

# Geographic Inquiry: Phillipine Drug War

CGC-1D8

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# Part 1

## Questions

### 1.1 Who are the people in the photograph?

I chose this question because of the mood of the photograph. The colors are dreary, evoking a sense of sadness. We also see that there is a person, presumably dead in the bottom-left corner, which sparks intrigue.

### 1.2 What is the significance of the photo? Why does it exist?

This photo looks dramatic, and so I have a feeling that there is some cultural or personal significance around it.

### 1.3 If there is a problem, how might one resolve it?

I'm not sure if there is a problem that is depicted in the image, but if there is, it would be interesting to see ways that people have tried, and will be trying to resolve it.

## Part 2

# Research

### 2.1 General Information

- This photo was shot by [National Geographic](#)
- The story is about the unlawful punishments drug lords give to their members in the Phillipines, and the effects on the community.
- The story begins with a father named Rick Medina, and follows his path in finding out that his son, Ericardo, has been killed.
- That night, there were 7 more killings, and the day after, Ericardo's sister, Jhoy, went to the morgue to see all of them.
- There, she discovered something horrifying: the way they were killed.
  - Upon further investigation, it was found that they all were killed the same way
  - The murderers wrapped packing tape around their heads, then stabbed them with ice picks to pierce their lungs
- These are just some of thousands of killings in the Phillipines, demonstrating the extent to which the problem lies.
- However, this problem does not just lie with drug users; people who've never even used drugs, but have aided police, can be killed.
  - The photo depicts a bloody scene
    - \* There is a figure with blood draining out of him in the bottom left hand corner
    - \* In the background, there looks to be ordinary citizens
    - \* On the right-hand side, there is a police photographer
  - The person bleeding out of his head was 41-year-old Angelito Luciano
  - He was an assist to police in the area, seeking out drug lords and users

### 2.2 Coping

- The people of the Phillipines use many different methods to cope with the two main problems:
  - Their loved one has been killed
  - Their loved one was a user of drugs

- \* In the Phillipines, using drugs is highly looked down upon, despite the high drug rate.
- Death rituals have been a large part of Phillipine culture
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## 2.3 Meaning of the photo

- For a very long time, the world has been looking to eradicate drugs
- This all started in the 90s, with Richard Nixon declaring that "public drug abuse is enemy number one"
- This led to a global campaign that seeked to eradicate drugs by incarcerating those that used them
- However, this ignores a very simple marketing foundation: supply and demand
  - Unlike other industries, drug users cannot just stop using drugs.
  - Once somebody gets addicted, it is very hard to stop.
  - As a result, when supply drops, demand does not go down with it
  - This leads to very strong competitiveness in the market, and people will end up doing anything to get that product
- The 'doing anything' part of that sentence does not just mean for consumers; as is evident in this photo, drug producers iwll also do anything to anybody that gets in their way
- It is scenarios like this that the world starts to realize the err of their ways
  - The so-called "War on Drugs" has been claimed to be a complete waste of time, money, and human resources.
  - Countries like Switzerland have stopped all forms of combatting the 'War on Drugs', and they have shown that human-to-human interaction and rehabilitation is the best way to combat drug use.
- As more people start to figure out that parts of our world are inherently wrong, so our world will progress.

## Part 3

# Answers

I'll be creating a paragraph for my second question, "What is the significance of this photo? Why does it exist?"

### 3.1 What is the significance of this photo? Why does it exist?

Photographs serve as a vivid, undebatable view into the past. In some cases, they can serve as reminders of times past, or of the good in humans. However, the image that I've chosen serves to be neither of those things: it is a view into the brutal reality of the past. This image was taken in the slums of the Philippines, off the corner of one of the busiest streets there, and it shows a dead man in the corner, with an investigation crew in the background. This horrifying scene was caused by a surprisingly large part of society: drugs.

More specifically, this image shows the effects of the "War on Drugs" on society. In the 1990s, former president Richard Nixon declared "public drug abuse: public enemy No. 1," sparking an unprecedented global campaign to eradicate not drugs, but drug *users*, through incarceration and punishment; the aim was to decrease the amount of drugs by decreasing drug use. However, this violated a very fundamental law of business: supply and demand. Drug users will do *anything* to get their fix, no matter how illegal or hard-to-get they are. As a result, the government and drug sellers locked horns, each becoming more and more violent, driving up prices for drugs, until *direct* harm started to come to the citizens who cannot, which is what this photo shows.

The Philippines have killings on an almost daily bases, from people of all walks of life: from a *5-year-old child*, to the family of a *72-year-old*, and it is images like this that bring awareness to individuals, and they make impact. Globally, the "War on Drugs" has been deemed a complete waste of money, time, and resources. Talks are being resumed about a more humane approach to drug use and abuse, which I believe is a much-needed alternative. Slowly but surely, the world is shifting their view on drugs for the better, and if not for horrifying but *real* photos like this one, our world would be the worse for it.