

Power's Struggle to Transcend Legitimacy

Written by Clayton for The Voluntaryist Reader.

Imagine you are a young adult, say, sixteen or seventeen years old. Driving down the highway, you and your friends are laughing and joking. Without warning, you see a police cruiser, circus lights blazing, in your rearview mirror, and quickly pull to the side of the road. You are gripped with terror in the knowledge that you have been breaking the law in a very serious way. When the police officer approaches, you reluctantly roll down your window. He immediately recognizes the smell emanating from your vehicle – he orders you to step out of the vehicle and calls for backup. You are cuffed, your car is searched and a bag of cannabis is found. You are going to jail – it will be the first step in a very long journey that is going to have lifelong consequences. We could have told the same story of a young adult walking down the road with friends, laughing and carousing while drinking, circa 1920's. During Prohibition, the consumption of alcohol under most circumstances was illegal and punishment could be very severe.

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