

Smoking pot no more dangerous than drinking, Obama says

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President Barack Obama says smoking pot is no more dangerous than drinking but calls it a "bad idea," amid a push for legalization in several states.

In comments to The New Yorker magazine published Sunday, the US leader also noted that poor minority youths are more likely to get prison time for using marijuana than their richer counterparts.

"As has been well documented, I smoked pot as a kid, and I view it as a [bad habit](#) and a vice, not very different from the cigarettes that I smoked as a young person up through a big chunk of my adult life," Obama said.

"I don't think it is more dangerous than alcohol."

He added that he has told his two daughters Sasha and Malia that "it's a bad idea, a waste of time, not very healthy."

Obama, in a wide-ranging series of interviews with the prestigious publication, went on to say that "middle-class kids don't get locked up for smoking pot, and poor kids do."

"And African-American kids and Latino kids are more likely to be poor and less likely to have the resources and the support to avoid unduly harsh penalties," he added.

In that vein, Obama welcomed the recent legalization of marijuana in Colorado and Washington.

"It's important for society not to have a situation in which a large portion of people have at one time or another broken the law and only a select few get punished," he said.

Couching his remarks somewhat, Obama called the move in the two states a challenging

"experiment."

"Those who argue that legalizing marijuana is a panacea and it solves all these social problems I think are probably overstating the case," he added.

And Obama stopped short of calling for legalizing the drug at the federal level.

Colorado and Washington are creating a recreational market in which local authorities will oversee growing, distribution and marketing—all of it legal—for people to get high just for the fun of it.

While Colorado's law went into effect January 1, Washington's recreational marijuana shops are expected to open later this year.

Obama made a distinction between [marijuana](#) and more potent drugs.

"I also think that, when it comes to harder drugs, the harm done to the user is profound and the social costs are profound," he said.

The article is published in the magazine's January 27 issue.

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