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US Supreme Court OKs drug tea

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23 February, 2006

THE ARTICLE

US Supreme Court OKs drug tea

In a move that has surprised many, the US Supreme Court has unanimously voted in favor of allowing a religious sect to use a hallucinogenic tea in its rituals. Officials from President George W. Bush's administration had vehemently argued that the use of the drug contravened US narcotics laws and wanted the tea banned. However, in a victory for religious freedom, the congregation of 130 followers of a Brazilian religious sect can continue to use their holy tea. Presiding over the case, Chief Justice John Roberts said the government had failed to show that the sect was doing any harm in using the tea, which apparently brings followers closer to God. Opposition lawyers argued federal drug laws should prevail over religious freedom.

Followers of the religious group drink the hallucinogenic tea, known as "hoasca", as part of their rituals. Their defence team argued that America's strict drug laws could not be used to enforce a ban on the tea as the chemical substance in it was not being abused in a way illegal drugs might be. Prosecution lawyers conceded that although the tea was part of a "sincere exercise of religion" there was a danger of it being diverted for recreational purposes. Chief Justice Roberts said it was quite within the law to make exceptions regarding the use of drugs on a case-by-case basis. He sternly announced his decision would not open the narcotics floodgates. The victory proved a little hollow for the sect as customs officials seized shipments of their sacramental tea after the ruling.

WARM-UPS

1. RELIGIOUS RITUALS: In pairs / groups, talk about religious rituals. What do you do as part of your religion? What is the meaning of them? What would you think if your government tried to outlaw them?

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

Voting / religious sects / tea / rituals / drugs / freedom / harm / hallucinogenics / bans / chemical substances / lawyers / floodgates / victories / customs officials

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

3. ROLE PLAY: Role play a discussion between a follower of the religion that wants to use the hallucinogenic tea and a member of society who is against drugs of any kind.

4. TEA ROLES: In pairs / groups, discuss the following topics related to tea:

- a. The importance of tea to me.
- b. The part tea plays in my life.
- c. The history of tea in my country.
- d. Tea and health.
- e. Teas around the world.
- f. Tea-drinking habits.
- g. Tea or coffee?
- h. English tea, milk tea, iced tea....

Change partners and share what you talked about.

5. DRUG TEA OPINIONS: What do you think about these opinions? Students A agree with them, Students B disagree.

- a. It is right that the sect can use the tea for their religious rituals.
- b. The law is the law. An illegal drug should not be used for any purposes.
- c. If people can use this tea, then people should be able to use marijuana.
- d. Anyone who takes a hallucinogenic substance could commit a serious crime.
- e. America is great for allowing such religious freedom.
- f. The religion will see a great increase in followers from now.
- g. Members from the religion will sell the drug to make money illegally.
- h. The court victory means little because customs officials won't allow the tea into the country.

6. DRUGS: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word "drugs". Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- a. The top US court has allowed a religion to use a drug-laced tea. T / F
- b. The court said its decision maintained US religious freedom laws. T / F
- c. There are just 130 of the religion's followers in the United States. T / F
- d. The Supreme Court's Chief Justice said the tea was very harmful. T / F
- e. The religious group uses the tea to cleanse objects used in rituals. T / F
- f. Prosecution lawyers conceded the drug was being used sincerely. T / F
- g. The Supreme Court Chief Justice said the drug floodgates would open. T / F
- h. Customs officials let 280 kg of the tea into the USA after the ruling. T / F

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|-------------------|---------------|
| a. unanimously | decision |
| b. hallucinogenic | violated |
| c. contravened | drugs |
| d. presiding | implement |
| e. prevail | sitting |
| f. enforce | uniformly |
| g. conceded | meaningless |
| h. narcotics | win out |
| i. hollow | mind-changing |
| j. ruling | accepted |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| a. allowing a religious sect | recreational purposes |
| b. the use of the drug | was doing any harm |
| c. in a victory | open the narcotics floodgates |
| d. failed to show that the sect | contravened US narcotics laws |
| e. federal drug laws should | to use a hallucinogenic tea |
| f. the chemical substance in it | shipments of their sacramental tea |
| g. the tea was part of a sincere | prevail over religious freedom |
| h. a danger of it being diverted for | was not being abused |
| i. his decision would not | for religious freedom |
| j. customs officials seized | exercise of religion |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

US Supreme Court OKs drug tea

In a _____ that has surprised many, the US Supreme Court has _____ voted in favor of allowing a religious sect to use a hallucinogenic tea in its _____. Officials from President George W. Bush's administration had _____ argued that the use of the drug contravened US narcotics laws and wanted the tea banned. However, in a _____ for religious freedom, the congregation of 130 followers of a Brazilian religious sect can continue to use their holy tea. Presiding over the _____, Chief Justice John Roberts said the government had failed to show that the sect was doing any harm in using the tea, which _____ brings followers closer to God. Opposition lawyers argued federal drug laws should _____ over religious freedom.

vehemently
apparently
unanimously
case
move
victory
prevail
rituals

Followers of the religious group of just 130 _____ drink the hallucinogenic tea, known as "hoasca", as part of their rituals. Their defence team argued that America's strict drug laws could not be used to _____ a ban on the tea as the chemical _____ in it was not being abused in a way illegal drugs might be. Prosecution lawyers _____ that although the tea was part of a "_____ exercise of religion" there was a danger of it being diverted for recreational purposes. Chief Justice Roberts said it was quite within the law to make _____ regarding the use of drugs on a case-by-case basis. He sternly announced his decision would not open the narcotics _____. The victory proved a little hollow for the sect as customs officials seized shipments of their _____ tea after the ruling.

sincere
enforce
floodgates
conceded
followers
sacramental
exceptions
substance

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

US Supreme Court OKs drug tea

In a move that has surprised many, the US Supreme Court has _____ voted in favor of allowing a religious sect to use a hallucinogenic tea in its rituals. Officials from President George W. Bush's administration had _____ argued that the use of the drug _____ US narcotics laws and wanted the tea banned. However, in a victory for religious freedom, the congregation of 130 followers of a Brazilian religious _____ can continue to use their holy tea. _____ over the case, Chief Justice John Roberts said the government had failed to show that the sect was doing any harm in using the tea, which _____ brings followers closer to God. Opposition lawyers argued federal drug laws should _____ over religious freedom.

Followers of the religious group of just 130 followers drink the hallucinogenic tea, known as "hoasca", as part of their _____. Their defence team argued that America's strict drug laws could not be used to _____ a ban on the tea as the chemical _____ in it was not being abused in a way illegal drugs might be. Prosecution lawyers _____ that although the tea was part of a "sincere exercise of religion" there was a danger of it being _____ for recreational purposes. Chief Justice Roberts said it was quite within the law to make exceptions regarding the use of drugs on a case-by-case basis. He sternly announced his decision would not open the narcotics _____. The victory proved a little _____ for the sect as customs officials seized shipments of their sacramental tea after the ruling.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'drug' and 'law'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "DRUGS" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about drugs and tea.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- | | |
|-----------|----------------|
| • move | • strict |
| • rituals | • substance |
| • banned | • sincere |
| • freedom | • diverted |
| • harm | • case-by-case |
| • prevail | • hollow |

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- b. Do you think this case is just a storm in a teacup?
- c. Are you surprised the US Supreme Court has allowed the sect to use the hallucinogenic tea?
- d. Would you like to try the tea?
- e. Do you think the ruling will anger those who want to use marijuana for medicinal purposes?
- f. Do you think a law that says "anything goes" to preserve religious freedom is a good law?
- g. What do you think the Supreme Court would do if a religious sect wanted to use cocaine or heroin as a "sincere exercise of religion"?
- h. Do you think America is a model of religious tolerance?
- i. What do you think would happen if the congregation mushroomed to millions of followers?
- j. Do you think mind-changing substances should be allowed as part of a religion?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. Do you think accepting a banned drug as part of a religion might cause problems for society?
- d. Do you think all drugs can bring people closer to God?
- e. How real is the danger of the drug being diverted for recreational purposes?
- f. Do you think the floodgates will open and other narcotics cases will be brought before America's courts?
- g. How do you think the religious sect will be able to practice its religion if US customs does not allow the tea into the country?
- h. Are there aspects of your religion or others that you think are questionable under the law?
- i. Do you think other drugs used in society should be legalized or made illegal?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b. Was there a question you didn't like?
- c. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d. What did you like talking about?
- e. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

DRUGS: In pairs / groups, talk about the pros and cons of the following drugs in society.

	PROS	CONS
Hallucinogenic tea		
Alcohol		
Marijuana		
Nicotine		
Morphine		
Caffeine		
Other _____		

Change partners / groups. Tell each other what your previous partner(s) said.
Decide which of the above drugs you would allow or ban in your society.

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find information about the hallucinogenic tea. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson. Did you all find out similar things?

3. TEA: Make a poster about all the different kinds of teas in the world. Describe the important role tea plays in various cultures. Show your poster to your classmates in the next lesson. Did everyone find out similar things?

4. EFFECTS: Write an essay on the effects of allowing the hallucinogenic tea to become a legal part of the religions sect's practices. Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Did everyone write about similar things?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. T b. T c. T d. F e. F f. T g. F h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|-------------------|---------------|
| a. unanimously | uniformly |
| b. hallucinogenic | mind-changing |
| c. contravened | violated |
| d. presiding | sitting |
| e. prevail | win out |
| f. enforce | implement |
| g. conceded | accepted |
| h. narcotics | drugs |
| i. hollow | meaningless |
| j. ruling | decision |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| a. allowing a religious sect | to use a hallucinogenic tea |
| b. the use of the drug | contravened US narcotics laws |
| c. in a victory | for religious freedom |
| d. failed to show that the sect | was doing any harm |
| e. federal drug laws should | prevail over religious freedom |
| f. the chemical substance in it | was not being abused |
| g. the tea was part of a sincere | exercise of religion |
| h. a danger of it being diverted for | recreational purposes |
| i. his decision would not | open the narcotics floodgates |
| j. customs officials seized | shipments of their sacramental tea |

GAP FILL:

US Supreme Court OKs drug tea

In a **move** that has surprised many, the US Supreme Court has **unanimously** voted in favor of allowing a religious sect to use a hallucinogenic tea in its **rituals**. Officials from President George W. Bush's administration had **vehemently** argued that the use of the drug contravened US narcotics laws and wanted the tea banned. However, in a **victory** for religious freedom, the congregation of 130 followers of a Brazilian religious sect can continue to use their holy tea. Presiding over the **case**, Chief Justice John Roberts said the government had failed to show that the sect was doing any harm in using the tea, which **apparently** brings followers closer to God. Opposition lawyers argued federal drug laws should **prevail** over religious freedom.

Followers of the religious group of just 130 **followers** drink the hallucinogenic tea, known as "hoasca", as part of their rituals. Their defence team argued that America's strict drug laws could not be used to **enforce** a ban on the tea as the chemical **substance** in it was not being abused in a way illegal drugs might be. Prosecution lawyers **conceded** that although the tea was part of a "**sincere** exercise of religion" there was a danger of it being diverted for recreational purposes. Chief Justice Roberts said it was quite within the law to make **exceptions** regarding the use of drugs on a case-by-case basis. He sternly announced his decision would not open the narcotics **floodgates**. The victory proved a little hollow for the sect as customs officials seized shipments of their **sacramental** tea after the ruling.