



Gathering Place
Earl Arakaki

Death toll will keep rising as 'ice' rules isles

The death count continues to mount in Hawaii as politicians sit by and do nothing.

A 23-month-old toddler was killed last week after he was tossed off an H-1 freeway overpass, allegedly by a crystal methamphetamine, or "ice," addict. Ironically, the mother of the toddler is a rehabilitated crystal meth addict who admits "relapsing" as recently as Jan. 11.

The day before in Kailua, a mother of five was beaten to death on a public road in the middle of a residential neighborhood, allegedly by an admitted former drug addict. And meth being the drug of choice in Hawaii, odds are those who murder or commit other violent crimes have meth either in their system or in their history.

These two unbelievably brutal and unnecessary slayings are two of the latest victims of the ice epidemic -- an epidemic that has been pervasive in Hawaii for more than 20 years.

It would be difficult to find a person in Hawaii who hasn't been hurt by the islands' ice plague. Nearly every family in Hawaii is somehow touched by a member, neighbor, friend or acquaintance who is using and addicted to meth. No matter what the family's social standing, job, neighborhood or ancestry is, the "devil's dandruff" knows no boundaries. Meth addiction has ruined the lives and families of some of our local entertainers, politicians, teachers, police officers, athletes and students, to name a few.

When I see homeless locals on the beach, I know they have family members who would love to take them in if it's merely someone down on their luck. However, families hesitate to bring ice-addicted relatives into their homes because they are afraid of the potential for theft and violence associated

with meth. If Hawaii can get control of the meth epidemic, then a large portion of the homeless will find a way to get back on their feet and get back to work.

It isn't just the homeless in trouble. Often, keiki don't do well in school because they live in a home where an ice-addicted family member is disrupting life. Control the meth problem, and students will have a better chance of succeeding in life and remaining substance-free themselves.

Homes burglarized while owners out working? Ice sellers and their addict customers ruin the quality of life for whole neighborhoods by hitting each home on the block while parents are at work and students are at school. Just visit Ewa Beach, where I live. We're real proud to be a federally designated "Weed and Seed" neighborhood, but we still have plenty of crime.

You don't live in Ewa Beach? No matter. All of Hawaii has the distinction of being a "high-intensity drug-trafficking area" (HIDTA), all brought on because of meth. Lucky you live Hawaii? Only if the meth problem can be controlled.

Meanwhile, our politicians are not doing what they need to do to address this problem head-on. They waste their time on issues that aren't their business and don't really matter, like smoking in a bar or drinking beer at Aloha Stadium tailgate parties.

Enough BS'ing about the meth problem. This state needs to crack down, and crack down harder on those selling this pilau poison. Long jail time for those selling and trafficking ice and mandatory rehabilitation for those imprisoned for crimes connected to ice addiction.

Earl Arakaki lives in Ewa Beach.