) I learned that she smokes pot often and that this past Monday night she tried cocaine. She realizes she has a problem, but isn't doing anything about it instead it seems she is going down hill. She tells me that she doesn't want to tear me down and is doing things intentionally to push me away."* (Photogrrlz, 2005).

How does a criminal justice professional deal with this situation? Does the officer walk away from the person in question? Does the officer arrest the person in question if required by state statute or law? Does the officer overlook the professional implications that this situation represents to them as a professional in the criminal justice field because it is a family friend or significant other? Ethics and morals are an important part of a law enforcement officer's life. Most departments have policies and regulations that are restrictive on drug use and abuse by its officers, but what happens when the officer is faced with the above situation? Professional ethics and personal ethics can sometimes conflict. It is an officer's duty (as a sworn officer of the town, city, county or state they reside) to enforce the state statutes or governing state laws they have sworn to. Is it that simple? Should it be that simple? If you were a police officer in this situation would you arrest your spouse, girlfriend, best friend, or possibly your mother?

During the past 40 years drug tolerance has become one of the hottest topics in criminal justice. In the early part of this century during prohibition, it was commonplace to see police officers in illegal drinking establishments, "everyone does it" was the common thought during this period. This is shown in any movie, book or historical paper during this time. Approaching the 1960's, illegal drug use was rampant in the younger generations emerging into adulthood and still today the use of illegal drugs consumes the younger generation through experimentation. With these considerations in mind, can law enforcement recruits today be expected to hold to the expectations that they (as professionals in criminal justice) will enforce blindly the laws of the state in which they work and are sworn to uphold? The *Los Angeles Times* reported that police departments across the country are hiring admitted former drug users (Stop the Drug War, 2005). In specific cases like the Denver Police Department, statistics state that "52 of 80 new hires admitted to past drug use, usually, but not always marijuana. Ten of the new hires had used other drugs, including LSD, psilocybin, ecstasy and amphetamines" (Stop the Drug War, 2005).

The ethical dilemma in this is: are citizens and departments going to understand the position of these candidates with regard to ethical dilemmas concerning drug use. Departments are going to have to reinforce the policies and educate their personnel (as well as the public) as to the regulations of the department and the demand for consistent enforcement of the law. Ethical breaches will have to be handled in a fashion that shows others in prospective departments, and the citizens of the community in question, that any police officer sworn and active in the enforcement of the law will do what is professionally ethical in these situations, regardless of personal morals or values. Many American police officers don't bother enforcing possession laws on those holding small quantities of soft drugs such as marijuana (Wikipedia, 2005). The relaxed views of illegal substance use are "part of a trend nationally", said Andrew Morabito, senior projects specialist with the International Association of Chiefs of Police in Alexandria, Va (Mitchell, 2005). Society has evolved over time to understand and tolerate the use of illegal drugs by some of its citizens. As society has evolved, the criminal justice profession has evolved as well, allowing for "mistakes" by its members during the early periods of their lives. "If you're going to be a law enforcement officer, you're going to have to gear your life to be a law-enforcement officer," said Lt. Frederick V. Roussey, president of the police union in Baltimore (Mitchell, 2005). Some law enforcement officials contend that previous drug use would hurt an officer's credibility in court, and raise doubts about a recruit's judgment (Mitchell, 2005). However, excluding all with a history of drug experimentation is not the answer either. When a citizen chooses to become a member of the criminal justice profession there should no longer be a conflict between their professional and personal ethics. The ethics of the officer should reflect the ethics of the profession. "Law enforcement should be held to a higher standard," said Gary McLhinney, chief of the Maryland Transportation Authority police (Mitchell, 2005).

So, to answer the question stated above, Is it that simple? Should it be that simple? Yes, it is that simple. If an officer sees a violation of the law then the officer is required to act under the guiding principle of the position that the officer holds. If the officer is unable to act on that guiding principle then it might be said that it's time for that officer to find a new profession.

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## **Ethical Questions Regarding Immigration Policy**

**Christopher R. Heck, Graduate Student**

The United States is based on the principles of a free and democratic society. Immigrants from all over the world have been flocking to this wonderful country for hundreds of years. The ability for these people from diverse cultures to come to the United States in order to pursue the "American Dream" has never been better. America depends on these individuals as much as they depend on it. The economic vitality of this great nation depends on individuals from all regions of the world bringing their capital resources to our country. However, with the massive amounts of opportunities that the United States provides an individual who chooses to come to this country legally, there is a problem of keeping those individuals who come to this country illegally from crossing our nation's borders. There is not a better time than now to start focusing on the immigration laws and policies that have compounded this problem for years. Politicians and legislators have been afraid to turn people away from this country because of the political backlashes that could occur from doing so. International terrorism has found its way to America. The September eleventh terrorist attacks in New York City have placed this country at the heart of a war based on religious ideologies. Immigration laws have historically been very lenient because of the need for blue-collar workers. Individuals who have the ability to obtain a visa from the State Department should be able to come to this country with absolutely no problems. These people are not threats to the United States. The people who pose a threat to this nation are the individuals who cross the border between ports of entry and circumvent our border security. The question regarding immigration reform is ethically based. Are these people who avoid inspection at our ports of entry merely coming to the United State to find work or are they coming here to harm us?

Organizations who support today's immigration policy feel that people who are coming to the United States illegally are financially motivated. I agree with this argument, in that these individual only want to earn increased wages to provide a better life for their families back in their home country. However, are illegal immigrants taking jobs away from Americans that are willing to work? The United States is the most vibrant economy in the world. Yet, there are citizens in this country who cannot find work. Those who are skilled and unskilled laborers are left without options when it comes to finding work. These workers are being forced to collect unemployment checks by companies who can hire illegal immigrants for a fraction of the cost. It is against federal law to employ illegal immigrants who are not in possession of a work permit. Unfortunately, there has been little effort by federal officials to go after these companies because nothing will be done to them once the case enters the judicial system.

In comparison, restructuring immigration laws may have an enormous impact on the economy. If illegal immigrants who supply many labor oriented jobs are forced out or are caught upon entry into the United States the economy may regress. If corporations are forced to hire legitimate legal workers for higher wages then the cost will ultimately be passed on to the consumer. The housing market would probably be the most impacted segment of the economy. It is not a secret that many illegal immigrants are employed in the construction industry. For example, if these companies who specialize in construction are forced to hire American workers to build homes then they will have to pay higher wages and thus the profit margins of these companies will decrease. To supplement their decline in profit margin the home building companies will pass the added expenses on to the consumer. This is only one of hundreds of industries that would be affected by the restructuring of immigration laws. If this were to happen large corporations and small business owners will be writing their legislators and Congressman about their inability to run a profitable business due to human capital expenditures.

If the federal government wishes to increase border security they must give the agencies responsible for this daunting task the resources to carry out the mission. Technology and the increased hiring of additional law enforcement officers along the northern and southern borders will help solve this problem. Increased protection between ports of entry is needed. Why would an individual who wants to inflict damage upon this country make him or herself susceptible to inspection at a port of entry? The debate over illegal immigration will continue to be a topic of discussion among politicians and at dinner tables across this nation for many years to come. The two sides that collide over this issue both have valid points. A difficult ethical decision will have to be made by the citizens of this country someday. Do we as a society jeopardize the cultural and ethnic diversity that has saturated this nation since its inception? Or do we secure our borders more effectively and make entering the United States a major process? These are questions that must be answered by United States citizens in the aftermath of September eleventh. ●

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