

BROOKE CROUCH

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WESTERN ALBEMARLE HIGH SCHOOL

THINGS I LEARNED ABOUT HEMP:

1. HEMP IS NOT A DRUG. MANY PEOPLE VIEW IT AS SUCH, BECAUSE IT IS IN THE SAME FAMILY AS CANNABIS, BUT IT IS NOT PSYCHOACTIVE. THE GOVERNMENT BANNED ALL FORMS OF CANNABIS, BUT HEMP IS NOT DANGEROUS IN ANY CAPACITY. IN FACT, IT IS VERY USEFUL! HEMP HAS MANY USES; FOOD, CLOTHING, PAPER PRODUCTS, AND AS A BUILDING MATERIAL.
2. HEMP IS A VERY SUSTAINABLE AND HARDY PRODUCT. IT IS FROST RESISTANT, REQUIRES ONLY A SMALL AMOUNT OF WATER, AND CAN BE GROWN IN ALL THE STATES IN THE UNITED STATES. IT CAN BE USED AS AN ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY PLASTIC SUBSTITUTE, AND CAN ALSO BE USED TO MAKE HEMP PAPER; THE PAPER WILL NOT FALL APART FOR HUNDREDS OF YEARS AND CAN BE RECYCLED MANY TIMES. IT AERATES THE SOIL WHERE IT GROWS, REDUCING EROSION AND DEFORESTATION.
3. HEMP WAS A MAJOR PRODUCT IN THE US ECONOMY FROM 1776 TO 1937 DUE TO ITS EASY-TO-GROW NATURE AND ITS VAST PROPERTIES. NOW, HEMP IS CONSIDERED TABOO AND DANGEROUS, BUT IT USED TO BE WIDELY ACCEPTED. THE FIRST FLAGS WERE MADE OUT OF HEMP!

CAN HEMP BECOME A BIG AMERICAN PRODUCT IN THE FUTURE?

THE SIMPLE ANSWER: YES!

THE COMPLICATED ANSWER: IT DEPENDS. THERE IS A LARGE STIGMA AGAINST HEMP, BECAUSE MANY PEOPLE HAVE BEEN BRAINWASHED INTO EQUATING HEMP WITH MARIJUANA. THE CURRENT LAWS WILL BE HARD TO REMOVE, BECAUSE THE GOVERNMENT BUREAUCRACY IS VERY CONVOLUTED AND MAKES IT HARD TO EFFECT CHANGE QUICKLY. HOWEVER, THIS COULD BE A SOLUTION TO THE UNITED STATE'S MANY PROBLEMS. WITH THE PRODUCTION OF HEMP, MORE JOBS COULD BE CREATED, BOTH IN FARMING AND THE CONVERSION OF HEMP INTO OTHER MATERIALS. ADDITIONALLY, THE RAPID ECOSYSTEM LOSS WE ARE EXPERIENCING COULD BE HALTED AND MAYBE EVEN REVERSED WITH THE INTRODUCTION OF HEMP; IT AERATES THE SOIL AND CAN ABSORB 4 TIMES MORE CARBON DIOXIDE THAN A TREE

CAN. THIS COULD BE A HUGE STEP FORWARD TO REDUCING CLIMATE CHANGE DUE TO EXCESSIVE CARBON DIOXIDE LEVELS IN OUR ATMOSPHERE. THE FOCUS ON QUALITY AND COMMUNITY, AS SEEN IN THE PATAGONIA VIDEO, REVEALS TO ME AN OPPORTUNITY FOR COMMUNITIES TO RECONNECT, BOTH WITH EACH OTHER AND WITH THE EARTH. SINCE THERE IS NO NATIONWIDE INDUSTRIALIZATION OF THE HEMP INDUSTRY, IT REMAINS VERY PERSONAL AND IN TOUCH WITH NATURE. IN A SOCIETY WHERE MOST PEOPLE DON'T KNOW OR CARE WHERE THEIR FOOD AND PRODUCTS COME FROM, IT WOULD BE A WELCOME CHANGE- AND A NEEDED ONE. IT WILL BE DIFFICULT INITIALLY TO BEGIN THE PROCESS OF INTRODUCING HEMP ON A LARGE SCALE IN THE UNITED STATES, BUT I AM CONFIDENT THAT OUR COUNTRY AND OUR WORLD WOULD BE A BETTER PLACE FOR IT.



PHOTO CREDIT: CLIP ART

RESPONSE:

WHY ARE WE SO AFRAID OF HEMP? WE NEED TO EMBRACE IT, NOT SHY AWAY FROM IT! HEMP IS A SUSTAINABLE ALTERNATIVE TO SO MANY PRODUCTS THAT ARE BANKRUPTING OUR RESERVE OF NATURAL RESOURCES; TREES, COTTON, FOOD! OUR WAY OF THINKING HAS MORPHED INTO A DISCONNECT WITH THE EARTH- HEMP CAN BE A WAY FOR US TO RECONNECT WITH THE EARTH, OUR COMMUNITY, AND OURSELVES. WE HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD A BETTER WORLD, AND WE NEED TO TAKE IT! HEMP CAN HEAL THE EARTH AND HEAL OURSELVES... IF WE LET IT.