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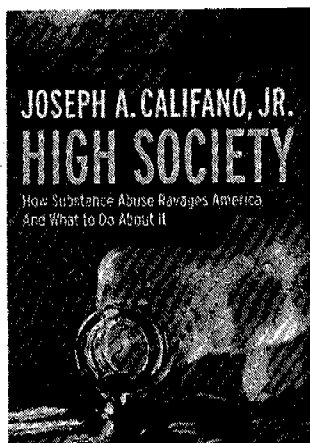
Reviewed by James D. Zirin

High Society: How Substance Abuse Ravishes America And What to Do About It

By Joseph A. Califano Jr., Public Affairs, New York, N.Y. 238 pages, \$26.95 hardcover.

Perhaps the most famous statement about the Sixties, an era we seem unable to escape, is a quip attributed to its own Pied Piper, the late Timothy Leary: "If you remember the Sixties, you weren't there." Joseph Califano remembers the sixties. He spent them as the president's chief domestic adviser in Lyndon Johnson's White House. He doesn't like what he saw then or sees now. With his experience in the Johnson administration helping to push through Congress the Drug Rehabilitation Act of 1966 authorizing the first federal funds to treat addicts, in the Carter administration as Secretary of Health Education and Welfare, and later as a lawyer in private practice, Califano came to see drug and substance abuse addiction as a "form of enslavement" and "among the most pernicious threats to our society."

Now, the head of the New York based think tank known as the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia (CASA), he views the war on drugs as "too narrowly focused on criminal punishment, interdiction and illegal drugs," (supply side) and has come to understand that the



solution lies in viewing the problem more broadly as treatment of substance abuse addiction (demand side)—"regardless of whether the substance was alcohol, nicotine, or illegal or prescription drugs."

Seeking to look at an old problem in a new way, his sobering and thought provoking book is a call to arms. Writing in tough Brooklyn born, Jesuitically crafted, Harvard Law School honed prose, he exhorts:

We must end our denial, stamp out the stigma, rethink our concept of crime and punishment, reshape our medical system, and commit the energy and resources needed to confront this plague. Failure to do so is a decision to continue writing off millions of Americans to lives of debilitating illness, social dysfunction, and crime, and to continue imposing on taxpayers and citizens exorbitant medical, social service, and prison costs.

Bristling with impressive statistics, Califano marshals the evidence persuasively. Substance abuse addiction has afflicted some of our most celebrated Americans. The list is long and includes: George W. Bush, Chief Justice Rehnquist, Paris Hilton and Lawrence Taylor. He fails to mention Britney Spears. Substance abuse addiction "funds terrorism, spawns crime, drives up health care costs, breaks up families, spreads AIDS, promotes unwanted teen pregnancy, and

frustrates so many efforts to eliminate poverty." Substance abuse addiction is closely associated with cancer, heart disease, respiratory ailments accidents and violence. On any given day, 100 million Americans are partaking of an upper or a downer, smoking a cigarette, inhaling from an aerosol can, snorting cocaine, doing Ecstasy or smoking marihuana, which Califano

of course views as a "gateway" drug, along with cigarettes and alcohol. Substance abuse addiction is so bad in America, he writes not without some hyperbole, that "chemistry is chasing Christianity as the nation's largest religion."

Califano gives no quarter. Athletes use steroids to improve performance; rock stars high on cocaine tax our senses as, amid flashing strobes and techno beats, they sing paeans to the drug culture; physicians promiscuously prescribe mood-altering drugs, particularly to women; teenagers drink and smoke, heedless of the horrific consequences.

Reinforced by music, movies and television, we have become the "High Society."

And, the fault, argues Califano, lies not in the sellers of addictive substances, but in ourselves. From prominent politicians and their wives to the Barrymores, from college students to teenagers, drug abuse addiction has become an American pandemic. Califano points out that the prime target of the purveyors, whether Colombian drug lords, tobacco and alcohol magnates or street pushers, are our youth. Addictive substances are only just a cell phone, a parent's liquor cabinet or a medicine chest away. In the digital age, real or counterfeit iterations of controlled substances, such as OxyContin, are offered online without prescription. All the kid needs is a credit card and a laptop.

The peer pressure, the teenage environment, the ready availability are all overwhelming. This places a special burden on parents, clerics, principals and teachers. Schools may have courses in the perils of substance abuse addiction. But Califano argues that the ultimate responsibility is with the parents. Quoting University of North Carolina sociology professor David Hanson, Califano asserts that, "the modeling that happens at home will still have the greatest effect on how kids ultimately behave." Modeling is the cultivation of attitudes that involves not only words but deeds, particularly in the area of smoking and drinking.

Most will acknowledge the serious problem that Califano presents. The essential question is what is to be done about it?

Presenting congeries of proposals ranging from political leadership to parental role modeling, Califano totally rejects legalization. And I leave you to this worthwhile book to consider and analyze all of them. Sufficient to say that among his intriguing ideas is a "revolution" in the criminal justice system to provide incentives for rehabilitation and disincentives for continued abuse addiction.

Many of Califano's ideas are not new. But seeing them assembled as a package epitomizes the problem and informs its difficult solution. Will Califano's formula produce a land of the substance free? One can only hope it will produce a less addicted nation. A brilliant advocate, Joe Califano has made a powerful case.

James D. Zirin is a partner in Sidley Austin. He is co-host of the weekly talk show "Digital Age," which runs on WNYE (Channel 25) in New York.