

CANNABIS FOR ALL WOMANKIND

MJ

L I F E S T Y L E

MADE in
the CITY

THE SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUE



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When trying cannabis products, MJ Lifestyle recommends going low and slow—start with a micro-dose (1.5mg–3mg) and take your time, wait at least 2 hours before adding to your dosage. Cannabis affects all body types differently, it may take several tries to determine the right dosage for you.

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MJ Lifestyle rose from a community of women eager to share our knowledge, triumphs, and lessons learned. Our fine art print magazine is inspired and built on the blood, sweat & tears of many women before us. For centuries women have fought to raise their voices without judgment or shame. We believe in the strength of the feminine uprising change by empowering women to become founders and leaders. We are so proud to elevate the cannabis space with a tribe of endless inspirational women navigating their way through an abundant & holistic lifestyle. We are overwhelmed with gratitude for the collaboration of community, creativity, and support that has brought us here, thank you for your love and devotion.

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FOUNDER'S LETTER

Jennifer Skog /skög/



We've had our first three issue topics slated since the beginning, but it was the "Social Justice Issue" I was most fired up about. I would have come out of the gates with it, but knew that we needed to establish trust in the space before such brave women would welcome us into their lives—especially in states where cannabis is still illegal. As I've mentioned before, I often questioned why I jumped so far into this passion project, with only the experience of a digital creative and avid consumer. Creating this issue has granted me so many answers; I'm no longer wondering why, but how.

How much louder can our voices get?

The cannabis industry is an incredibly volatile space, and in the words of our girl Jervonne Singletary, "Cannabis prohibition remains one of this country's most flawed policies." The criminalization of this loving plant has disproportionately caused decades of tragedy and harm to our communities of color. Thousands of non-violent individuals are sitting in cells awaiting expungement of marijuana charges while we flaunt our cannabis yoga retreats and CBD suppositories.

In 2017, *Marijuana Business Daily* found a significant decrease in women holding executive positions in cannabis falling from 36% in 2015 to 23% in 2017. And though it isn't surprising, they cited 81% of the industry as being white-owned indicating that all other races and ethnicities combined make up just 19% of the market. The data shows that it is imperative we join forces to maximize opportunities for all. *MJ Lifestyle* proudly provides free brand consulting to qualified companies while dedicating space in the magazine and online to help promote equity brands.

For this issue, I flew into Dallas for a quick trip to interview 14 women currently standing up for legalization in Texas. When I arrived, I felt like I had gone back in time sneaking around to take a hit off a hand-rolled joint, praying the neighbor who was just bringing in her laundry didn't call the cops. We started this publication in California after cannabis had already been medically legal for 20 years and I say with confidence that *MJ Lifestyle* would not even exist if cannabis was still prohibited here. These women (almost all mothers), testifying at the Capitol to defend our girl *MJ* are heroines and true suffragettes of cannabis prohibition. Like most of the US, Texas cannabis patients are still fighting for the legalization of a plant that's healing effects have been well documented and scientifically proven. This is intensely frustrating and only one of many incredible stories we have for you in this "Cannabis Policy and Social Justice Issue" of *MJ* that will also leave you frustrated, no doubt, but it is our responsibility as humans walking this earth to open our eyes, educate ourselves and advocate for our communities.

The anti-prohibitionists featured in this issue are leading the charge for social equity in the cannabis industry and I am completely humbled by these women. Nothing seems more terrifying than lawmakers making uneducated decisions in our legislature. Thank you all for your support and please enjoy this beautiful work of art we have created for you. We hope she inspires you to take action somewhere that is meaningful to you.

xx, *Jen*



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Plant-based Lady Date

The ladies of *MJ Lifestyle* have a few ideas about how to throw an elevated plant-based event for that much needed girl time that we can never get enough of. With our most favorite plant in mind, guests can choose their own adventure with micro-dosed edibles and CBD tinctures. CBD can actually negate some of the negative effects of feeling “too high” from over-consumption of THC. We love CBD tinctures because they quickly level out the effects and gets us even closer to homeostasis!



MJ loves The idea of mixing in micro-dosed edibles like The Garden Society’s Fruit Gelées infused with the uplifting attributes of a Sativa cannabis strain to energize the mind and body. With 5 mg THC per serving, it’s best to go slow with one to start and wait up to ninety minutes before consuming more—unless you are a seasoned pro with edibles!

The Garden Society also has the most delicious Spiced Dark Chocolates with Chili infused with a Sativa hybrid strain to get the party started—we try to steer clear of the Indica cannabis strains unless we are ready for bed.

Whenever serving infused edibles make sure each guest is completely aware and educated about what they are consuming. Always purchase from legal dispensaries.

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FLOWER MOON ELIXIRS

RECIPE BY ERIN WILLIS, MOTHER INDICA



INGREDIENTS:

- 3 bags of tulsi sweet rose tea (or sweet rose tea)
- 3 bags of hibiscus + white mulberry tea
- Ginger kombucha, *I prefer GT Kombucha*
- Soda water, if desired
- 1 dropper of Verté Essentials CBD

METHOD:

To brew the tea: Steep tea in 24 ounces of boiling water, a mason jar is perfect for this. You can brew it from 30 minutes to several hours if you'd like. The original version of this elixir was brewed under the Full Flower Moon for that magical spark.

Squeeze tea bags and set aside or discard. Cool tea with ice and store in the refrigerator.

To make the elixir: Combine the desired amount of iced tea with kombucha and/or soda water, top with 1 dropper of Verté Essentials CBD tincture of choice, garnish with your favorite fruit of the season and sit back with your girlfriends and enjoy!

Erin Willis is a mother, writer, and holistic nutritionist who founded Mother Indica after treating her postpartum depression with cannabis and other medicinal plants.

Believing that all energies and ecological systems are connected, and that utilizing and flowing with the natural world is our answer to a thriving, balanced world, Erin has made it her life's mission to help shift the toxic, disease-causing status quo of the Western World by debunking cannabis misconceptions, encouraging botanical-based lifestyle, and by paving the way for a modern, integrative health paradigm.

Erin understands cannabis as a healing food and medicine that can live in conjunction with a healthy, holistic and plant-based lifestyle. She ultimately created Mother Indica to speak out against cannabis misinformation and misuse, and the detrimental effects caused by stigma and the lack of cannabis education and safety in our communities.

You can find out more at www.motherindica.com and on Instagram @mother_indica



ZESTY CORN & PEPPER FLATBREAD

RECIPE BY RACHEL BUSSEY, MESSY BUN KITCHEN

INGREDIENTS:

Naan bread
Hummus
Fresh corn, kernels cut from the ear
Yellow onions, sliced
Chile Pasilla, thinly sliced
Cilantro, chopped
1 lime; ½ lime zested + wedges
1 garlic clove
Olive oil

METHOD:

Preheat your oven to 400° F and cut and prepare all of your veggies. Slather a thin layer of hummus on the naan bread just as you would for a pizza. Sprinkle the corn, onion slices, chile, lime zest, garlic and oil; seasoned with salt and pepper to taste. Bake the flatbread for 8-10 minutes. Use caution removing from the oven, slice into desired pieces and enjoy!



Rachel Bussey is a locally grown, plant powered, California native currently residing in the SF Bay Area. Growing up in a diverse melting pot of cultures, she found herself called to try new cuisines and lifestyles that were beyond her family's four walls. Obsessed with all the possibilities of flavor, texture and colors that can be created through culinary, Rachel made the easy decision to attend culinary school right out of high school. Immersing herself in the culinary industry, she learned about recipes, tips + tricks on a commercial scale, food & meal preparation, and, her favorite, techniques on how to play with your food the RIGHT way.

In the Messy Bun Kitchen, Rachel has made it her mission to provide healthy, flavorful, rewarding recipes that ignite all of your senses beyond just tasting. "I want you to breathe in the flavors, visualize new textures and possibilities, feel amazing, and lastly but most importantly tap into and listen to your body thanking you."

Rachel is also a big part of the MJ Lifestyle team wearing many hats, a photographer, and professional model.

You can find out more at www.messybunkitchen.com and on Instagram @messybunkitchen



SUMMER MANGO SALSA

RECIPE BY RACHEL BUSSEY, MESSY BUN KITCHEN

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 mangoes; small diced
- ½ red onion; small diced
- 1 red bell pepper; small diced
- 1 jalapeño; small diced
- 1 lime; ½ zested + halved for juicing
- Cilantro; roughly chopped (optional)
- Salt + pepper
- ½ tsp Potli chili oil
- 1 tsp avocado oil

METHOD:

In a bowl, combine all chopped ingredients and oils, mix until well combined. Season with salt and pepper to taste and enjoy!

Serve with taro or tortilla chips.

MJ loves

I don't know about you, but we are DIY women! We love getting creative with different fresh herbs to infuse our own unique oil blends with LEVO, a sophisticated machine that is sure to wow your whole girl gang. Not only does LEVO allow us to create both medicated and non-medicated infused oils, but imagine a device that you can make homemade candy, body butter, dish soap, shaving cream, candles—whatever your pretty heart desires! We love LEVO for giving us a crafty way to be more intentional and know exactly the pure ingredients we are putting into our bodies.

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The Women of Potli dish it out.

Felicity Chen and Christine Yi, co-founders of premium infused ingredients company Potli, sat down and interviewed each other for the very first time to chat about something they're constantly involved in but rarely discuss: entrepreneurship.



So Chris, we've told the story about my parents being business owners and how our beehives were originally set up to help my mom and her asthmatic symptoms. Your parents are also business owners, how did watching them while growing up influence you?



I think my parents also being entrepreneurs impacted me in ways I didn't realize until very recently. My parents are small business owners because they're immigrants and they had to be. I feel like growing up all they hoped for me was a stable, white-collar job, and I was happy to adopt this dream as well because I saw how hard entrepreneurship was for them. They worked and sacrificed so much so that I'd have more options than them, and for me to take on the same types of risks and lifestyle seemed inconceivable to me a few years ago. But I had this need to do something of my own, and I know now that entrepreneurship was inevitable for me, and if that was in spite of my parents it must be because of them! I've been surprised by their support for my decision, I didn't really expect it. How about you? How has the reality of entrepreneurship been different from your expectations?



I don't think I expected for entrepreneurship to be so freeing. Working for other companies meant I was working towards someone else's dream, and while these jobs were very relevant in building a skill set, I was mentally exhausted. When you pursue your own passion you feel focused, energized and liberated. I wake up super thankful but also feeling like there isn't anything we can't achieve in this world. I've had a long-standing struggle with depression and by becoming an entrepreneur, it's actually been cured.




What about it has made you happier? Do you think it's because it's given you self-confidence?



We help others manage stress and anxiety through food, and that's amazing. It's very fulfilling and I feel like it has definitely given me a purpose.



It's funny you say that because I agree with everything that you said, but in my day to day I actually find entrepreneurship to be way more limiting than my previous life. I spent 5 years working in consulting and corporate strategy guiding and advising people, giving my opinion. The sky was always the limit. Now I find myself thinking with way more constraints that I'm used to, which is depressing sometimes...



“We help others manage stress and anxiety through food, and that’s amazing. It’s very fulfilling and I feel like it has definitely given me a purpose.”

—*Felicity Chen*



Do you think that's impacted your mental health?



Don't get me wrong I'm so happy and grateful to work on Potli! Limits exist everywhere and they're just problems you've got to solve! A few months ago I read something I wrote when I was 20, and it felt like a letter from my old self to my future self. I don't explicitly state entrepreneurship but there's a line where I say something like, "If you don't take the risks to pursue your own dreams you'll spend your life pursuing someone else's." So while I'm definitely more stressed now, it's all worth it. Besides, we've got CBD for that.



How do you think being a female entrepreneur has shaped your experience?



I think being a woman has shaped our experience because there are a lot of situations where we could have negotiated, or asked for more, or demanded more, or could have been given what we were owed but didn't. That's constantly something we talk about. Men in our position, who own a high-growth startup would be talking themselves up more, too.



I definitely notice we do that a lot. Whenever people compliment us on where we're at and what we're building, we're so quick to deny it and make ourselves smaller. Do you think that also has to do with us coming from Asian backgrounds? As Asian females, you're not supposed to tell people about your successes, because you don't want to seem like you're bragging. I remember as a kid my mom would tell me not to be so outspoken.



Holy s**t, I never even thought about it that way. The ideal, stereotypical Asian woman is reserved, modest, smart but is not a smart-ass. But sometimes modesty doesn't best serve entrepreneurs!



But I also think we're super lucky in the cannabis industry, and specifically in San Francisco. There are a lot of amazing female players in the space, and it's very powerful. I think we're leading by example for other industries that women leaders can make great work environments and products.



What are some of the biggest challenges you've faced as a business owner?



Working in cannabis, there's a big assumption or an expectation that we have money, or that our business is risky, and both of those attributes lead to premium pricing across the board, whether it be payment processors or taxes or financing, etc. So a constant challenge we deal with is having multiple back-up plans and being able to pivot and come up with new options as needed, which is most of the time. What about you?



Funding is a challenge that's top of mind, and it's a new experience for both of us. Everyone has different advice and perspectives on how to approach the process. I think a challenge I didn't expect was being able to navigate through those opinions and quite frankly, sometimes feel comfortable and confident enough to ignore them. What about working with a co-founder? What's that like?



It's great! [Laughs] We have a special relationship because we've been friends for a very long time and built this together from absolutely nothing. Not all co-founding experiences are that way. We also have very...what's the word...



Complementary?



See! That's what I mean! You literally know the words before I say them. Complementary skill sets. We may not agree on everything but we can problem solve and think about what the best end result for the business is. How has it been for you?



My favorite part is just having someone you can build a dream with, someone to depend and rely on. Entrepreneurship is such an isolating experience because nobody knows what you're going through, but if you have a co-founder that means you have one person who does know.



You know I remember our very first conversation about entrepreneurship three years ago. We were on a subway in Paris and I was like "Should we start a business together?" and you were like "Yeah."



[Laughs] And you know before we ever became business partners, what we always said about our friendship is that you and I are both the most "Yes" people we know. Everyone else says no, and we always just say yes. That's how we ended up together on a trip to Paris in the first place. And you want to start a business who just says "why not." Especially for us, we were 23 when we started Potli and had no money, no experience. Just a dream, really.



We always talk like we're two old women now but I think that's just because building a business is so hard, every month our personal growth is so high. But you know I don't think you've changed that much since we met when we were 17. You've always been very outspoken and smart and known what you wanted in life and pursued it.



I actually think you've changed quite a bit. You've always had this tremendous energy, but up until now, you didn't really know where to direct it. It's incredible to see you find your passion, not only as your co-founder but as your friend. Do you have any advice for others starting a business?



Hire people who have skills outside your own, and if you're co-founding with someone communication is everything. Even when you think you're doing a good job communicating, audit yourself and really ask if you're making it a priority.



PHOTO BY DANIEL LEE

“My favorite part is just having someone you can build a dream with, someone to depend and rely on. Entrepreneurship is such an isolating experience because nobody knows what you’re going through, but if you have a co-founder that means you have one person who does know.”

—Christine Yi



I also always tell people to start their business with a great problem statement. The one we started with is that the edibles space didn’t have healthy or versatile options. And when you start your business via a problem statement that’s valid and thoughtful, it makes everything easier. It means your customers will be there, it means there’s a purpose to your brand. It’ll continue to carry and guide you.



And lastly, specifically for the cannabis industry, I’d say to not forget about the past. People think of the space as brand new and changing but California is the home of the oldest medical program in the US, and that means something. We need to pay homage and respect to those that come before us and have a responsibility to make sure equitable futures are being built. The future is nothing without the past. 🍀



Follow more of Fel and Chris’s entrepreneurial adventures on Instagram @getpotli and online at www.potlishop.com (Potli Hemp) www.getpotli.com (Potli Cannabis).



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IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE BOX
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The Evolution of Medicine & Cannabis

BY NICOLE FOX, MPH, RD

“The doctor of the future will give no medicine, but will instruct his patient in the care of the human frame, in diet and in the cause and prevention of disease.”

—Thomas Edison

The evolution of medicine has begun, and not a moment too soon. You aren't imagining it, it isn't just your friends and family that have minor health woes, significant diseases like diabetes, or just aren't feeling so well. In our modern society, we have a significant level of chronic our hands.

From one in six women being diagnosed with an auto-immune disease to back pain that causes millions of dollars in lost time from work and depression, migraines, and blood sugar disorders, we Americans, living in the wealthiest country in the world, are losing our greatest asset—our health. The good news is that more people than ever are turning to wellness professionals to replace or augment visits to their conventional physicians. In fact, 78% of Americans report visiting alternative medical professionals. If you don't currently work with a nutritionist, an acupuncturist, bodyworker, Ayurvedic doctor or herbalist, I bet you know someone who does. We are clearly looking for answers.

It is encouraging that the practice of medicine is being reclaimed by a new breed of health professionals, who have trained over and above the programs required in medical school, in a field called Functional Medicine. In recent years there has been a wave of citizens turning to these professionals who have training in the diagnostic and treatment philosophy sometimes called Lifestyle Medicine. This movement is the future of medicine.

Functional Medicine uses a root cause approach with advanced biomarker testing to diagnose and personalize treatment options. Instead of symptom amelioration that pharmaceutical interventions offer, a Functional Medicine approach assesses a person at a deeper level to create a personalized treatment program.

This program may include some pharmaceuticals if created by an MD, but is more often grounded in lifestyle change, with support from diet, plant-based supplements such as cannabis, while also helping patients change their mindset when it comes to recovering from chronic illness.

Primary care physicians, also frustrated with the current system, are gravitating to the movement too. The Institute for Functional Medicine at The Cleveland Clinic, arguably the top training program for physicians ready for change, has seen a 25% uptick in enrollment in the last five years. Functional Medicine is trending and you may be wondering what it's all about, so let's break it down. The best way to understand Functional Medicine is to compare it to conventional medicine, which is the system we all know.

THE FUNCTIONAL MEDICINE FRAMEWORK

Functional Medicine looks at the individual in a very different and personalized way taking a “systems approach,” meaning that each person is not just a group of parts and symptoms, but a unique individual made up of many integrated systems working together.

This holistic approach allows a practitioner to look at the interactions between genetic, environmental and lifestyle factors to determine the underlying cause of chronic illness or disease.

While the concept of a “holistic approach” in medicine may sound less than scientific, rest assured, the Functional Medicine edge is that it is rooted in science. After all, underlying conditions and dysfunctions in the body such as inflammation, gastrointestinal or oxidative stress aren't usually confined to just one area, nor do they have just one cause. The best way to get to the bottom of the cause is to use the latest scientific evidence to investigate the interrelationships in our body functions. And while the disease focus of conventional medicine has been ineffective at treating and preventing chronic disease over the last century, Functional Medicine is reconceiving this outdated system.

WHERE DOES CANNABIS FIT INTO A FUNCTIONAL MEDICINE FRAMEWORK?

WHAT IS IT LIKE TO WORK WITH A FUNCTIONAL MEDICINE PRACTITIONER?

Working with a Functional Medicine doctor or practitioner will probably seem different from what you are accustomed to. Functional Medicine practitioners need to spend more time with their patients, understanding not just current symptoms but also investigating their diet, lifestyle choices, activity level, genetics, and environmental influences, among many other factors. A typical functional medicine evaluation is 75 minutes, compared to 15-20 minutes for conventional medicine. Unfortunately, most insurance companies haven't quite caught up with the real costs of practicing Functional Medicine that actually works. The current insurance system is based around short visits and algorithms that help your physician apply pharmaceuticals to symptoms. While a typical Functional Medicine physician evaluation is around \$300, the level of information and perspective that you get from this information is priceless. Smart physician groups like Parsley Health based in New York and now offering services in California offer a membership-based model for as little as \$100/month for integrative, Functional Medicine-based care.

Treatment approaches in Functional Medicine are oriented around helping a person's physiology correct itself. A core tenant of this approach is that if the body has all of the compounds, enzymes, nutrients and rest that it needs, it is a master healer that knows what to do to correct itself. The problem is that we humans are often too impatient to wait on nature to do her work. Headache? I don't have time for that! It's a pop a pill mentality. Cannabis is becoming more widely accepted by Functional Medicine providers as more work is being done to show that the endocannabinoid system is a master homeostatic regulator. We can actually develop Endocannabinoid Deficiency Syndrome and exhibit symptoms of low endocannabinoid tone, as explained in the work of Ethan Russo, MD.

For example, the body produces our own endocannabinoids, anandamide, and 2-AG. Early studies are beginning to show a correlation between a patient experiencing depression and low levels of anandamide. The growing field of Functional Medicine-based health care providers are incorporating cannabis as a powerful plant in treatment regimens that support their patients being free of pharmaceuticals and supporting their bodies to correct and naturally heal. It is an exciting time for cannabis and her renaissance right now.

As a Functional Medicine oriented dietitian in practice for over ten years, I have been quietly recommending CBD and cannabis products as adjuncts to nutrition therapy for over a decade. I see cannabis as a powerful healing botanical. However, I'd like to clarify that it is not a panacea, as some cannabis and CBD companies would have us believe. Cannabinoids belong as a part of a personal wellness program. When we are also taking care of ourselves through a simple organic, plant-based diet, sleeping enough, hydrating, managing stress, cannabis can come in and potentiate her healing effects at a greater level. I like to think of the cross-section between health and cannabis as being a series of lifestyle choices that we make, or what I like to call The Cannabis Wellness Lifestyle. This lifestyle can even mean that you like to consume cannabis socially with friends and are either cutting out alcohol entirely or minimizing it because of cannabis.

We are fortunate to be living in a time when wellness and Functional Medicine is on the rise, and many people are addressing the root cause of their chronic health issues. It's beyond exciting that cannabis is also acting as an exit drug for many people to be free from the shallow symptom relief cycle of pharmaceutical intervention and are getting real resolution to their health challenges. Repositioning cannabis as a powerful supplement in our personal medicine cabinets is how we lift the stigma of cannabis and the "stoner mentality." She is a multi-tool of health and homeostatic balance that is clearly here to serve us, and she is here to stay. 🍀

Nicole Fox, MPH, RD has been an integrative dietitian, health educator and author for over 10 years. She has also been a cannabis advocate, dispensary operator and involved in cultivation operations for almost two decades.

Nicole is the founder and CEO of Aeon Botanika, a vertically integrated cannabis company based in Los Angeles. Aeon Botanika is reclaiming the power of cannabis as a traditional wellness botanical to elevate health and happiness. Its flagship location will be opening in West Hollywood in early 2020. She would love to hear from you with questions or topics for her forthcoming quarterly wellness column in MJ Lifestyle. Please join us for a visit whenever you are in Los Angeles.

Find out more at www.aeonbotanika.com



ISOLATE *vs.* BROAD SPECTRUM *vs.* FULL SPECTRUM

Which CBD is right for you?

CBD is just one of over 100 cannabinoids found in cannabis. Research shows that CBD works best when used with *all* of the phytonutrients naturally found in the plant, including trace amounts of THC (*best known for its ability to produce a "high"*). **This is known as the entourage effect.**

While the entourage effect indicates that you ideally want trace amounts of THC with your CBD, there are circumstances where excluding THC from a product may be better for you. **The terms isolate, broad spectrum and full spectrum describe which cannabinoids are included in a product.**



ISOLATE

Isolate is what it sounds like: CBD that has been isolated from all the other compounds found in its original cannabis plant, with some products testing as high as 99% pure CBD.

When comparing isolate to full spectrum, Canadian researchers found that isolates have a minimum and maximum threshold: in other words, you have to take at least a certain amount (that is typically more than full spectrum products) in order to be effective (minimum threshold), and there's a limit on how much you can take in a day before the effects rapidly taper off (maximum threshold).

In the past, isolates have been a good option for people who may be concerned about drug testing. Now, broad spectrum products offer another alternative.

BROAD SPECTRUM

Broad spectrum extracts are essentially a full spectrum extract but with any traces of THC removed.

This is a great alternative to isolates for those who may be concerned about drug testing but still want to reap the benefits of the entourage effect.

FULL SPECTRUM

Full spectrum extracts contain the full range of cannabinoids and phytonutrients originally found in the plant.

Canadian research found that full spectrum CBD did not show the same minimum and maximum threshold values for effectiveness, indicating that using the full spectrum of phytonutrients encourages our bodies to better use CBD.

Full spectrum is arguably going to be the best, most effective CBD option. It's important to note here that the trace amounts of THC found in full spectrum products do have the potential to build up in fat cells over time and cause you to register positive on a drug test. If you are concerned about this, look for broad spectrum products instead.

IN GENERAL,
A DARKER OIL INDICATES:
*the oil contains a broader spectrum
of phytonutrients AND/OR the oil
has a higher concentration of CBD*

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Hempsley[®]



Kristen Williams, Founder & CEO of Hemsley

CBD EDUCATION EXPERTS

Hempsley is a Wellness Guidance company that **introduces the basic science behind a variety of natural wellness tools** that support the endocannabinoid system such as cannabinoid therapies, herbs, essential oils, nutrition, and more.

Born in prohibition Missouri, Hemsley is designed to be an unbiased, educational resource that you can feel comfortable sending your most skeptical and conservative friends, family, and coworkers to for more information about CBD, cannabis & more.

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EDUCATION

We specialize in visually communicating high-level information to the layman

- Download the Hemsley app for educational eBooks, recipes & DIYs at your fingertips!
- We license our educational content and graphics
- We collaborate with other businesses on educational materials & content
- We offer one-on-one consultations for new patients and aspiring CBD business owners

REVIEWS

With endless CBD products on the market, we provide thorough, unbiased reviews

- Our Review Team, made up of individuals with a range of backgrounds and ailments, tests and provides feedback on new products
- Having this Review Team allows you to find a profile that resonates with you then see what they had to say about a product before investing in it yourself
- This also helps businesses increase credibility

PRODUCTS

In addition to online, you can also shop with us at our office or in stores across Missouri

- We teach consumers how to choose products that are best for their specific needs
- You can trust that any CBD product we carry has been thoroughly vetted and tested by our own trusted Review Team
- We have our own line of herbal blends that can all be made into tea, added to a bath, or smoked or vaporized

EVENTS

We create interactive learning experiences to encourage care for the endocannabinoid system

- We do presentations about the endocannabinoid system and cannabis
- We host Wellness Workshops where participants can do hands-on activities to apply the knowledge they're learning about cannabinoids, terpenes, and more
- We train employees on how to talk to customers about cannabinoid therapies

SARA PAYAN

ADVOCATE
EDUCATOR
SURVIVOR

PUBLIC EDUCATION OFFICER, THE APOTHECARIUM
CO-CHAIR, SAN FRANCISCO STATE CANNABIS LEGALIZATION TASK FORCE
INTERVIEW & PHOTOGRAPHY BY JENNIFER SKOG



I HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK ON A PANEL WITH THIS WOMAN. I ALREADY HAD MY SIGHTS SET ON HER FROM A COLLEAGUE'S RECOMMENDATION, BUT HEARING HER SPEAK—THE POWER IN HOW SHE SPOKE WITHOUT EVER RAISING HER VOICE. HER KNOWLEDGE WOWED, BUT HER PRESENCE COMPLETELY CAPTIVATED THE CROWD.

SURVIVING STAGE III COLON CANCER WITH THE HELP OF MEDICAL CANNABIS SPEARHEADED SARA'S CANNABIS CAREER IN EDUCATING ABOUT THE ASTOUNDING BENEFITS OF THE PLANT. FIVE YEARS AGO SHE CREATED PUBLIC EDUCATION CLASSES HELPING PATIENTS UNDERSTAND HOW CANNABIS WORKS WITH THEIR BODIES AND EMPOWERING THEM TO MAKE EDUCATED DECISIONS WHEN PURCHASING CANNABIS. SHE HAS QUICKLY BECOME A SOOTHING VOICE IN THE CANNABIS INDUSTRY AND IN ADDITION TO EDUCATING AND SPEAKING, SARA IS STARTING HER OWN PODCAST 'PLANTED' WHERE SHE WILL BE HOSTING EDUCATIONALLY FOCUSED CONVERSATIONS.

WHAT WERE YOU LIKE AS A YOUNG GIRL? WHAT DID YOU DREAM OF BECOMING?

Growing up in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, the lake and forest were my playgrounds so I was always very connected to nature. As a young girl, I was pretty precocious and a total bookworm. My local librarians knew me very well, I literally took grocery bags of books home from the library every week. I wanted to be a writer and kept a journal starting with my first diary gifted to me at age six.

YOU ARE A STAGE 3 COLON CANCER SURVIVOR, WHAT ROLE DID CANNABIS PLAY IN YOUR CANCER TREATMENT PLAN?

Cannabis helped manage my nausea, appetite, anxiety, and pain. Using cannabis made it possible for me to forgo using opiates and anti-nausea drugs that would have caused constipation during my treatment, which for a colon cancer patient can be deadly. My mother was an oncology nurse and researcher (who actually did the clinical trial of the FOLFOX chemotherapy regimen I ended up taking years later), so I knew from her that THC would be a good tool for relief. I know now there are many other helpful tools in the medical cannabis realm.

WERE YOUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY ACCEPTING OF YOUR DECISION TO MEDICATE WITH CANNABIS DURING YOUR TREATMENTS?

Some were weirded out by it but most were just concerned about me surviving and getting relief. I think my cannabis use created some good conversations leading to normalization in regards to medical cannabis for a lot of my loved ones.



WHAT ARE YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGES TODAY WITH ACCESSIBILITY TO MEDICAL CANNABIS?

Price. My most critically ill patients live on fixed incomes and it's heartbreaking to watch them trying to make ends meet and afford their medicine. Our compassion programs that used to help these patients with free cannabis have not been able to exist after legalization. I've promised my patients they have not been forgotten and that we're doing all we can to get legislation in place to start giving again. Also, many high dosage products that worked for patients in the past have disappeared with the advent of legalization, and those that haven't, like concentrated oils and higher dosage capsules can be difficult to find.

YOU ARE ALSO EDUCATING HOSPITALS AND MEDICAL FACILITIES, WHAT IS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGE IN MERGING WESTERN MEDICINE WITH HOLISTIC MEDICINE?

The most significant challenge has been getting health professionals to understand there is no standard dosage with cannabis. We all metabolize cannabis differently, depending on our personal body chemistries. Another challenge is getting people to understand that CBD is not a cure-all and that THC has significant therapeutic effects as well. What's exciting is, more than ever before, health professionals are fascinated by how cannabis works and are open to being educated. I guest lecture and lead training at large healthcare facilities and learning institutions for pharmacology students, doctors, nurses, alternative health practitioners, therapists, and their patients.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BIGGEST MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT CANNABIS THERAPY?

That cannabis therapy is a panacea. It's definitely not as some people don't tolerate it at all. However, it does help a lot of people and it is a useful tool for many types of symptom management. In my private practice, I work with clients to educate them on how to use tools for determining their appropriate dosage and to record their experiences. I also work with physicians, helping them use cannabis with their patients as an alternative to drugs like benzodiazepines and opiates. Another misconception is that THC content equals strength. There is so much more to consider than just THC. Terpene profiles will also influence the perception of strength in combination with the cannabinoid profile.

To connect with Sara visit SaraPayan.com and [@SaraMitraPayan](https://www.instagram.com/SaraMitraPayan) on Instagram

HOW DO YOU RECOMMEND PATIENTS BRING UP THIS ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE TO FRIENDS OR FAMILY THAT MAY NOT BE SO ACCEPTING?

Having engaging written educational materials helps start conversations. One of my favorite books to share is *The Cannabis Pharmacy*. It's an interesting friendly read for anyone and I use it as a textbook for my Cannabis 101 classes. Also, hearing other people's experiences and stories can be humanizing and de-stigmatizing. The impact of storytelling and education on normalization is a big reason I decided to start my podcast *Planted*. I'll be covering many different areas of cannabis but always with an approachable educational focus.

CANNABIS IS SUCH A NATURAL SOURCE OF MEDICINE, WHAT ARE YOUR FEELINGS ON PACKAGING LAWS AND REGULATIONS?

The level of packaging we are required to use is wasteful, harmful to our environment, and has actually caused injury to some of my physically disabled clients. As Californians, we could and should do better to serve the public and our environment. If we're educating the public on the safe and proper storage of cannabis, how much extra packaging do we need?

IN YOUR OPINION, HOW CAN WE BE MORE ECO-FRIENDLY WITH OUR PACKAGING?

Hemp packaging and more compostable or recyclable packaging would be an amazing start.

ARE THERE ANY BRANDS OUT THERE THAT YOU SEE GETTING CREATIVE WITH ECO-FRIENDLY PACKAGING?

I have not seen any, which is not to say it doesn't exist but it does mean we don't have nearly enough of it.

“My most critically ill patients live on fixed incomes and it's heartbreaking to watch them trying to make ends meet and afford their medicine. Our compassion programs that used to help these patients with free cannabis have not been able to exist after legalization.”

—Sara Payan



“...hearing other people’s experiences and stories can be humanizing and de-stigmatizing. The impact of storytelling and education on normalization is a big reason I decided to start my podcast *Planted*.”

—Sara Payan





Sunday Goods
Premium
Flower
Cones



Garden Society
Whole Flower
Pre-rolled
Rosettes



HOW IS CANNABIS INVOLVED IN YOUR DAILY LIFE NOW? DO YOU PREFER CBD TO THC OR BOTH? WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR FAVORITE BRANDS?

I use cannabis regularly. To manage my peripheral neuropathy left over from chemo, I use a low dose 2:1 CBD capsule in lieu of pharmaceuticals that had bad side effects for me like Gabapentin and Norco. It relieves my pain and keeps me clear-headed so I can get through my day. I find smoking and ingesting both CBD and THC helpful. THC is not only great for pain management but also helps with my creativity. My choices depend on what I'm doing that particular day, though I usually gravitate towards something more on the relaxing side. Some of my favorite brands are Kind Meds (capsules), Sunday Goods (prerolls), Whoopi and Maya (Epsom salt soaks—great for cramps and neuropathy), and Garden Society (everything Erin and Karli do is awesome!).



Whoopi & Maya
Medicated
Bath Soak





PHOTO BY TAYLOR VARVIL

The Botanical Joint is a licensed sun-grown hemp and organic herb farm located in Colton, Oregon, focused on producing sustainable and affordable products for the community. The Botanical Joint provides non-euphoric CBD effects of calming and anxiety paired in tandem with specifically formulated blends of Chamomile, Lobelia, Mullein, Original Cherry Hemp Flower Rose, and Red Raspberry leaves. Ships nationwide!

MEDICAL KIDNAPPING IS DEFINED AS THE STATE TAKING AWAY CHILDREN FROM THEIR PARENTS AND PUTTING THEM INTO STATE CUSTODY AND THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM, SIMPLY BECAUSE THE PARENTS DID NOT AGREE WITH A DOCTOR REGARDING THEIR PRESCRIBED MEDICAL TREATMENT FOR THE FAMILY.

MAD AS A MOTHER

AN INTERVIEW WITH MEDICAL KIDNAPPING SURVIVOR MARIA SELVA BY PEDIATRIC CANNABIS ADVOCATE, SOCIAL WORKER & WRITER, ALLISON RAY BENAVIDES, LCSW

“Are you already watching? A mom in Orange County is streaming her daughter being removed by Child Protective Services! She has seizures and they’ve been giving her CBD.” Friends started direct messaging me as soon as they went live on Facebook. I am also the mother of a pediatric cannabis patient, and a licensed clinical social worker.

I groaned and navigated over to Maria Selva’s page to watch as the police took her husband downstairs in handcuffs, while she stayed upstairs to soothe her children. It put me in a dark, sad place. How was this happening in 2017 in Southern California?

My son has been using cannabis since 2013, and is seizure-free since 2014. We’ve never had an issue. Neither has anyone in our local pediatric cannabis support group. As an advocate, I specifically reassure parents this won’t happen to them. It’s not my style to fuel fear—us parents of special needs kids are powerless enough as it is. Plus, California’s medical marijuana program is over 20 years old and legally protects children.

...so what do I tell parents now?

I watched longer, maybe to see if anything would happen to help this tragedy make sense. It never did. I cried and tried to imagine the risk so imminent that necessitated a special needs child be forcibly removed from her home just days before Halloween. Since the problem in question involved cannabis—known for its gentle safety profile—I could not.

I reached out to Maria to offer my support. It took weeks to coordinate our schedules and felt like a huge success once we did. I always feel better with another special needs mom around and I wondered if she might too.

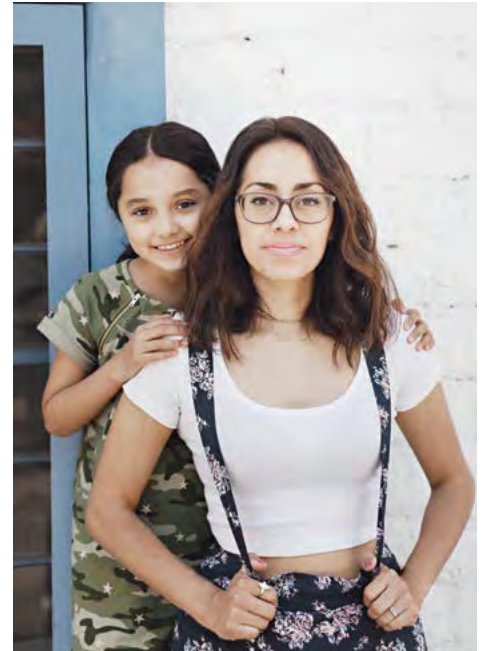
Maria, the first thing I noticed in the video was how calm and graceful you were. I know I would be the opposite and probably the one in handcuffs. Where does that come from?

You know, I think when you have a special needs child with seizures you have to be. It’s always scary, so I have experience with staying calm in horrible situations. And I remember my inspiration that night was knowing that my actions were the only thing I could control. I tried to be level headed to avoid escalating anything with the police, to avoid any extra trauma. I just prayed in my head, “God give me strength to navigate this the best way I can.”

I was also moved by your focus on your children. You were both nurturing and protective, with very specific instructions for your daughter Ali.

When CPS decided to move forward with the investigation I went into defense mode. The fact that they still had concerns about my children after talking with me, I was like, okay, I’m done with you. Look where being open with them got us—they took her from us! So I decided not to do that anymore. I told her not to answer their questions because I wanted to make sure she knew she had that right. I wanted her to know that you don’t have to talk to them—so don’t.

“I remember my inspiration that night was knowing that my actions were the only thing I could control. I tried to be level headed to avoid escalating anything with the police, to avoid any extra trauma. I just prayed in my head, ‘God give me strength to navigate this the best way I can.’”



How did she do with all that information?

I could see it was starting to overwhelm her. So I wrote a note I showed on the video saying that they do not have my consent to medically treat her. I didn't want to put too much pressure on her because it has been very confusing.

How have you known how to help her process her experience? There's not a picture book about how to recover from a CPS separation. What have you done as a family to help her heal?

At first, obviously it was really rough. I remember I just wanted to do whatever I could to make her feel secure and safe with us. Before she was good at night on her own, in her own bed. But then she became anxious. She slept with us a lot so she could feel that security. We homeschool now too. So we've had a lot of time to be together as a family.

Sometimes she will ask big questions and I encourage her to bring them up. It's important for us to talk about it. She still asks if she will ever have to go live with another family again. She also noticed that I was trying not to cry that night and brought that up, so recently I've been sharing with her more of my experience too and why it happened.

What do you tell her? Why did this happen to your family, Maria?

I say, "You know that CBD oil that you take? The doctors wanted you to take the other yucky stuff, but the CBD that we are using works better and helps a lot of other people too. But unfortunately, not everyone has access to it because there are certain laws in place. It's not bad, it's just not accepted by everyone yet."

I tell her, "We decided to keep you on it and the doctor and your school nurse didn't like that. And so that's why they came to take you that night. They felt like what we were doing was wrong, but we know what we were doing was right. That's why we fought and got you back. And there are a lot of other people still fighting to use CBD."

So she'll ask me, "Am I special?" And I'll say, "Yeah you are!" And I can see her little mind working trying to understand it all.

It IS a lot to understand. I'm over here comparing our experiences. We've had zero problems with doctors, schools, or CPS. I'm still chewing on why your family?

I think I was naive. I did my research on treatments which led to CBD oil and I was like, yes, that's it and I bought it at the Mother's Market less than a mile from our home. I knew there was a cultural stigma but it didn't have THC obviously so I thought we were good. We bought it literally over the counter. Even when we were being investigated by CPS, they kept asking if we had a prescription. And I'd say, I don't need one.


You know we had this feeling not to tell anyone, don't tell the doctors. They were very against it. But it was the school nurse. She wanted Ali on a prescription. Feeling the pressure from her, my husband let her know, "We have her on CBD oil right now. It seems to be working until we find a new neurologist." We had just left Kaiser. So it was taking some time but the nurse at her school was very pushy.

When I learned that you had taken your time and didn't rush into using pharmaceuticals I was so proud of you. I may start crying...we put our son on Keppra immediately, following doctor's orders. And what they didn't tell us is that all antiepileptic drugs can also actually cause seizures. Keppra made my son worse. He went from a few seizures a week, to over 75 a day. You basically got in trouble for making the choice I wish I had. There is such a huge disconnect between what families value and how they want to treat their children, and what the medical consensus advises.

Right? It makes finding a doctor who supports CBD so important. But I didn't know that was a thing. Because the only thing that was ever offered to us by any doctor was just Keppra. Even before CBD we were always asking for alternatives, something less harsh, and they had nothing. That's when I felt like I had to take matters into my own hands.

I relate to that. And alternative treatments always come with controversy: This nurse took a specific, superior interest in "protecting" your daughter - how weird! I don't even know our school nurse.

It was so extreme. I told my husband I felt harassed. I don't understand what's going on. Is it because we're Latin or look young? I let them know that we had just moved, were starting a new insurance, give us some time to get things in place. And, Ali doesn't have severe epilepsy. She has a seizure or two a month. Everyone seemed to agree but then CPS was called the day after he let her know about the CBD.

A photograph of a woman and a young girl embracing under a stone archway. The archway is covered in red flowers. The woman is wearing a white top and a long, dark floral skirt. The girl is wearing a camouflage dress. They are standing on a stone path. The background is a lush green landscape with trees and a white wall.

“Even before CBD we
were always asking
for alternatives,
something less harsh,
and they had nothing.
That’s when I felt like
I had to take matters
into my own hands.”

—*Maria Selva*



Allison Ray Benavides, LCSW is a medical social worker living in San Diego and working in the field of death and dying. She has a deep respect and gratitude for all wisdom traditions and is most inspired by her work when women, nature, Spirit and healing come together. When her three-year-old son was diagnosed with intractable epilepsy in 2013, he was lucky to find seizure freedom with high CBD. She is the cofounder of a support group for San Diego families navigating the uncharted territory of pediatric cannabis together.

To learn more visit
PediatricCannabisSupport.com



You sound so reasonable. Major medical decisions take time to make. What was the specific charge? That you'd been abusive by giving her CBD or that you'd been negligent by not putting her on a medication?

It was both. The court documents called it "severe medical neglect" by taking her off the Keppra. But we weren't neglecting her and gave up her medical records in the investigation. We were just looking for a new doctor, give us a minute.

I got a call from a mom last night looking for resources and she randomly mentioned that someone at their school called CPS on her, which was interesting timing, knowing I'd be talking to you today. She tells me her experience like no big deal. They showed up, she showed them his medical record and medical marijuana recommendation, and they went away. So is that the lesson here? Get the recommendation?

But you can buy it without one so it's a mixed message. Knowing what I know now, I think it's good to start by seeking out the doctors who support cannabis. And they are very hard to find. So it's important to be resourceful and reach out to other families who know so they can help you navigate. Until you get a doctor you're confident with, DON'T TELL ANYONE.

I also tell parents to go with their gut and use their intuition. You know, I had this feeling about the nurse. The sad part is that it's hit-or-miss who you're going to deal with.

Ugh, yes! The element of luck! 'Cause what the fuck can we really control anyway. But your family isn't taking this lying down. What specific things are you doing to take back your power?

We just found a civil rights attorney to file a lawsuit and have become advocates for pediatric cannabis. We are in an upcoming documentary called Weediatics that basically follows a few different families desperately trying to treat their children's diseases with cannabis. Some have to break the law. So it documents the struggles of these families just trying to get their kids healthy. Still waiting to hear when that's coming out.

And then we had a really fun photo shoot with Charlotte's Web after meeting you guys with *MJ Lifestyle* for this shoot earlier in the month.

How does Ali do with all the attention? I'm wondering if it's had a healing effect on her, helped make sense of her experience?

She does well, she likes it. She enjoys sharing about herself and she knows that she helps educate people about epilepsy and the oil she takes. And we do talk to her about how when we share what happened to us that night it helps it not happen to other families.

She is so brave. You all are! Even though it is uncomfortable and scary to be bold and put our stories out there, I have also found advocacy work to be enormously healing.

Absolutely. Right now I'm working on a website called PursuitOfCannabyss.wordpress.com—because starting your kid on cannabis can feel like falling into the abyss. And we need to create more places where we feel met on a real level, with warmth and humanness. There will be a blog, articles, interviews—my main goal is to empower parents by encouraging them to learn their rights, listen to their intuition and be empowered.

Maria, do you have a parting statement to moms who are afraid this could happen to them?

Yes. I always pray first. Seek guidance before everything. Then get educated, find support, and have a plan. And don't let anyone ever tell you that they know your child better than you do. 🙏

“Knowing what I know now, I think it's good to start by seeking out the doctors who support cannabis. And they are very hard to find. So it's important to be resourceful and reach out to other families who know so they can help you navigate. Until you get a doctor you're confident with, DON'T TELL ANYONE.”

FOR MORE ON WEEDIATRICS: THE COVERT MEDICAL MISSION DOCUMENTARY
VISIT @WEEDIATRICS ON FACEBOOK



**MEET
TESS MELODY TAYLOR
FOUNDER & CEO OF
PLANT-BASED
CBD SKINCARE LINE
TAYLOR + TESS**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARSHALL COX @SECRETARYSTUDIO

Named in high regard for her beloved family roots, founder of TAYLOR + tess, Tess Taylor brings to life a CBD skincare for “Women, Men, Neither and Both.” She’s a true entrepreneur at the core, and this woman’s mission to promote diversity and inclusion while breaking social barriers are just two of the many reasons why we love Tess. Her organic, plant-based ‘menage a trois for the face’ promises to nourish your skin with a regimen that seamlessly fits into busy schedules. TAYLOR + tess’s three-piece facial set is comprised of the ‘in the Buff’ cleansing bar & industrial hemp sponge, ‘the Quickie’ refreshing spray of nutrients for the face, and ‘the Nightcap’ cream to rest and replenish. MJ not only got to meet and interview this inspiring woman but we also graciously photographed the TAYLOR & tess ‘Everything is Love’ Campaign in collaboration with Jessica Cure of Cure Designs earlier this year in Los Angeles.

WHAT WERE YOU LIKE AS A YOUNG GIRL? WHAT DID YOU DREAM OF BECOMING?

I was busy and ambitious as hell! I loved school, competed at the national and international levels in three sports by age eight, and started my first business at the age of 12 selling warm-ups to my volleyball and cheerleading teams that I pressed myself and distributed. As a kid, I wanted to switch from in-line speed skating to ice speed skating to compete in the Olympics, but by my teens, I knew I wanted to run my own business.

DESCRIBE YOURSELF IN THREE WORDS.

Passionate + Curious Capricorn



CONGRATS ON YOUR RECENT LAUNCH OF TAYLOR + TESS CBD AND PLANT-BASED SKINCARE LINE. WHAT LED YOU TO PURSUE A CAREER IN CANNABIS?

Thanks so much! I have smoked weed since my teens, and it has always been a healthy coping mechanism and a form of medicine for me for everything from body aches to eczema to ADHD to incontinence. However, my parents and their growing affection for and interest in the growing cannabis industry—from manufacturing, to product offerings, to the idea of one day being able to apply for a government contract—led my family and me here.

My father is a Vietnam Marine Corps veteran who worked for the military and government for 48 years. In the last decade, he has had over 10 major surgeries. This long medical journey began in Germany, where I attended high school. For 10 years, he has been prescribed painkillers/opioids. His chronic pain always comes back, and his interpersonal relationships have deteriorated as a result of the psychological side effects of opioids combined with PTSD.

My mother is an Army veteran and is nine years younger than my dad and is his primary care provider at home. Two years ago, she started to feel the daily, chronic pains of aging but did not want to go down the same road as my dad. I convinced her to try a Mary's Medicinals balm from Colorado, then a gummy, then a vape pen. She's now a self-proclaimed advocate.

This plant has the ability to heal so many people, so I want to do my part in generating awareness, affecting change, and destigmatizing it. Intersecting the hemp and beauty industries will allow me to reach more people and build a customer base that will be the foundation of our future wellness and pain management product lines.



DID YOU HIT ANY UNEXPECTED ROADBLOCKS ALONG THE WAY? DOES BEING IN THE STATE OF TEXAS MAKE BUSINESS AND OPERATIONS MORE CHALLENGING?

Roadblocks present themselves every day. Not only is it difficult managing a team that is all over the map, producing quality products in ethical and sustainable ways, and building and maintaining a customer base, but those in the hemp and cannabis industries face unique hardships and barriers to access because of what they're selling—everything from website hosting, payment processing, banking, social media advertising, etc.. You have to accept that challenging times are also a part of running a business, especially in this industry, and just keep

going and learning.

My mission is to take care of mom and my family; to provide more opportunities for womxn of color and people who identify as LGBTQIA+ to start businesses and create job opportunities within the industry. If we want an intersectional cannabis industry that is not white-washed and predominantly male, marginalized groups must band together and support one another.

Being in the state of Texas is difficult in that weed is still taboo here; it is generally a conservative state; and cannabis legislation is only beginning to slowly, but surely, catch up to other states in the union. Texas recently passed bills for industrial hemp cultivation, broader access to medical cannabis, and reduced penalties for cannabis possession. I have hope that our laws will continue to evolve, but I think about moving to California every day!





IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WISHED YOU HAD DONE DIFFERENTLY?

I wish I had more time to give to this project during the past several months so I could have been more hands-on leading up to our launch. I had to learn to delegate, which can be tough for someone as anal as me. It was difficult balancing a full-time job that sometimes kept me in the office until 10 or 11 pm, while finishing a second master's degree, while trying to correspond with vendors and contractors and designers. However, I remind myself that women do what I'm doing everyday while taking care of children or aging parents or whoever else needs them. I also have to remember to show myself the same grace that I show others. My purpose reminds me why it's all worth it.



CAN YOU GIVE US YOUR HIGH AND LOW OF YOUR FIRST YEAR IN BUSINESS?

High: Feeling inspired, humbled and proud at our LA and Dallas launch events.

Low: The strain my schedule and traveling put on familial and intimate relationships and friendships.

CAN YOU SHARE THE MEANING BEHIND YOUR RECENT 'EVERYTHING IS LOVE' CAMPAIGN?

Everything is Love speaks to the inclusivity that I want this brand to embody. Love sees no color, gender, religion or socioeconomic class and neither do we.

I was listening to Oprah's podcast, *Super Soulful Conversations*, and heard Sister Joan Chittister say, "The prophet is one who speaks the truth to a culture of lies," and that really resonated with me. To me, the only universal truth is love.

We are one of the most individualistic societies in the world, and that is not by coincidence, it is by design. Bipartisanship and greed are classifying and dividing us; those of us with the bandwidth, fortitude and ability to repair society need to step up and speak out for the future we want, rather than settle for what we are currently being given. 2019 is an awesome time to be alive; marginalized people are finding their voice and their positions of leadership in society despite the ever-present adversities that try to keep them from having a seat at the table. So much light is shining through the inevitable darkness. I want to see more of that. I want to spread more love and kindness and humanity and empathy and understanding with our platform.

I trademarked "for women, men, neither and both" because inclusivity is a priority for us. I want to use this platform to invoke social and economic change for the historically marginalized and disenfranchised, which we know are women, people of color, and individuals who identify as LGBTQIA+. Representation and inclusivity bridges gaps in society, and activism leads to change. My team is comprised of women, men, minorities and LGBTQIA+ because the table always has more to offer when the person to the left and the right looks and thinks differently than you. We are stronger together and more alike than we think.

WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR YOUNG WOMEN INTERESTED IN STARTING THEIR OWN PRODUCT LINE?

Network and build a multifaceted team to support you and bring different gifts than you; work with other women and members of protected classes; give yourself some grace and room to grow, and remember that most things take longer than you expect or is "estimated."

HOW DO YOU STAY INVOLVED AND CONNECTED IN THE CANNABIS SPACE? ARE YOU PART OF ANY ASSOCIATIONS YOU RECOMMEND ADVOCATING FOR?

I am still learning and getting acclimated in the space, but I am thankful for female leaders like Jessica Cure (Cure Designs) and Courtney Freeman (White Buffalo Cannabis) who provide access and opportunities to connect. It has been awesome to witness Jessica provide opportunities not only for me, but for so many other women trying to find their lane in the space. I stay current by subscribing to several newsletters to stay up-to-date on policy change and new regulations. I attend cannabis, beauty, media, and retail summits and expos to take in advice from expert panelists.

I am a member of Texas NORML + the NCIA's CBD Coalition. I believe that legislation reform provides new opportunities for and benefits everyone.

WHERE CAN WE FIND TAYLOR + TESS PRODUCTS?
AND DID YOU SAY PLANT-BASED?!

Yes! All of our products are plant-based, vegan, toxic-free, cruelty-free and our packaging has as little plastic as possible.

We are focused on and committed to delivering great products and superior service to our clients directly through our website and Amazon Prime. We will also sell at a handful of small businesses in Los Angeles and Dallas later this year. 🌱



WHAT ARE THE THINGS YOU TRULY LOVE ABOUT SOME OF YOUR NEW PRODUCTS?

I love our 'in the Buff' cleansing bar because I can travel with one product for my face and body and it smells amazing! It is handmade, vegan, toxic-free and cruelty-free. We wanted a universal scent that would appease pretty much everyone, while also not being identifiable as "feminine" or "masculine." Shower time is sacred to me and I take it very seriously, so I loaded our bar with essential oils and CBD to make it a truly therapeutic experience. I like to use our exfoliating face sponge a couple of days a week and loofahs/exfoliating body brushes during my daily shower routine.

'the Quickie' immediately feels like a drink of water to the skin. Imagine spraying a thin veil of refreshing nutrients and astringents on your skin to refresh, balance and brighten your skin. It's great on its own or followed-up with a serum or moisturizer. I don't wear makeup on a daily basis, so I like to create a natural glow with vitamin C rich products.

'the Nightcap' is my favorite way to end the day. I spend all day rushing to my next destination, and our nighttime moisturizer is the perfect way to unwind. Ylang ylang essential oil has been used for relaxation for thousands of years and it is especially effective on the skin with its antibacterial properties. Expect a heavy dose of vitamin C, plant extracts, and full-spectrum CBD oil to repair and restore your skin and encourage cell turnover while you sleep and reveal glowing skin in the morning.

"For women, men, neither and both"



FROM THE 'EVERYTHING IS LOVE' CAMPAIGN
PHOTOGRAPHED BY JENNIFER SKOG



Being from California, it had been a few years since I visited a state where cannabis wasn't at least medically legal. As I passed through both Chicago and the Dallas / Fort Worth airports, a wave of all the past paranoias of traveling in airports rushed through me. Was there something in my camera bag that I didn't catch? Like the random pre-rolled joint that comes with the territory. I quickly remembered all the previous times passing through airports with my medicine, feeling like a criminal inside.

Flying in for a whirlwind of a trip, just 24 hours and over a dozen women to meet and photograph. I was of course greeted with true southern hospitality and delicious fresh eats from Chef Nico Murillo. I knew I was going to meet an incredible group of female advocates, what I didn't know was just how in awe I would be of the bravery each one of these women beholds. As mothers there is no question what we wouldn't do for our children, but what if it means risking up to life in prison?



sowing seeds ^{IN} TEXAS



NICO MURILLO

Texans for Safe Access
Americans for Safe Access
@bocanna oils

Certified Research Chef Nico Murillo received her training at The Art Institute of Dallas. Since, she has worked in various pastry kitchens and landing her a corporate position as a full-time R&D Chef with PepsiCo/Frito Lay where she obtained her Research Chef Certification.

Choosing to leave the corporate world behind, Nico decided to dedicate her career and time to the new emerging cannabis industry. Nico, a cannabis advocate for over 20 years, applied to the Texas Compassionate Use Program (TCUP) and opened a non-profit chapter of Americans for Safe Access (ASA). Nico spends her time working on Bocanna Skin, her hemp skincare line set to launch in spring of 2020.



PILAR ANGEL

Axeos Performance Institute
Director of Communications and Community Outreach, Texans for Safe Access
@cometadecali

Pilar is a social communicator, journalist and writer with more than 25 years of experience as a communications and branding consultant. Before moving to the US, she worked extensively in her native Colombia with high-profile clients and co-founded the Axeos Performance Institute focusing on resiliency and peak performance training for Executives. In 2017 she received her second patent, securing the intellectual property of a unique combination of techniques used to assess stress markers in the body and boost cognitive performance.

An advocate of Lifestyle Medicine for many years, Pilar has consulted in the preparation of multiple dispensary applications and acted as Communications and Community Outreach Director for a licensed dispensary.



CHELSIE SPENCER

National Cannabis Bar Association,
Honorable Barbara M.G. Lynn American Inn of Court Member, Co-Chair Dallas Community Involvement Committee, State Bar of Texas Intellectual Property Trademark Committee, Dallas Bar Young Lawyers Intellectual Property Committee
@RitterSpencer

Chelsie Spencer is a principal attorney with Ritter Spencer PLLC, a law firm with offices in Dallas, Texas, and Miami, Florida and represents numerous clients across the United States in the areas of medical marijuana, hemp, hemp-derivatives, and intellectual property.

Recently, she was featured in the *Forbes* article “Meet the Fearless Lawyer Saving the CBD Industry” for her work in the cannabidiol industry. Chelsie is an advocate for reform of Texas’ current medicinal marijuana program and advocates in favor of expanding the current statutory list of qualifying eligible conditions and opening program access for greater accessibility. Currently she and her husband are trying to open a sea turtle rescue facility in Galveston, Texas.





MAGGIE RAINES

@maggie_raines

While deployed by the US Army, Maggie Raines' husband Josh survived multiple explosions for which he received a Purple Heart. But once home, Maggie noticed Josh's symptoms were overwhelming him into a downward spiral of depression. VA doctors diagnosed him with seizures, traumatic brain injury (TBI) and post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and by the age of 25, Josh was taking eleven different medications that did not appear to be offering him the relief he needed.

Knowing that being an Army spouse came with the responsibility of loving and lifting Josh up during the scary days of reliving war after the Army, Maggie turned to cannabis with the help of research, loving communication and PTSD support groups. Together with cannabis, they could finally see the light at the end of the tunnel. Now, she and Josh share their story with other veterans and legislators and produce educational videos for groups seeking cannabis reform in Texas.



JESSICA MARIE PALLETT

Tarrant County Libertarian Party, DFW NORML, Toastmasters International @PallettontheBallot

Jessica was born a California girl but raised in the heart of Texas. A champion for all things freedom, Jessica is a Business Analyst by day, and yogi by night. She lives with her daughter and partner Shaun McAlister, a fellow Texas cannabis activist.

Jessica had always been empowered to take her own personal freedoms, but Shaun is the one who showed her the need to speak out for those who cannot. After reading a pamphlet in Shaun's car that listed the criminal penalty for possession of a medicated brownie as a felony charge she joined DFW NORML that very day to fight cannabis prohibition in Texas. Jessica believes effective persuasion and concise communication is the key to inspiring action.



LISA SEWELL

Comfort Solutions, Texans for Safe Access @comfordsolutionscannabisco

Native to Fort Worth, Texas, Lisa Sewell began her cannabis advocacy after 17 years of secretly using cannabis as an illegal form of natural healing. Lisa joined the Board of DFW NORML in 2018 to educate local communities and help end the stigma attached to cannabis. After putting together a solid business plan to open a state-approved retail medical cannabis dispensary in the Dallas/Fort Worth area, she became active in the 2019 legislative session, including testifying at the Capitol on behalf of HB 1365, Texas' medical expansion bill.

Lisa received her education through Dallas/Fort Worth Academy of Cannabis Science and serves as Secretary for the Texas Chapter for Americans for Safe Access.





CHRISTY ZARTLER

Texans for Safe Access
@karazartler

Christy Zartler has been a Nurse Practitioner for 23 years and is the caregiver of her 19 year-old daughter Kara, who has Cerebral Palsy, Severe Autism and Seizure Disorder. Medications prescribed by doctors had been unsuccessful in treating Kara's Autism that manifests in uncontrollable self-injurious behavior, so the Zartler family turned to cannabis.

Witnessing positive changes in Kara's behavior, Christy began advocating for Medical Marijuana at the Texas Capitol in 2015, and two years later posted a before and after video medicating their daughter with cannabis using a vaporizer that went viral, bringing awareness of the benefits of cannabis to medical professionals, politicians many families in need. In May of 2018 Americans for Safe Access awarded the Zartler family with the Courage Award. Christy and her husband flew to Washington DC to accept the award and took the opportunity to further their advocacy at the Nation's Capital.





“Sharing patients’ testimonies and communicating the miraculous results many have experienced is the key to end the stigma with which Prohibition tainted cannabis.”

–Pilar Angel



ANITA M(ASCP)

American Association of Drugless Practitioners @cbdgenieatx

Anita aka CBD Genie is a United States Air Force Veteran and a native Texan. After serving eight and a half honorable years on active duty, the Texas Tech University alumna received a Bachelors of Science degree in Cell and Molecular Biology. Anita is also a Certified Essential Oils Coach accredited by the American Association of Drugless Practitioners and has been diagnosing infectious diseases as a Certified Microbiology Technologist in a clinical reference lab for the past six years.

Today Anita shares her passion educating on the biochemistry involved with the Endocannabinoid System (ECS) and the therapeutic properties of cannabis. As CBD Genie, she finds it her moral and ethical obligation to share her knowledge with compassion and kindness.



“It is my mission
to bring cannabis
conversations to
every home,
medical office,
church, and school.”

—Amanda Hughes-Munson





“Texas needs to do a better job at being more inclusive to licensee applicants and even the playing field for women and minorities.”

—Nico Murillo



STACY THOMPSON

Women of Cannabis Conference
Canna Closet
@TheStacyThompson

Stacy Thompson saw an opportunity to enter into the cannabis industry in 2015 and went for it. She has been treating herself with cannabis for almost three decades, and not until she came out of the Canna Closet, did she realize how much education is still needed for most people.

As a result, Stacy created Canna Closet, a platform for advocates to share their stories, break the stigma and earn an income through in-home parties. Canna Closet is already in 20 states and will be launching nationally within the next few months rapidly building a tribe of women who empower one another through networking, encouragement, and having a platform to connect.



AMANDA HUGHES-MUNSON

Higher Education Texas, DFW
Academy of Cannabis Science
@highereducationtexas

Amanda Hughes-Munson is a native of Dallas, a 5th generation Texan, daughter of Law Enforcement, a mother and a wife. After three unnecessary surgeries, five doctors and numerous incorrect diagnoses, Amanda learned to heal her body with cannabis, motivating her to share her knowledge.

Amanda is also a Licensed Medical Esthetician, Cosmetic Chemistry instructor, and spa owner with serious intentions to develop a professional cannabis skincare line. She holds a Medical Cannabis Science certification from the DFW Academy of Cannabis Science where she is now an educator. She is the founder of Higher Education Texas, an organization that teaches how cannabis works in the body, how it can be used for medicine, and how to get involved reforming Texas policies.



ANNIE ROSA PAYNE EPLEY

DFW NORML,
Women of Cannabis
@queens_of_cannabis

Annie Epley started her career in 2012 as a trimmer on a grandfather farm in Humboldt, CA where she now staffs the farm with season-long green thumbs while leading campaigns for safe access. Annie holds a certificate from the Cannabis Training University and DFW Academy of Cannabis Science and has been working to educate the public since August of 2018.

As the founder of Queens of Cannabis and Christian Cannabis, Annie is making strides through Texas cities planting seeds for improvement. Her late husband Christopher Samuel Epley passed away in UT Southwestern in 2018, one of the largest research hospitals in America, and no one knew anything about the endocannabinoid system.





KAREN C. REEVES

CenTex Community Outreach
@TeamCenTex

Karen C Reeves of Central Texas and has been on a ‘Crusade for Cannabis’ for the last 45 years. After turning 50, she made the decision to stop taking harmful pharmaceuticals and became a proud Texas cannabis activist educating others about the therapeutic benefits of cannabis and hemp. In 2014, she started the CenTex Community Outreach Group that has been busy advocating for cannabis reform by reaching out to help change hearts and minds through education and compassion.

The CenTex Community Outreach believes no one belongs in jail for a plant. They started a social media campaign called Action For Alex to help bring awareness about Jury Nullification after Karen’s son was unjustly arrested.



SARA MOSELEY

Texas Cannabis Collective, DFW Norml
@sarahsstonedagain @txcannabiscollective

Sarah is an entrepreneur dedicated to educating Texans about state and federal marijuana policy, industry initiatives and cannabis culture. She is the Assistant Chief Editor and content creator for Texas Cannabis Collective, the leading news source of cannabis news, events and legislative updates in Texas.

Sarah’s main objective is to help end the stigma around using cannabis, especially for women. She is currently creating a female-centric extension to Texas Cannabis Collective as well as trying to coordinate a “women & weed” discussion series aimed towards opening up the discussion about what affects women the most as females who use cannabis.



KELSI LEIGH

Texas NORML
@iamkelsileigh

Kelsi Leigh is a passionate cannabis advocate, photographer, mother, and artist who has been using cannabis to treat her postpartum and PTSD symptoms since 2016. Knowing she was defying the law in Texas, Kelsi dove deep into the history of cannabis prohibition and discovered her state’s laws were based on intentional misinformation and propaganda.

As a cannabis patient, Kelsi testified to the Criminal Jurisprudence Committee in support of a bill that would effectively decriminalize cannabis and continues to lobby lawmakers to legalize access to cannabis. She is currently photo documenting the experiences of Texans from all backgrounds as they call for legalization of cannabis as a medical treatment for her upcoming blog *Let’s Sesh*.



MEET JERVONNE SINGLETARY

ASST. VICE PRESIDENT, LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS
NYC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORP (NYCEDC)
INTERVIEW BY ELIZABETH CONWAY & JENNIFER SKOG

OBSSESSED WITH POLITICS AND CURRENTS EVENTS FROM A YOUNG AGE, THERE'S NO DOUBT JERVONNE SINGLETARY, ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT OF LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS FOR THE NYC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORP (NYCEDC) IS EXACTLY WHERE SHE'S SUPPOSED TO BE. IN A CITY OF ALMOST 9 MILLION PEOPLE, BEING PART OF THE CHANGE IN CANNABIS POLICY IS NO EASY FEAT. ESPECIALLY WHEN SHE'S SURROUNDED BY THE AGED YET STILL VERY PREVALENT "REEFER MADNESS" MENTALITY MOST ELECTED OFFICIALS STILL OPERATE UNDER.

IN HER WORK WITH THE EDCNYC, IT IS HER PERSONAL MISSION TO RESTORE THE COMMUNITIES THAT HAVE BEEN DESTROYED BY CRIMINALIZATION AT A SIGNIFICANTLY DISPROPORTIONATE RATE. THIS WOMAN IS BRAVE, INTELLIGENT AND HAS SOMETHING TO SAY, SO LET'S LISTEN UP.



WHAT WERE YOU LIKE AS A YOUNG GIRL? WHAT DID YOU DREAM OF BECOMING?

I was super inquisitive and argumentative. I was obsessed with politics and current events even as a little girl. I always wanted to be an agent of change in the world. I saw myself as a force for good. At first, I wanted to be a police officer like my father, then an attorney and I think I settled on a Marine sometime around high school. I'm glad none of those worked out.


HOW DID YOUR CANNABIS JOURNEY BEGIN?

I've worked in New York City politics since 2008. My first experience with cannabis came when I was serving as Chief of Staff to a NYS Assemblymember, and we worked on decriminalization legislation. Many are unaware, but New York State decriminalized the possession of $\frac{1}{8}$ an ounce of cannabis back in the '70s, but due to a technicality and the expansion of stop and frisk policing a lot of minority youth were getting arrested for public possession. In 2013, we worked on "in plain view" legislation which would allow people to carry and have in plain view of law enforcement the $\frac{1}{8}$ of an ounce to correct the discrepancy and make personal possession punishable by a fine only. While the bill didn't pass during my tenure at the Assembly, the legislature included this in its comprehensive cannabis decriminalization bill that passed this year.

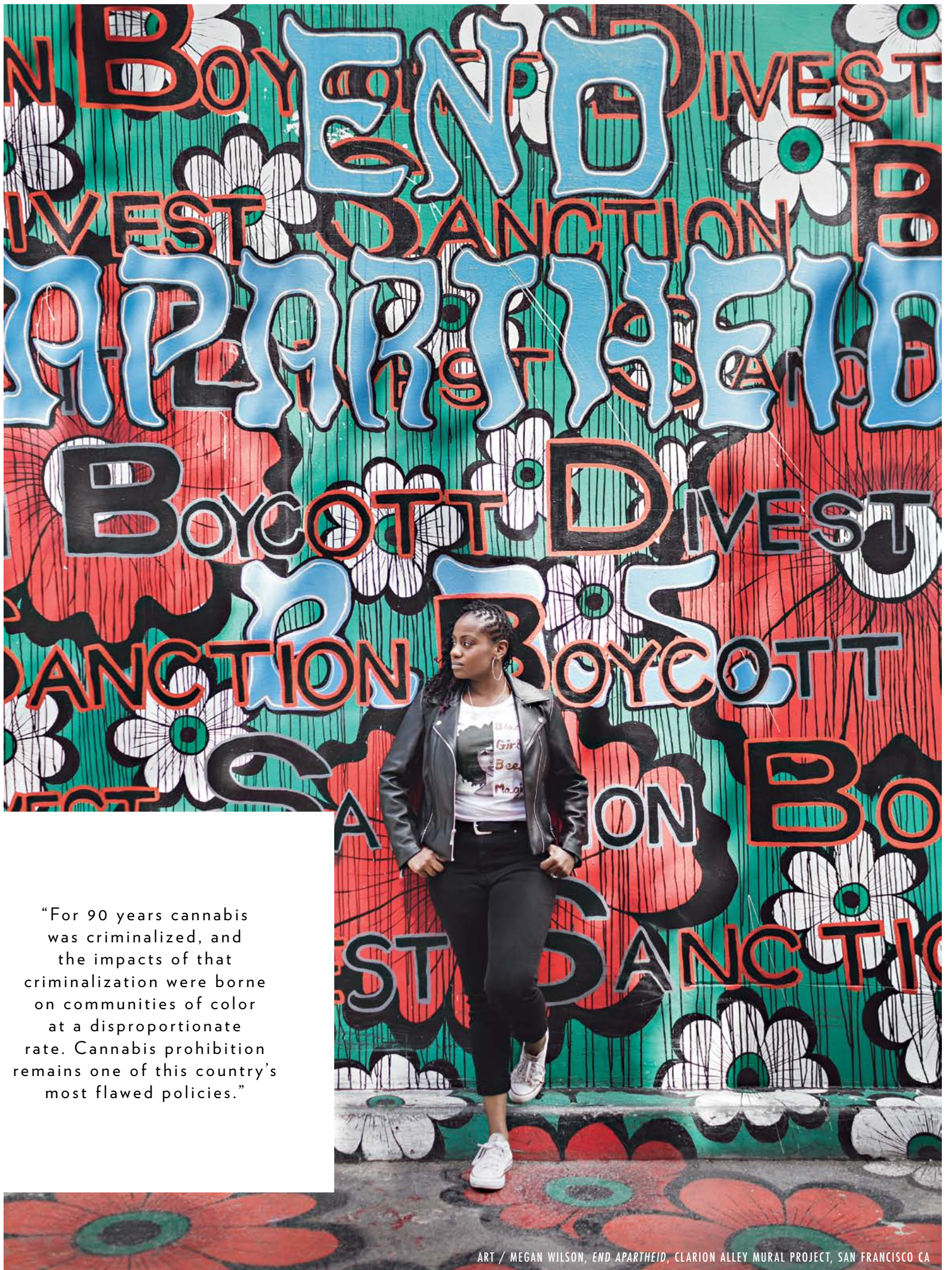
In 2016, my company hosted a competition for proposals that would create good jobs for New Yorkers. I submitted the idea of expanding the State's medical program to adult use cannabis. This was around 2016 after Colorado, Washington, Oregon, and Alaska had legalized and California had just passed Prop 64. These states were experiencing benefits like increased tax revenue, job creation, and a decrease in opioid addiction and violent crimes. I began to see the economic and social justice benefits of legalization and what it could mean for a state like New York. I knew that it was only a matter of time before the political climate would inevitably begin to shift.

WHAT YOUR ROLE IS AS ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT OF NYCEDC?

I analyze legislative policy and assist with city, state and federal elected official coordination for the organization.

A woman with braided hair, wearing a black leather jacket, a white t-shirt with a graphic, and black pants, is walking on a street. The street is painted with a vibrant rainbow. The surrounding buildings are covered in colorful murals and graffiti. In the background, other people are walking. A large, semi-transparent white box containing text is overlaid on the right side of the image. The overall scene is bright and colorful, representing a vibrant urban environment.

“States were experiencing benefits like increased tax revenue, job creation, and a decrease in opioid addiction and violent crimes. I began to see the economic and social justice benefits of legalization and what it could mean for a state like New York.”



“For 90 years cannabis was criminalized, and the impacts of that criminalization were borne on communities of color at a disproportionate rate. Cannabis prohibition remains one of this country’s most flawed policies.”



WHAT KEEPS YOU UP AT NIGHT?

VERTICAL INTEGRATION

FULL INCORPORATION OF THE LEGACY MARKET

FEDERAL PROHIBITION

TAXES—HOW WILL WE USE THEM?

HOW MUCH WILL WE RECEIVE?

WHAT LED YOU TO PURSUE A CAREER WITH NYCEDC?

Economic Development advances and strengthens communities and helps them realize their full potential—I wanted to be a part of that change.

WHAT IS IT LIKE WORKING ON CANNABIS POLICY FOR A CITY LIKE NEW YORK?

It's truly a balancing act. When I worked on the Mayor's Marijuana Task Force, I realized that there are so many valid opinions that need to be thoroughly considered. Everyone who I've encountered while having conversations about the plant has had such a unique perspective and added so much nuance to the discussion. New York City is unlike any other city in the world, its nearly 9 million people, we have concerns that most other jurisdictions couldn't conceive of, and we aren't a quiet bunch. So, to work on such a transformative yet controversial policy like cannabis legalization, you have to take all of these views concerns and positions into consideration, especially if you want the plan to be successful.

WHAT WERE YOUR BIGGEST SURPRISES WHEN YOU STARTED TO INTEGRATE CANNABIS POLICY WITH OTHER PUBLIC POLICY?

Its parallels to other industries and businesses. By working in economic development, I have the privilege of examining multiple industries and it was surprising to see how many of those sectors could successfully intersect with the cannabis industry.

I was also surprised by the background of so many who are now working in or looking to get into the space. Some of the people leading the industry today, don't necessarily have a background in cannabis but they simply applied their preexisting skills. And the multidisciplinary collaboration shows in the type of innovations that are coming to market.

It kind of mirrors the plant- all the diversity of the environment is infused in the plant to make new variations and species. And what you are seeing now is all this diversity infusing itself in the cannabis space.

HOW DO YOU THINK ABOUT CANNABIS AS AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TOOL WHEN THERE IS SO MUCH UNKNOWN ABOUT THE MARKET SIZE?

At the time I began advancing legalization in 2016, conservative estimates pegged the market at \$7 billion nationally. If New York State saw even a tenth of that market we'd be a major player. Now estimates have increased to over \$25 billion for the US and continue to trend higher as more states legalize.

Also, while we may not know the exact size of the legal market, we know the population size, nearly nine million, couple that with the fact that New York already consumes a tremendous amount of illicit market product, nearly 77 metric tons by some estimates. It's not hard to make a pretty informed calculation that the legal New York State cannabis market will be huge.

WHAT ROLE DOES GOVERNMENT PLAY IN ENSURING THE CANNABIS INDUSTRY FOCUSES ON SOCIAL EQUITY?

The government plays a primary role as far as I am concerned. For 90 years cannabis was criminalized, and the impacts of that criminalization were borne on communities of color at a disproportionate rate. Cannabis prohibition remains one of this country's most flawed policies.

So yes, if governments have now come to this awakening about the benefits of cannabis then they must restore the communities that they destroyed. And we must be intentional about it, equity in cannabis policy can't be an afterthought. We must develop policies that create opportunities for people.

HOW IS THE CITY PREPARING FOR LEGALIZATION, AND IF LEGALIZED, WHAT WOULD THE INITIAL STAGES OF LEGALIZATION LOOK LIKE FROM AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVE?

Right now, it's more wait and see. The New York State legislature was ultimately unable to agree on cannabis legalization before the end of its calendared session, much to the chagrin of the advocates and the industry. The bills sponsors Senator Krueger and Assemblywoman Peoples-Stokes have indicated that this is only a delay and not the end of the road, so I have full confidence that a regulated market will ultimately come to NYS.

In the meantime, some amazing groups are doing the groundwork with marginalized communities and women to get them prepared for the business opportunities that will come with legalization. Recently, I attended an event at Emmanuel Baptist Church in Brooklyn sponsored by Women Grow and others. The event covered all of the aspects of cannabis, but one of the better-attended workshops was the one on ancillary business opportunities. So, people are getting themselves ready, not waiting on government, which is impressive and exactly what should happen.

In terms of economic development planning, we're in the process of identifying business interventions that have worked in other industries to determine if they can be applied to cannabis. We are looking at the best practices of the cities and states that have legalized before us to see what would work in NYC. We are thinking through the opportunities to retrain our workforce so they can access the coming jobs.

WHEN YOU LOOK AT SOCIAL EQUITY AND POTENTIAL TAX INCENTIVES, APPLICATION ASSISTANCE, LOANS ETC. TO ENSURE SOCIAL EQUITY, HOW DOES THE CITY ALSO GET THE REVENUE IT WILL NEED TO FUND EDUCATION, PREVENTION, OVERSIGHT, AND A CANNABIS REGULATORY BODY?

Conservative estimates say that we'll clear just shy of \$300 million in tax revenue. That's enough money to reinvest in communities that have been harmed by unjust enforcement and set up a sufficient regulatory system.

With \$300 million we can do transformative work supporting entrepreneurs, creating workforce development program, invest in public health and education, and invest in communities.



ARE THERE OTHER FACTORS TO CONSIDER THAN JUST TAX DOLLARS IN THE COFFERS?

Absolutely! Public health, legal equity, patient access, responsible use, shared economic prosperity.

This isn't all about taxes and revenue. It's about correcting historical wrongs; it's about realizing the benefits for people of all walks of life.

WHAT DO YOU THINK THE INDUSTRY SHOULD BE TALKING TO GOVERNMENT ABOUT?

Reefer Madness concerns. In my opinion, many elected officials are still operating under old school assumptions of cannabis—gateway drug, lazy stoner, violent and seedy drug dealers. And the industry needs to continue to work to dispel those misconceptions and change the “face” of cannabis from unproductive stoner to employed professional.

They should also be talking about the commitments they are willing to make in the form of grants, technical assistance, incubator space, and workforce training. They need to prove to government that they will be good partners as legalization advances.



ART / DEAD EYES, UNTITLED, CLARION ALLEY MURAL PROJECT, SAN FRANCISCO CA

ARE THERE THINGS NEW YORK CAN TEACH OTHER MAJOR CITIES (LOS ANGELES, CHICAGO, MIAMI, HOUSTON, PHOENIX) ABOUT HOW TO IMPLEMENT RESPONSIBLE CANNABIS SALES AND USE?

Every locality is different, and it really depends on the aims of that municipality. It's crucial to carefully set up your adult use regulatory and tax framework. The equation is not all about maximum taxes in year one. It will take at least five years for the market to stabilize and we need to be cognizant of that. So be patient on the tax side, and don't set the taxes too high because that only fuels the unlicensed product market.

On the regulatory side, I caution against too many rule changes as the ecosystem is maturing. While the opaqueness of packaging may be an afterthought for policy and rule makers, changing those requirements midstream could have disastrous consequences for a small entrepreneur who's in the middle of production. As any state sets up its system it needs to think of the impact of even small rule changes and build in sufficient time for businesses to come into compliance.

I'd also say that if they are earnest about equity, invest in it at the onset, identify the source and set up the loans and grants before the first license is issued to ensure that the equity applicants can compete with the well-financed medical and multi-state organizations.

Make sure you aren't creating unnecessary hoops as well. Realize that your municipality probably already had some sort of cannabis infrastructure and work to incorporate those folks into the regulated industry early. They were the pioneers. .

SMOKING CANNABIS IS SUCH A MAJOR PART OF CANNABIS "CULTURE". HOW DO YOU THINK NEW YORK CITY WILL HANDLE THAT?

Consumption methods are changing, people are consuming less flower and moving towards vape, edibles, and other consumables, in line with the overall wellness movement. So, I really expect the New York City market to trend the same way.

But people still love to light up a joint, and New York has some of the strictest no-smoking laws in the country for very good reasons. However, some of those will need to be amended to allow for on-site consumption lounges. With the lounges, we'll need to be very thoughtful about things like ventilation, filtration, hours of operation, and product offerings beyond cannabis.

I think it will be a real balancing act.

DESCRIBE YOURSELF
IN THREE WORDS.



FREE-SPIRITED

REBEL

RESILIENT



WHAT COULD THE INDUSTRY BE DOING BETTER IN YOUR OPINION, RIGHT NOW FROM A PUBLIC POLICY PERSPECTIVE?

It depends on how you define the industry. If by it you mean the advocates, they've been really clear on what they want and how to achieve it.

If you are talking about business interest in the industry, I think they need to engage more. The industry needs to be more explicit about the financial commitments they will make, they need to be explicit about who they are going to hire and what their plans are to ensure diversity.

New York State will literally be starting from scratch and we have a lot to learn when it comes to cultivation, distribution, and manufacturing so the industry has a significant role to play there as well.

WHAT WILL BE THE MOST DIFFICULT THING IN LEGALIZING CANNABIS IN NEW YORK (AFTER WE PASS THE LEGISLATION)?

Setting up the infrastructure. Unlike California, New York didn't have a robust medical market with an established supply chain. We have limited cultivation farms, those that we do, have a part of a vertically integrated registered organization. So, we'll need to dedicate a lot of time to setting up cultivation facilities and distribution networks.

IF YOU HAD A CRYSTAL BALL, WHAT DOES CANNABIS USE IN 5 YEARS LOOK LIKE FOR NEW YORK CITY?

I think consumables will be huge, and edibles will continue to evolve beyond candy and other confections. You'll see cannabis integrated into beverages because it's a social form of consumption that we're more familiar with.

I think you'll see venues and businesses move to incorporate cannabis into their operations, think cannabis yoga, cannabis spas, salons.

WHO DO YOU CONSIDER A HERO OF YOURS?

I have so many, but I look up to trailblazers in the industry like Charlo Greene who started a cannabis movement in Alaska, Minority Cannabis Business Association Vice Chairwoman Shanita Penny, Women Grow Chief Executive Officer Dr. Chanda Macias and Executive Vice President Gia Moron. Other trailblazing women like Rihanna, Josephine Baker, Shirley Chisholm, Bessie Coleman, Madam C.J Walker, and principled individuals like Muhammad Ali and Colin Kaepernick.

WHAT ABOUT WHEN YOU WERE GROWING UP?

Malcolm X

Rosa Parks

Huey Newton

Nat Turner—I was a little revolutionary as a kid, I studied a lot of black history.

HOW IS CANNABIS INVOLVED IN YOUR DAILY LIFE?

Every morning as soon as I wake up, I check the latest in legalization news—there was one point when it seemed like every day a different state or country was considering legalization, so I like to keep abreast of that. I like to read those proposals and do a little back of the envelope analysis to see if anything could be useful in NYC.

Then I check my ticker—I closely follow the performance of a few companies from medical to manufacturers, packaging, etc. to get a sense of how the entire market is doing and how shareholders and customers are responding to individual companies. I like to stay informed on what deals these companies have signed and how they are doing with revenue projections, this helps me to identify trends and growth opportunities.

Then I check my general cannabis news sites for any information I may have missed.

My workday involves meetings and conversations with the universe—advocates, industry professionals, elected officials.

HAVE YOU ALWAYS BEEN OPEN ABOUT CONSUMPTION AND ADVOCACY?

Consumption no—I believe it's a personal matter. Advocacy absolutely! I can't advocate in a vacuum; people need to hear the message.

HOW DO YOU STAY CONNECTED IN THE CANNABIS SPACE?

Event attendance—NYC has a very robust albeit underground scene. I like to check out different events and meet entrepreneurs. As we continue to advance legalization there are weekly business networking events that I like to attend.

IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE FROM THE INDUSTRY?

Outside of a real commitment to equity and gender diversity, I want to see a commitment to environmentally sustainable practices in all stages of production but especially in product packaging. I'd love to see the industry move away from plastics in as much as possible.

ANY ADVICE FOR WOMEN LOOKING TO GET INVOLVED?

Do it! Start where you are and go for it. 🌱



The Voice of California Regulation.

Lindsay
Robinson

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CALIFORNIA CANNABIS INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION (CCIA)
INTERVIEW & PHOTOGRAPHY BY JENNIFER SKOG

WHAT DOES THE CALIFORNIA CANNABIS INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION (CCIA) DO AND WHY DOES IT MATTER SO MUCH?

CCIA promotes the growth of a responsible and legitimate cannabis industry and works for a favorable social, economic, and legal environment for our industry in the state of California.

CCIA was founded on the principle of strength in numbers. The thousands of California businesses involved in our state-legal cannabis industry represent a significant economic force. As the industry's most influential state trade association, CCIA works every day to ensure our burgeoning business sector is represented in a professional and coordinated way at the state level.

Every large industry has trade associations to help craft and shape the laws that govern that industry. CCIA takes feedback from the experts, our members, and helps amplify that message to those in charge of regulating the industry. We make sure those voices are heard. There are a lot of struggles that are unique to this industry but even more that are not. We need to find a balance between regulation and over-regulation and that's not an easy task.

Being part of CCIA means so much to me because I truly believe in the work we're doing. If we want the regulated market to thrive we have to fight for it, and I am 100% committed.

WHAT LED YOU TO PURSUE A CAREER IN CANNABIS? WHAT STEPS HAVE YOU TAKEN TO ACHIEVE YOUR CURRENT POSITION?

I started working in cannabis almost 20 years ago. I had a small cultivation [cannabis farm] that I shared with a friend and it was one of the most inspiring things I had ever done! Cannabis has been a big part of my life for many years and it was so educational for me to watch it grow from seed. My awareness of the risks I was taking on by cultivating caused me to connect the dots on how unfair our penal system is towards cannabis. Our justice system was/is so overly harsh to cannabis consumers, cultivators and distributors. Once my eyes were open, I had no choice but to act.

This realization and my love of cannabis turned into activism. I started working to reform cannabis—and drug laws in general—in the early 2000s and haven't stopped. Before I joined CCIA in my current role, I worked with the Marijuana Policy Project (MPP) for almost a decade, working on campaigns to legalize both medical and adult-use cannabis all over the country.

The most harmful thing about cannabis is the impact of prohibition. I've always been deeply opposed to the way our legal system incarcerates people for a plant. There's such harsh punishment for choosing something that's so much safer than alcohol, which is abundantly available and socially acceptable. Now, in places like California, people get to make a real choice and don't have to suffer from the stigma as much as they used to. The whole Reefer Madness, gateway drug mentality is falling by the wayside as it was based on falsehoods. Cannabis should be about an individual adult choosing what's best for their health and wellbeing. We're getting closer to that goal! Cannabis might not be for everyone, but anyone who chooses to consume should have access to clean, tested products.

WHAT DOES A TYPICAL DAY IN THE LIFE OF LINDSAY ROBINSON LOOK LIKE?

There are very few typical days for me. I live in San Francisco but our office is in Sacramento, two blocks from the Capitol. I travel a lot between the two but I also spend time in LA, San Diego, Santa Rosa, etc. I move around quite a bit because I'm always meetings with CCIA [California Cannabis Industry Association] members or with elected local and state officials or with regulators. Since CCIA is statewide there's always a lot going on.

Self-care is hard when you travel as much as I do but I try and take breaks so I can hike or do yoga. The regulated landscape in California can be really stressful to navigate so it's important to create some space where I can just breathe.



“We wouldn’t have legal cannabis if people hadn’t risked their freedom, and sometimes their lives for this plant. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to the pioneers and the warriors of the industry.”

—Lindsay Robinson



HOW IS CANNABIS INVOLVED IN YOUR DAILY LIFE? HAVE YOU ALWAYS BEEN OPEN ABOUT YOUR CONSUMPTION & ADVOCACY?

My relationship with cannabis is always evolving. I used to smoke much more than I do now. I could consume a lot of strong sativa and it made me feel great. But that doesn't work as well for me now. These days I tend to prefer strains with higher CBD content. I gravitate towards edibles that help me relax and promote sleep or meditation. I rarely consume something unless I know exactly what it is and where it came from. One of the many benefits of regulated cannabis is that it's much easier to know exactly what we're consuming! Topicals are also amazing. I just healed up a sprained ankle and they've been super helpful.

I've always been a bit of a boundary-pusher both socially and politically. My conviction is sometimes stronger than I am but I find inspiration in standing up for things I truly believe in—part of my DNA, I think. When I “came out” as a cannabis advocate and consumer it wasn't a huge surprise to most people. It took my family a little longer to accept, but they've all come around to it, thankfully. I think they're proud of how much I've accomplished to change laws around cannabis.

NOW THAT PROP 64 HAS PASSED, HOW ARE LOCAL REGULATORS ROLLING OUT PROP 64 AT THE COUNTY AND CITY LEVELS?

Prop 64 passed overwhelmingly in California but implementation has been difficult. Essentially, we have a dual licensing system in the state. In order to get a state license, you need to have authorization from your local municipality. Without the local component, you're unable to get a state license. Roughly two-thirds of the state does not have local ordinances for commercial cannabis in place. This means there's a de facto ban on cannabis cultivation, manufacturing, sales, etc. across a huge part of California. And as we know, the prohibition of cannabis doesn't work.

Obviously, cannabis is still being cultivated and sold in many of those jurisdictions but it's not regulated. That puts both the consumer and the cannabis operators at risk. Lack of local authorization is the number one obstacle facing legal cannabis in California. Our other two highest priorities are addressing high taxes and lack of enforcement on the illicit industry.

WHAT IS THE PROCESS OF EDUCATING REGULATORS LIKE? ARE THEY RECEPTIVE TO LEARNING MORE ABOUT THE CANNABIS INDUSTRY?

Education is a huge part of what we do. We not only educate lawmakers and regulators but also the industry. For the industry, we focus mostly on how their experiences and collective voice can be hugely instrumental in policy reform. We help empower our members to be part of shaping the laws and regulations that affect how their businesses run. We want them to have a seat at the table.

Our approach to educating legislators and regulators is constantly evolving. At the start of statewide regulation here in California, many of the folks making the laws had very little understanding of how cannabis grew or was processed. There was a real knowledge gap. We've hosted over 100 tours for elected officials at cultivation, manufacturing and retail sites all over the state. These on the ground educational opportunities have helped create a base of knowledge about what makes this industry so unique and special.

We continue to host tours for new legislative and regulatory staffers and we have ongoing meetings with lawmakers to help educate them on how the new rules are impacting the industry in both positive and negative ways. It's a heavy lift but vitally important!

WHAT ARE SOME COMMON CONCERNS YOU HEAR FROM REGULATORS?

Regulators tend to think that the industry doesn't want to be regulated but that's not my impression at all. Having worked in this space for so many years, I think most people desperately want to be regulated and follow the rules. Especially the ones who've been underground for so long. Many of them have risked a lot to continue to do this work because they truly believe in it, myself included. We want to be regulated in a sensible and practical way but what we're currently seeing is fairly extreme regulations that are pushing companies to the brink as they try and comply with all of these new rules.

That's not to say there aren't some operators who want to remain in the illicit market; every industry has bad actors. But our members and most of the folks I talk within the industry want to be compliant.

WHAT BILLS ARE YOU CURRENTLY LOBBYING FOR?

At the beginning of each legislative session, our board, with input from our 500+ members, sets the policy priorities for the next two years. Our current priorities include:

1) Reducing barriers to entry.

Supporting incentives that both encourage localities to permit commercial cannabis activities, as well as provide pathways for unlicensed businesses to enter the compliant market.

2) Tax Reduction/Relief.

Sponsor and support legislative efforts, as well as local efforts, to reduce tax burdens on compliant cannabis businesses.

3) Access.

Support legislative and regulatory efforts that expand access to medicinal and adult-use consumers, including legislation proposed for introduction in 2019 related to Compassionate Care Programs (SB 34 - Wiener)

4) Enforcement funding.

Include funding for state and/or local law enforcement in combating illicit market activities in the state budget.

We're also supporting:

SB 67 (McGuire)

AB 1356 (Ting)

SB 34 (Wiener): CCIA sponsored

SB 51 (Hertzberg)

AB 404 (Stone): CCIA sponsored

AB 37 (Jones-Sawyer): CCIA sponsored

SB 475 (Skinner): CCIA Co-sponsored

WHAT ARE THE HOT TICKET ISSUES THAT WILL MOVE THE INDUSTRY FORWARD IN A POSITIVE WAY?

I think most of us are united on what needs to be fixed. It's just a question of how we're going to get there. We're stronger when we're united! I love what's happening with branding across the industry—it's really helping to set some companies apart. And I love that people can get more creative with products these days. There is so much innovation happening in the cannabis space.

HOW DO YOU PROTECT HERITAGE FARMERS AND CROP CULTIVATORS NAVIGATE THE COMPLEXITIES OF REGULATIONS?

Small, medium and large businesses alike are struggling to navigate this very complex regulatory structure. We educate all of our members on what the regulations mean and how they will affect their businesses. Our Agriculture Committee weighs in on the nuances of these issues and we help disseminate that message to other members and lawmakers.

We were supportive of the delay of the Type 5 Cultivation license, which would allow for very large grow operations. That license type will not be available until 2023, which gives smaller businesses more time to become established. One of CCIA's main goals is to reduce barriers to entry across the entire industry, which would help small business gain access to the legal markets.

We're also working extremely hard with all of our allies to suspend the cultivation tax for three years while the regulated industry gets it feet under itself. I testified in support of the Bonta tax bill AB 286 just a few weeks ago.

IF YOU HAD A MAGIC POLICY WAND FOR CALIFORNIA WHAT WOULD YOU FIX FIRST?

The industry needs comprehensive banking so badly and ultimately that's a fix at the federal level. We're supporting SB 51 Hertzberg, which would create a limited purpose state charter bank and credit union for the industry. A similar bill was introduced last year and CCIA sponsored it but unfortunately, it died in committee over the summer.

CCIA is also lobbying on the federal level which helps us represent our members in a more comprehensive way. California is the largest cannabis market in the world and it's so important that we get this right! Our amplified voice on the federal level is helping shape policy across the country and I'm super proud of that. But again, lots more work to be done.

WHAT KEEPS LINDSAY ROBINSON UP AT NIGHT?

The fact that there's always more to do. I'm so committed to this work, and I'm always left feeling like there is so much more I would like to accomplish to ensure our industry can reach its full potential. I'm a bit of a perfectionist so I tend to overthink things. Luckily, I know a lovely little plant that helps with stress relief.

Also—how are we going to build a market that will be the framework for legalization on a national scale? It's important to focus on the big picture while we solve the problems of today's reality.

I've worked my entire adult life to end the drug war and some days it feels like we take two steps forward and one step back. I know there's progress overall but it often feels unbalanced. The divide between the haves and the have nots is alive and well in the cannabis industry. We also have a huge responsibility to address, and work to remedy, the social equity issues in the cannabis space. It's our responsibility to build an equitable industry that truly recognizes the lastly harm of the failed war on drugs.

WHAT DO YOU THINK WE GOT RIGHT IN DEPLOYING CALIFORNIA ADULT USE?

There's a lot of things we got right in California. People are no longer being locked up for this plant and that feels like a win. But we still have so much more to do.

THE ASSOCIATION REPRESENTS SO MANY INTERESTS, AND YOU ARE POSSIBLY THE LARGEST CANNABIS INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION IN THE WORLD—HOW DO YOU MAKE DECISIONS ABOUT WHAT IS THE RIGHT THING FROM A PUBLIC POLICY PERSPECTIVE IF SOME OF THE MEMBERS ARE CLAMORING FOR SOMETHING ELSE?

CCIA operates ten committees under our umbrella, and these committees have proven to be one of the best ways we receive feedback from our members. Our committees include Cultivation (including hemp), Manufacturing, Retail & Delivery, Distribution, Diversity, Inclusion & Social Equity (D.I.S.E.), Insurance & Human Resources, Intellectual Property, Events, Legislative and Quality Control (testing labs).

On occasion, it can be difficult to find consensus between our stakeholders but we strive to speak with a unified voice as much as possible. Our board of directors helps to set the priorities and policy goals each year and it's heavily based on the feedback and participation of our committees. We rely on them to tell us what's working and what's not with the current laws and regulations. It's their expertise that guides the organization.

We always strive to see five steps ahead of where we are now. The current industry is changing so quickly in so many ways and we want to be able to help shape those changes so that the laws benefit as many people as possible. My experience over the years is that short term setbacks can't dictate your attitude or long term goals.

THE CCIA HAS A SIGNIFICANT AMOUNT OF MEMBERS, SOME THAT HAVE RECEIVED NEGATIVE PRESS FOR THEIR TREATMENT OF WOMEN AND OPERATING WITHIN THE ILLICIT MARKET. HOW DOES THE CCIA HANDLE THE QUESTION OF INTEGRITY WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION?

Every industry has bad actors but we try to elevate and highlight the ones that are doing good things for their communities, and for their employees. We promote social responsibility, environmental stewardship, social equity, and we work really hard to be a mirror for the industry. When we stand together and elevate the best in the business, we tend to elevate the industry in general.

I'm proud to say we really value female leadership in the industry. I'm the Executive Director of CCIA and our state lobbyist is also a woman.

As is our Board President and our federal lobbyist.



HOW DO YOU SEE THE WORK OF THE CCIA AS IT TIES INTO SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE?

Legalizing cannabis is a form of social justice in and of itself. Regulating this complicated industry might not always be sexy but it's a major part of legalization. I believe so deeply that you can't have legalization without recognizing what it took to get here. We wouldn't have legal cannabis if people hadn't risked their freedom, and sometimes their lives for this plant. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to the pioneers and the warriors of this industry.

Without the efforts and demands of people affected by HIV and AIDS (and gay activists in general), medicinal cannabis wouldn't have taken to the mainstream social realm as a medicine as fast as it did. Those activists brought the idea that cannabis was more than the demonized "drug" and that the people who consumed it were patients and not "users" who had the right to a medicine that brought natural relief. Because of their efforts, California's Prop 215 was proposed and passed in 1996, which laid the groundwork for modern cannabis reform.

Right now we have the opportunity to right many of the wrongs that were created by the state and federally supported war on drugs, and on cannabis specifically. The disproportionate rate that black and brown people are arrested for cannabis as compared to white folks—while the usage rate is nearly identical—is something we can't forget. This is still happening in our country today. We need to keep all of this in mind as we build the regulated industry. It's our responsibility to not let lessons and injustices slip by. We can do better and we must. I won't stop fighting for these issues and I'm proud that my values and passions align so perfectly with CCIA.



WHAT ACTIONS CAN PEOPLE TAKE TODAY TO SUPPORT RESPONSIBLE CANNABIS POLICY?

If you're in the cannabis industry please join a trade association! The best way to ensure your voice is being heard is to get involved. Most companies cannot afford their own lobbyist so being a part of a trade association is critical in making sure your concerns as a business are being taken seriously. We're stronger when united!

For consumers, please try and buy legal, compliant cannabis whenever possible. The illicit industry is stronger than ever in California so it's important to support the regulated market, which means buying cannabis from licensed operators. I know it's more expensive but it helps supports a system that we're all fighting for. Plus it generates tax revenue for education and public works projects—and it's safer for you since it's tested! 🍀

FOR INFORMATION ON BECOMING A MEMBER OF THE CCIA,
VISIT CACANNABISINDUSTRY.ORG OR
FOLLOW @CCIA_TEAM FOR THE LATEST ON INSTAGRAM





**“WE’RE HOPING
THAT WITH THESE
CONVERSATIONS, WE
CAN SET NEW VALUES.”**

—Nina Parks

THE (R)EVOLUTION OF



CANNABIS EQUITY CONSULTANT & ADVOCATE & APPLICANT
WRITTEN BY KAISHA-DYAN MCMILLAN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JENNIFER SKOG

With cannabis spending projected to reach a staggering \$23.4 billion nationwide by 2022,¹ it's clear that Americans (60% of them, to be exact²) are more in favor of legalization than ever.

And yet, even with two-thirds of the nation having cannabis legalization laws on the books, black and brown people are not only still being disproportionately arrested for cannabis crimes—but they're also being shut out of the legal industry.

The oft-quoted finding³ that a black person is 3.73 times more likely to be arrested for cannabis possession than a white person despite both groups having similar usage rates is just the tip of the iceberg. Of the over 659,000 people arrested in 2017⁴ for cannabis law violations, 47% were black or Latinx. In New York, where medical marijuana is legal, 86% of those arrested for possession in 2017 were people of color.⁵ In Washington D.C., black people are arrested at double the rate of other ethnicities despite cannabis having been legalized for medical and adult-use in the district. And in the greatest of ironies, we have a legal industry in which 81% of business owners and founders are white.⁶

No wonder Nina Parks is so busy.

¹BDS Analytics, 6th ed., "The State of Legal Marijuana Markets."

²Jaeger, Kyle. "Majority Of Americans Support Legalizing Marijuana And Expunging Records, Poll Finds." Marijuana Moment (March 6, 2019): marijuanamoment.net

³ACLU, June 2013, "The War on Marijuana in Black and White."

⁴Drug Policy Alliance, "Drug War Statistics." drugpolicy.org

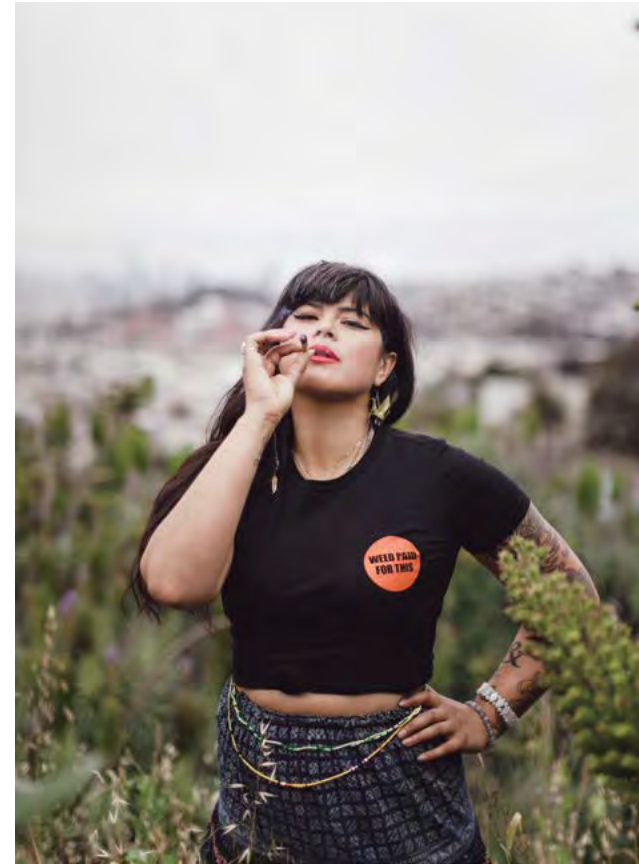
⁵New York State Law, Penal Law, "Offenses Involving Marihuana." ypdcrime.com

⁶Marijuana Business Daily, September 11, 2017., "Chart: Percentage of cannabis business owners and founders by race." mjbidaily.com

⁷EquitySessions.com

“IT’S A VERY SPECIAL THING TO GROW UP IN THE BAY AREA. WHEN WE TALK ABOUT DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION, ALTHOUGH THERE ARE A LOT OF SOCIAL ISSUES THAT EXIST, WE CELEBRATE PEOPLE’S CULTURES OUT HERE.”

—Nina Parks



Four years after co-founding Supernova Women—an organization that provides educational, advocacy, and networking resources for women of color pursuing ownership in legal cannabis—Parks’ sights remain firmly planted on helping usher in an equitable industry.

“I’ve started my own consulting company doing primarily diversity, inclusion and racial equity consulting work targeting the city of San Francisco, larger businesses, and new companies that are trying to ensure that they start off inclusive,” she explains over video chat.

Parks changed direction to focus on Equity Sessions, a workshop series geared towards applicants, business partners, and incubators participating in San Francisco’s cannabis equity program.⁷ “I left the board of Supernova so I could focus on creating Equity Sessions and all of the educational curriculum that comes with that,” she says. It’s the latest chapter in the story of a woman who answered the call to activism long ago.

“I was a latchkey kid. Public transportation was really a babysitter of mine, and I wandered all over San Francisco as a youth,” Parks says of her upbringing. “It’s a very special thing to grow up in the Bay Area. When we talk about diversity and inclusion, although there are a lot of social issues that exist we celebrate people’s cultures out here.”

There's a degree of social awareness inherent to the lives of kids who grow up in the Bay, and Parks is a shining example. Frustrated by both the passage of California's Prop 21—which gave the DA the power to decide whether juvenile offenders who commit serious crimes be tried as adults—and the reduction in funding for arts, sports, and other experiential youth learning programs, Parks started organizing with hip-hop and social justice youth leadership organization 3rd Eye Movement when she was just 15 years old. "It was there that I learned about the power of art as a powerful aide for the human spirit and its ability to assist in a change in communities," she explains.

Parks participated in protests and helped organize school walkouts, including a sit-in at the Hilton Hotel due to their financial support of the initiative. She honed her community negotiating skills by frequently serving as a chant leader and police liaison. After using a Star Assessment scantron to submit an essay on why aptitude tests are ineffective at gauging student learning, Parks was kicked out of school and sent away to a correctional boarding school in New Mexico for a year and a half. The fire was lit by the time she returned home. "I was determined to effect change in the justice and education system," she says, "wanting to see more educational opportunities and mental health support versus punishment."

After briefly attending then dropping out of San Jose State's Criminal Justice program, Parks started working in after-school programs and case management to help keep youth away from the criminal justice system. She ran food pantries and collaborated with community organizations "to support people when they're struggling with their human experience. Through expression, and human beings finding outlets for their expression, it's less likely to come out in violent ways," she says. When continued harassment and over-policing in the City's Excelsior community led to higher incidents of excessive force, she organized the youth to help create the "Community Policing General Order." But after the SFPD fatally shot Alex Nieto in the same Bernal Heights neighborhood he grew up in, Parks felt defeated. "I thought I'd never work on public policy again; it hurt too much to see the community in pain, my heart felt too broken," she says.

Because Parks has always been a creator, she turned to art for healing. "Art has been a way of life, expression of joy and pain, and everything in between. Without a creative outlet, I feel like my spirit dies," she says.





Parks focused her energy on making jewelry, photographing hip hop shows, and using her film school education to share community stories and make music videos for local artists. “Cannabis was a big part of my creative process,” she says, laughing. “It was always social currency amongst artists, something that we shared and explored with each other to be the catalyst of creative conversations, so switching over to running a cannabis business didn’t feel too foreign.”

For the self-described Life Artist (“Art is the way that you live,” she says) Parks’ inspiration came directly from her community. For a long time, she made origami crane earrings, selling them in local boutiques and pop-up shops as a way to increase violence awareness while also trying to help reduce the impacts of trauma. “I started making them after a friend of mine passed away when I was 19 years old,” she says. “He was the first friend that I lost from violence, and it was devastating.”

But it would be the arrest and incarceration of both her brother and a close friend for cannabis offenses that brought the advocacy work to her

front door, and along with it, the legal marijuana industry. Out of necessity, Parks took over her brother’s delivery service while he served out his sentence on Riker’s Island. Between considering the long-term effects that being in a notoriously violent prison would have on her brother, and seeing her friend struggle to rebuild his life under the constraints of probation, a new path started emerging for Parks. “There was no way that I was going to fall victim to a system looking to dehumanize my family, especially for something people were having conferences about,” Parks explains.

“White dudes in suits at these conferences are talking about their national cannabis markets freely, with no fear, or think that they’re so cool that they’re taking the risk at something that’s federally illegal and wearing it as a badge of honor,” she says. “My brother and thousands of other people are literally sitting in jail cells, or were sitting in jail cells and now have this scarlet letter on their forehead. So equity programs are essential to being able to correct those societal impacts of criminality.”

Cannabis social equity programs are intended to level the playing field so that those most impacted by the enforcement of cannabis prohibition—black, brown, and impoverished communities—can have a stake in the legal industry. From where Parks sits, supporting cannabis legalization means also recognizing that it’s a social justice issue.

“Cannabis prohibition was how they were able to enforce and institutionalize racism on so many different levels. We have to undo that, we have to say it out loud, we have to identify it,” she explains, and that means digging in to fully understand what “reducing the impacts from the war on drugs” and other rhetoric on the subject really means.

“Talking to the community and having them source answers from their experience: the breakup of homes, families having to be separated from one another, having to figure out how to build healthy relationships from there,” Parks says, offering clarity. “Lack of access to education, deficiency in seeing people in powerful positions that look like us.”



**“CANNABIS PROHIBITION
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—Nina Parks

For Parks, exploring the industry under the lens of social justice cracks open the door to a wealth of issues: from having safe institutional spaces to openly discuss race, to broadening the expungement process for formerly incarcerated individuals to include reentry programs and other support systems, to cannabis entrepreneurs being granted access to the Small Business Administration for resources, to financial literacy courses that give business owners the skills to confidently pursue and manage funding. And that's on top of also recognizing the environmental impact of cannabis as an agricultural product and as the center of a wasteful and expensive packaging system, as well as ensuring that veterans and people with disabilities also have visibility in this industry. Simply put, the areas of opportunity for equity are vast.

"It's racial justice, eco-justice, criminal justice, it intersects so much," Parks explains. "When we talk about inclusion and diversity, we have to build up for the other conversations to happen just as deeply as we do for social equity. We have to talk about rebalancing power because that's where the justice is going to happen."

Still, with all of the work yet to be done, Parks views the discussion itself as a massive step in the right direction. She credits former Oakland City Councilmember Desley Brooks for being courageous enough to bring equity to the forefront in the first place—a move that not only made Oakland the nation's first city with a cannabis equity program but serves as inspiration for new jurisdictions, perhaps ultimately at the Federal level.

"I just read the Marijuana Justice Act that Barbara Lee submitted, and it is absolutely amazing to see a national bill hold so much equity language in it," Parks says. "It actually addresses the impact and makes moves to decriminalize, to de-stigmatize, and also re-humanize folks."

At the end of the day, Parks wants this industry worth billions to be about much more than money.

"We're hoping that with these conversations, we can set new values," she explains. "It's doing a great disservice to all that work that people have done before us if we allow it to just be numbers. If we allow it just to be about figuring out the most efficient way to produce, it's a complete disservice to the magic of what this plant actually can do." 🍃

TO WORK WITH NINA, VISIT @EQUITYSESSIONS ON INSTAGRAM AND AT NINAPARKSCONSULTING.COM



PHOTO BY SHEILA MENEZES

Kaisha-Dyan McMillan is a freelance writer and journalist specializing in the cannabis industry. After spending more than a decade in retail merchandising and product development, in 2016 Kaisha decided to transition years of marketing expertise into a copywriting business, identifying cannabis as her chosen niche. In the nearly 3 years since making that fateful decision, she has written content for multiple brands in the industry while also discovering her passion for journalism. Kaisha is building her own brand as a cannabis culture writer and is especially interested in telling the stories of women and people of color in the industry, particularly those in her hometown of Oakland.

For more from Kaisha-Dyan visit www.KaishaDyan.com

“WE HAVE TO TALK
ABOUT REBALANCING
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—Nina Parks

MAKEUP / JOY MARBELLA
JACKET / MADE IN THE CITY
HOODED JACKET / AYL A BLENDS
SHOES / DEEEFIND
EARRINGS / LADYBIRD SF
FLOWER / SF ROOTS

SHALEEN TITLE

COMMISSIONER, CANNABIS CONTROL COMMISSION, MASSACHUSETTS
INTERVIEW BY BETSY KABAHER
PHOTOGRAPHY BY LINDSEY MICHELLE WILLIAMS



Currently serving as one of five commissioners on the Massachusetts Cannabis Control Commission (MA CCC), Attorney and Drug Policy Activist Shaleen Title's Twitter feed will quickly give you an idea of the power in her voice. She believes all drugs should be legalized and regulated and helped make it a mandatory obligation of the MA CCC to promote and encourage inclusion of disproportionately harmed communities and in the industry. MJ Lifestyle's Betsy Kabaker asks the questions we all have, while trying not to *fangirl* too much!



WHAT WAS THE SPARK THAT TURNED YOU INTO AN ACTIVIST?

It would have to be when I saw cultural appropriation in Delia's catalog in the 90s when I was in middle school and they were selling Hindu imagery. Normally I'm okay with Indian culture being used in fashion and people wearing bindis and saris. I think it's cool that culture is for everybody, but in this case, in this Delia's catalog it was Hindu religious imagery on toilet paper—something I found really offensive—and I saw it and realized no one is going to change this unless YOU change this. There was no internet, of course. I couldn't go out and tweet about it, this was the 90s. I wrote a letter and I told them how I felt completely offended by it as a consumer, as a Hindu, and they probably hadn't thought about how it felt for me. They ended up removing it from the catalog.

WOW. SO YOU ACTUALLY SAW SOME ACTION FROM YOUR REACTION!

Yeah, I got a taste of that power as a citizen, yes.

IN WHAT OTHER AREAS DO YOU FEEL LIKE YOU HAVE THAT OPPORTUNITY?

Primarily in cannabis and drug policy. That's my life's work, but I also try to speak up whenever I see something even if it's not my area of expertise. If something ignites a feeling in me, I try to speak up. I know when other people tell me something that I can do that's going to make their life better and will make a difference for them I always try to keep it at the top of my mind. I change my language a lot for example—when people asked me to stop using the term 'black market' I stopped it when people asked me to stop using racially charged languages around drug dealers or illicit market dealers in drug policy. I tried to change that language. I listen to people and I hope they listen to me in the same way.

SO WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR YOU TO BE AN ACTIVIST WITH YOUR OFFICIAL ROLE NOW?

I'm always going to identify first and foremost as an activist. I think that means a person who is trying to make positive change and I'm still doing that—it's actually very similar—I feel like in my work now I work directly for the people which is not that different from when I was trying to make positive change for the people before as an activist. Sometimes you'll hear people refer to in a derogatory way to "The Activists" or "The Advocates" as though they're some kind of fringe group or special interest group, but to me, those are the people who are trying to make society better so, of course, I want to listen to them. Plus, most of the time they're doing it for free.



WHAT OBSTACLES HAVE YOU FACED WHEN EITHER TRYING TO FIND YOUR VOICE OR FIGURING OUT HOW TO EXPRESS YOUR VOICE TO A BIGGER AUDIENCE?

I think the biggest obstacle I face is people not taking me seriously because no matter what position you hold or no matter what degrees you get or experience that you have there is a certain population that is going to treat women of color, and in particular young women of color, as though they don't have any expertise and being condescending. I think the biggest challenge is to block out that part and know that my voice has worth and that's something that I've been practicing since long before I had external qualifications. Just my voice in itself has worth and that's something that I try to pass on to everyone who talks to me. If you care about an issue and you have life experience with that issue, to me your voice is incredibly important and that's how I treat you.

Get the word from Shaleen in real time on her personal twitter account @shaleentitle

WHAT WAS THE PRACTICE THAT LED YOU TO BECOME COMFORTABLE WITH EXPRESSING YOUR BELIEFS?

That's something I think about a lot as a parent because that's always come naturally to me. I grew up at a time where when I was in college, people would suggest that you take drug policy work off your resume or that you don't use the words "cannabis" or "marijuana" on your resume for fear of stigma or spooking an employer. Not only did I not follow those rules, but I also did the opposite and did my best to be as outspoken as possible with that work because I'm really proud of it. I brought up parenting because I think that's how I was raised and that's how I'm trying to raise my son—to trust and be confident in his own beliefs and what he feels is right.

YOUR SON IS LUCKY HE HAS SOMEONE LIKE YOU TO LOOK UP TO AND TALK TO. DID YOU HAVE STRONG ROLE MODELS GROWING UP?

My mom is definitely a role model for me. And last year we've seen Ayanna Pressley and AOC and here in Boston the new DA, Rachael Rollins, she's both the first woman and the first African American woman to be DA here in this county. They're all such important role models for me and it changes the way that you look at something when you can see a position being held by someone that looks like you or speaks like you.

ALL THESE CITIES AND STATES LEGALIZING IN THE US ARE INCUBATORS WORKING TO DEVELOP A REGULATIONS SYSTEM, WHICH WILL EXPAND ALL OVER THE WORLD. IN THE U.S. WE ARE AHEAD OF THE GAME, SO I'M HOPING THAT EQUITY AND THESE IDEALS LIKE COMPASSION AND MEDICAL ACCESS ARE REALLY GOING TO BE SPREAD.

WHAT ARE THE POLICIES YOU'RE PRIORITIZING RIGHT NOW AT THE STATE AND FEDERAL LEVEL?

At the state level, we're in a position in Massachusetts where we have been ahead of the equity discussion which is now at the forefront of the legalization movement: How do we do social justice right? How do we make sure that we're repairing the harms of the drug war? We started asking that question back in 2015 and we made it a mandatory obligation of this agency, the Cannabis Control Commission, to promote and encourage inclusion of disproportionately harmed communities and in the industry, but we didn't specify how. So here in Massachusetts, we are trying different ways, we've tried priority in terms of applications—that was not enough. We're trying a huge technical assistance program and we're trying exclusive access to certain types of licenses for people from those communities—a new groundbreaking way of trying to provide equity. At the federal level, it's the same thing. The federal legalization that eventually passes should be best practices learned from all of these states and equity should be at the top of that.

WE HAVEN'T SEEN THAT IN CALIFORNIA YET.

And we learn from California as well, especially Oakland, Sacramento, Los Angeles, San Francisco, all these cities are trying things, but I think the top priority is to make sure that we're really honest about what we're trying and about what the data is showing because so many other states are going to be doing this after us and also having equity as a top priority and I want them to do even better and learn from us.

IT'S REALLY INTERESTING BECAUSE WE SEE MASSACHUSETTS CREATING AN EQUITY PROGRAM AT A STATE LEVEL AND IN CALIFORNIA, WE SEE MUNICIPALITIES CREATING EQUITY PROGRAMS THEN TRYING TO CONVINCING THE STATE.

I think they both have their pros and cons, but it is very interesting to me that equity has been led by municipalities in California and then trying to bring the state along, but here it's the opposite. We're starting at the state level and really trying to bring municipalities along and provide the guidance and the resources that they need. I don't think one is inherently better than the other but I think both have proved that you have to do it at every level—the regulatory level, the municipal level, and also legislatively as well.

And California really led centering patients and compassion and safe access in a way that all of the other states followed. I think a lot of our patient-centered policies—like we were the first to make sure we had a supply safety net for patients if a dispensary is to be both medical and adult use, they have to set aside a little more than a third of their supply for patients—and that's something we learned by watching California. When you have a value it's really important in how you make policies. You start with the value and in this case, it's compassion and safe access, and then you make the policy from there.

IT'S REALLY DIFFICULT TO BE IN CANNABIS, EVEN THOUGH PEOPLE ARE FLOODING IN—IT'S HARD TO RAISE MONEY. THERE ARE SO MANY OBSTACLES THAT ANY EXPERIENCED OPERATOR FACES. AT TIMES I WONDER IF THE EQUITY PROGRAMS ARE ENOUGH. I LOVE THE IDEA OF HAVING A SEPARATE LICENSE FOR EQUITY APPLICANTS, BUT LOOKING TO THE FUTURE IN FIVE OR TEN YEARS FROM NOW, HOW ARE EQUITY OPERATORS GOING TO BE BEST SET UP FOR SUCCESS? IS IT WHAT'S EXISTING RIGHT NOW OR DO YOU SEE OTHER OPTIONS BEING BROUGHT IN BEYOND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND HAVING A FUND THAT CAN REALLY ENCOURAGE AND GROW THESE BUSINESSES?

I think we've barely scratched the surface of the creative ideas that we can have to encourage these small businesses and many of them we're going to learn as we go and we see the challenges that they are facing and we try to address them. The key is really listening and being flexible. Right now, for example, we're looking at moving the application process around so that we can have the demonstration of capital and the demonstration of property moved to the end of the process. That's something that you don't necessarily think about in the beginning until you're working with these businesses and seeing what their challenges are.

What we have right now is definitely not enough and when you think of the harms that these communities have gone through throughout the drug war, it will never be enough. We can try our best and let me say in a policy note that there are two things: there's the equity side of it, helping those businesses become successful but then the other side of it is what unites a lot of people regardless of how you feel about marijuana in Massachusetts. Generally, Massachusetts voters voted for a vision of an industry that was diverse and accessible and had room for businesses of all sizes including small craft high-quality cannabis businesses. We have a strict three-license limit for businesses. Making sure that we're enforcing that limitation is just as important as equity is helping these small businesses.

HOW DOES THAT TRANSLATE AT A FEDERAL LEVEL?

Cannabis is illegal federally, so until that changes...

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT EAST COAST VERSUS WEST COAST CANNABIS CULTURALLY? I KNOW THAT MASSACHUSETTS HAS THIS CONSUMPTION LOUNGE IDEA AND THAT'S REALLY HOW YOU BRING CANNABIS CULTURE TO A BROADER AUDIENCE. HOW DO YOU SEE BOSTON'S PLACE IN CANNABIS CULTURE VERSUS SAN FRANCISCO'S?



The East Coast cannabis culture and the Massachusetts cannabis culture already exist. It has been here for dozens of years and I think it's a matter of time before our laws and our regulations adjust to being in parity with the culture. I just try to think long-term and understand that each incremental step that we take is going in the right direction. For example, I suspect that our social consumption program when it starts will be small, will be incremental, will certainly not treat cannabis the way that we treat alcohol, but I also understand that it just takes time and in the meantime, the cannabis culture is still there. It never went anywhere. It's going to be here no matter what the laws and regulations say, so it's just a matter of making the match while also keeping public health, public safety and equity in mind.

DO YOU SEE THE CONVERSATION REALLY HAVING TEETH AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL?


We are winning that battle at the level of dialogue and conversation. For example, I think almost all of the 2020 candidates have endorsed legalization except for Biden, but the real question for them has been what will you do to give back to these harmed communities? What are the social justice aspects of your legalization plan? Having all of the presidential candidates think about that and have a substantive plan is to me a big victory. The time will come to federal legalization and I think we're approaching the point now where it's inevitable—and we need to, as activists in this movement, ask ourselves are we willing to just take what we can get and make the legal/federally legal marijuana industry look just like how it looks now in these states or are we willing to walk away until we get a truly just and fair and reparative industry? I hope it's the latter.

CORY BOOKER TOOK HIS NAME OFF A BILL THAT DIDN'T HAVE ENOUGH LANGUAGE SUPPORTING IT.

That's right. The Marijuana Justice Act sponsored by Senator Booker has those aspects and the other incremental bills that just added banking and will allow a company to take its products over state lines...is that enough? I would say no.

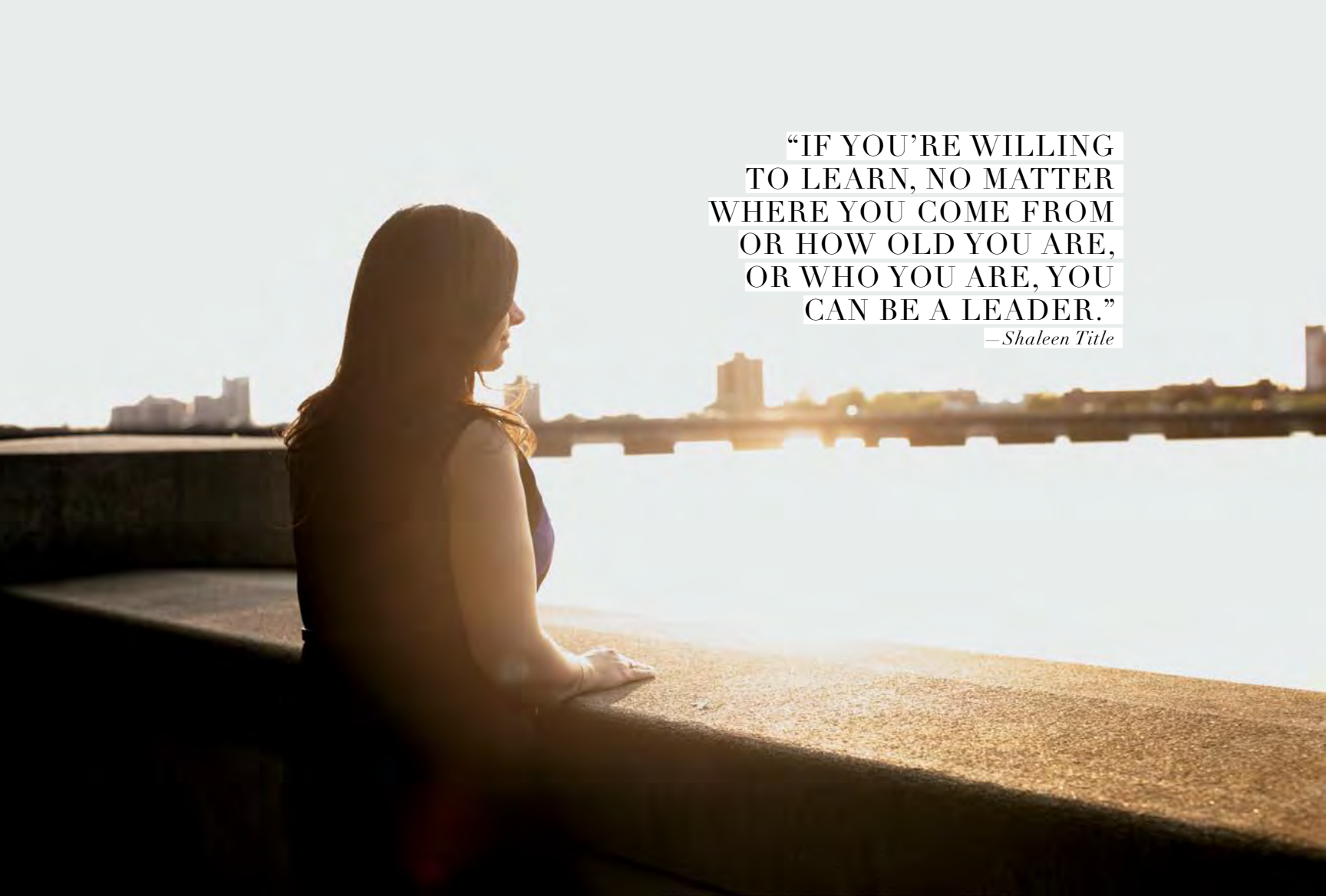
THIS IS A QUESTION THAT WAS SENT TO ME FROM AN ACTIVIST FOCUSING ON IMMIGRATION POLICY: WE'RE SEEING A LOT OF THINGS AROUND DEPORTING PEOPLE WHO HAVE POSSESSION OF CANNABIS. WHAT CAN WE DO TO PREVENT THAT FROM HAPPENING? HOW DO WE SHAPE THIS ISSUE AND HOW IT'S BEING ADDRESSED?

We won so far, not by winning over political leaders or people in the establishment machine, we won because at home everyday people and their neighbors and their friends talked about cannabis and understood that no one should be arrested for cannabis. In that same way, we need to make sure that we are being inclusive and that immigrants who use cannabis, in fact, immigrants who use drugs are people—documented or not—sex workers who use drugs are people—people with felonies who use drugs are people—and they all need to be treated as human beings. We need to make sure that in these conversations they are the reason that we keep winning and doing better and better at drug policy, we're remembering that. When it comes to the way that people are being deported for legal or totally normal cannabis use, depending on where they are, it's an outrage. We have to treat it as an outrage. We have to act as though that's happening to us and our own brothers and sisters and children because that is what's happening.



“We won so far, not by winning over political leaders or people in the establishment machine, we won because at home everyday people and their neighbors and their friends talked about cannabis and understood that no one should be arrested for cannabis.”

—*Shaleen Title*



**“IF YOU’RE WILLING
TO LEARN, NO MATTER
WHERE YOU COME FROM
OR HOW OLD YOU ARE,
OR WHO YOU ARE, YOU
CAN BE A LEADER.”**

—*Shaleen Title*

MOVING FORWARD, WHAT’S NEXT FOR YOU? WHAT OTHER ISSUES HAVE YOUR ATTENTION OR IS CANNABIS WHERE YOU FOCUS MOST OF YOUR CAUSE-RELATED ACTIVISM?

My plate is completely full until my term ends in 2020. After that, I don’t know. I do find the push to decriminalize psychedelics very interesting. I think there are a lot of complex regulatory questions there that are completely different from cannabis that I find fascinating. I’m looking forward to seeing what’s next.

YOU MENTIONED THAT YOUR PLATE IS REALLY FULL. WHAT ARE SOME PRACTICAL THINGS THAT YOU DO THAT HELP YOU MANAGE THAT?

I try to focus on where I’m going to have the biggest impact and sometimes that is pure policy matters, but other times it’s closing information gaps or its spending my time trying to help people understand issues or spending my time mentoring people that with a little bit of support from me will be extremely effective. I try to just be open minded about where I can make the most impact. On the weekends, I spend a lot of time traveling to other states and talking to them about the lessons we’ve learned in Massachusetts that I think can help them do better in their own state bills. That approach helps me to stay grounded and not waste time.

WHAT’S YOUR ADVICE ON HOW TO BECOME A LEADER IN CANNABIS?

Come to our meetings, read the regulations, learn all of the information and then become a subject matter expert. You don’t have to navigate an establishment because the extraordinary thing about cannabis and cannabis policy is that it changes every day and there is nothing established. If you’re willing to learn, no matter where you come from or how old you are, or who you are, you can be a leader. 🍀

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INTERVIEW BY BRITTNEY MESICA
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JENNIFER SKOG

SABRINA FENDRICK

DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS & POLICY
BERKELEY PATIENTS GROUP

Director of Government Affairs at Berkeley Patients Group, Sabrina Fendrick is paving the way for progressive cannabis reform in the US. As one of the first women to be hired at the national NORML office in D.C., she quickly became an international voice for women in cannabis.

From growing up in a politically engaged household to personal experiences with law enforcement involving cannabis misdemeanors, and a relentless drive for new knowledge on the issues that she stands for, Sabrina sets the tone and acts as a representative for professional, successful women within the marijuana movement.

MJ had the privileged to talk to Sabrina and gain an insider's look on what it's like to be a woman in the political realm revolving around national cannabis law and federal prohibition and how to maintain an ethical practice within an exponentially blooming, yet nuanced, industry.

WHAT DOES A TYPICAL DAY IN THE LIFE OF SABRINA FENDRICK LOOK LIKE?

It varies depending on organizational needs such as licensing and compliance, or if I'm engaging on particular policy initiatives. I do a lot of reading and dissecting of law and legislation. I assist in the development of policy proposals and update the operations department if there are any changes to the laws, or regulations in Berkeley or at the state level.

I regularly submit letters and attend council meetings, commission meetings, and state hearings - to support or oppose legislation or policy matters. I regularly liaise with lobbyists, our legal counsel, policy makers, and agency officials. I speak at a lot of industry events and conferences and serve as one of the media representatives for BPG.



WHAT WERE YOU LIKE AS A GIRL? HAVE YOU ALWAYS SO AMBITIOUS?

I was very opinionated, with a lot of unfocused energy that I ultimately put into sports and other extracurricular activities. My parents were diplomats so I spent most of my youth moving around overseas. Some of the countries where I lived at the time were going through pretty significant geopolitical changes. Growing up, politics, news, and current events were standard dinner table conversation. I think all of those factors had an influence on the social awareness I have today. I was very passionate about fairness and justice and was always encouraged to engage lawmakers on issues I cared about. One letter I sent to President Clinton—I don't exactly remember what about—got a response back, which I have kept to this day saying, "Thank you for sharing your concerns about bigotry..." I must have been 9 or 10.

I loved soccer and played for almost 15 years. I was on an all-boys team when I was 5 and then, when I came back to the states for a few years, joined a girls team. Although, I still practiced with the boys. I moved to South Africa in 1997, three years after apartheid ended. Very few women played soccer in South Africa so there weren't any girls leagues for me to join in Johannesburg. Luckily, my mom found a local boys team willing to allow me to try out. I was skilled enough to make the team and became the first and only female in the entire league. The significance didn't occur to me until we got to the championship game. The newspaper wrote an article about me, and the lack of female leagues in Johannesburg. I remember when we were warming up during the championship game, a bunch of boys pointing at me saying, "That's the girl! That's the girl!" That was the first time I truly appreciated the uniqueness of my situation. I was 12.

GROWING UP, WHAT WAS YOUR DREAM CAREER?

When I was younger I was really into sports and Mia Hamm was my idol. I wanted to play professional soccer. Then I started getting into theatre and became passionate about pursuing an acting career. As I got older, my interest expanded more into production and creative work like photography, film, and production.

Then, 9/11 happened. I was a high school junior in Arlington County, Virginia, about a mile from the Pentagon. I heard the plane roar over our school, and seconds later, crash into the Pentagon. It sounded like a bomb went off and our whole building shook. The school put us on lockdown. Nobody could reach their parents, most of whom worked in D.C., because the phone lines were all tied up. It was total chaos. It was that day, and the Beltway's ensuing, chaotic lead up to the Iraq War that completely shifted my focus to politics. I became fascinated with how the Bush administration was able to convince almost the entire country that Iraq was involved in the 9/11 attacks.

I became very interested in politics, political communication and the influence it can have on so many people. I started getting interested in working on political issues. I think I wanted to be a campaign manager at that point. I studied political communications in college which is when I had my first interactions with law enforcement. It was those experiences that introduced me to the destructive failures of the criminal justice system and the horrible impact of marijuana prohibition. Once I found this cause, I was hooked. By the time I graduated from college, my dream career was to be a professional marijuana legalizer.

HOW DID YOUR CANNABIS JOURNEY BEGIN?

The first time I tried cannabis I was in 10th grade when I was part of a school-community theatre partnership program. We had scheduled performances throughout the day and sometimes we got out early. One day, a group of us went to a friend's house where we shared a blunt and took a hit from a water cooler-jug sized gravity bong. It was a beautiful day and I remember really enjoying it. I dabbled at parties throughout high school, but I didn't really become a regular consumer until college. I didn't buy my first eighth until college—let's put it that way.

I experienced a really bad seizure my sophomore year before I knew anything about the medical applications of cannabis. I just knew that I liked smoking weed but I found myself using it to manage the depression that followed my seizure. It was pretty bad, and the cannabis really helped me get through it. I always enjoyed using it socially too, however. There was something very intimate and communal about it.

My first interaction with law enforcement, I was in college at a house party in Virginia. It wound up getting shut down by the cops, and I was the only person that got busted. They caught me red-handed, holding a bottle of liquor. I was underage so I got charged with underage possession of alcohol.

From the very beginning, it was a humiliating experience. It was one of those costume college parties where you're dressed in a theme. The police took a bunch of Polaroids of me, which, to this day, seems weird. So then I went to court, ended up on probation, with community service, a restricted license, and mandatory drug testing. I couldn't smoke weed because I was getting drug tested, which drove me nuts but also reinforced my appreciation for cannabis. That whole incident, especially the mandatory drug testing with the probation officer in the bathroom, gave me a small taste of the dehumanizing experience that is navigating the criminal justice system. And you know, having this woman standing in the bathroom watching me pee in a cup, it was an awful, humiliating experience.

[SABRINA'S CANNABIS JOURNEY CONT.] So then, in my junior year, my college roommate, who worked as a security aid told someone he worked with that our house smoked a lot of pot. A campus police officer found out about it and marched my roommate over to our house at six in the morning. He knocked on my door and came in. I had just bought the most beautiful bag of neon green weed. I had only smoked one joint of it or something. They found it, and a bunch of other stuff. We had to go before the school's judicial affairs committee and got assigned books to read and write reports on and do community service. In a random twist of fate, my roommate was issued *Reefer Madness* by Eric Schlosser. That book changed my life. Wow, I was just stunned. I could not believe it. It truly opened my eyes to the racist, destructive policy of marijuana prohibition.

During that time, campus police treated us horribly; they were invasive and seemed to have it out for us. They ended up telling the local police that we were dealing cannabis and four officers showed up at our door in a very intimidating manner. My roommate let them in and none of us really knew our rights. Somehow, a new rumor ricocheted through the local law enforcement network and one day, when I was walking back from class, I saw three men in full on SWAT gear with bulletproof vests and huge guns at my door saying that we were dealing coke. I don't even know how that happened. They just kept harassing us and there was absolutely nothing that we could do. I started obsessively researching the topic and became, again, fascinated by the power of propaganda. I ended up writing my senior thesis on the evolution of "Reefer Madness" propaganda, from the first year of federal prohibition in 1937 to 2007, which was the year I graduated.

HOW DID THINGS START EVOLVING WITH YOUR CAREER ONCE YOU STARTED AT NORML [NATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR THE REFORM OF MARIJUANA LAWS]?

I was hired in 2008 as the Assistant to the Executive Director but realized there was an immense amount of learning I still needed to do. NORML had a great library of books and research documents, so I started diving deep into all of the medical research and criminal justice books available to me.

A lot of these people at NORML I had cited in my senior thesis, so I was practically starstruck. My parents and my friends and family kept saying, "Oh, you should get a real job," and, "no company is ever going to hire you," that I was exposing myself to legal liabilities since I was in Virginia and Virginia was very much a prohibition state. But, I didn't care. I believed in this cause and would never work for a company that wouldn't hire me because of my work or passion for this issue. Fuck that.

After I started understanding the landscape and the movement, I figured out where I could plug in and help out.

DURING ALL OF THIS, WAS YOUR FAMILY SUPPORTIVE OF YOUR CAREER CHOICE?

My mom is more of an activist spirit. So, while I think she was concerned, she wanted to support my passion. My Dad, on the other hand, was not thrilled in any way, shape or form. I think he was kind of embarrassed because back then weed was not cool. There was a stereotype and stigma and all of that surrounding it. So, he would tell people I was "a lobbyist on K Street." For the most part, my friends and family were like, "why don't you work on a real issue?" and I would say, "This is a real issue. Why don't you go work for a cause you care about? This is what I care about. This touches so many pillars of our society. It's not just about cannabis; it's about so much more than that."

"I always thought that if somebody were actually listening, that the conversations would have to change their minds because there were just so many devastating phone calls of people caught up in the system, losing their jobs, losing their homes, losing their scholarships, losing their children."

I started building up NORML's social media presence. They didn't have a Facebook page or anything like that. It had only been a couple of years since Facebook opened up to the general public instead of only college students. I joined as a student and really appreciated the power of social media before a lot of the older people did. I worked on that a lot, really building it up. I knew it was going to be a great tool to find like-minded supporters all over the world. And it worked.

My parents seemed to come around when a close family member got caught up with law enforcement and a drug charge. He had the book thrown at him and it really shook up both my parents. Having to go through that experience I think made them appreciate my work a little bit more. Yeah, they came around. I mean, now, they're super stoked to tell people about it.

HAVE YOU ALWAYS BEEN OPEN ABOUT YOUR ADVOCACY FOR CANNABIS, OR EVEN YOUR CONSUMPTION?

Yes, absolutely. My first week at NORML we had a staff meeting, and the founder of NORML, Keith Stroup, who is still there as legal counsel, said in no uncertain terms, “We are cannabis consumers and we are proud of it.” I found my tribe. “Copy that, Keith.”

There was a real fear of law enforcement issues because I lived in Virginia and NORML had, back in the day, a huge FBI record. There was a lot of surveillance on them long before my time. I always thought that if somebody were actually listening, that the conversations would have to change their minds because there were just so many devastating phone calls of people caught up in the system, losing their jobs, losing their homes, losing their scholarships, losing their children. One of the stories that stood out to me the most is about a woman from Oregon who called in tears because her husband, who was a medical marijuana patient, was denied a liver transplant because he tested positive for cannabis. He was about to die, and she’s calling, crying, not knowing what to do. She was completely devastated. It was so painful. I was 23 years old. I didn’t know what to do or how to help in any substantial way. I connected her with some lawyers that were hopefully able to help but I mean, back then even Oregon had prohibitionist policies.

I think that story really exemplifies the emotional roller coaster that comes with being a drug reform activist. There are millions of tragic stories just like this and I’ll take any opportunity to speak out about it.

HOW DID YOU START THE NORML WOMEN’S ALLIANCE?

That spawned out of an article that I read in Marie Claire in 2009 called, “Stiletto Stoners.” It got a little bit of coverage. The writer went on a couple of morning shows. It was about mainstream, professional women who preferred to unwind with cannabis rather than a drink. Of course, the women were all anonymous in the story.

At that point, it literally had not even occurred to me that, A: I was the only woman in the office and, B: that there was such a lack of women in the movement.

I became really inspired by that article and ended up writing a blog post for NORML called, “Because Women Are NORML Too.” It was about how women really needed to step up and speak out against prohibition because women are a very powerful constituency that can change the world when we come together.

That blog got an unprecedented number of enthusiastic responses from women. We were just like, “Whoa, we’ve stumbled onto something here. These women are thirsty for something like this.” After some discussion, I was put in charge of launching the NORML Women’s Alliance.

I created a website and central hub with lots of information. Organizationally, it mirrored chapters that were similar to NORML chapters but geared toward women. NORML chapters were extremely male-dominated back then and some of these women wouldn’t show up to meetings or conferences just because they weren’t comfortable and didn’t know if there were going to be any other women.



Back then if you Googled “women” and “cannabis” or “women” and “marijuana” all you got was boobs and buds and bong girls. There were no depictions of normal women consuming cannabis. So, I created these five pillars and one of the pillars was to address the hyper-sexualization of female cannabis consumers. In 2010, one of the first things I did was organize a photo shoot in support of Proposition 19 (note: Prop 19 was a statewide ballot measure in California in 2010 to legalize adult-use cannabis). A couple of women warrior activists and I all got together in Brooklyn and spent all day with a volunteer photographer, volunteer makeup, haircare, and fashion artists. We pulled in a lot of different people that cared enough about the cause to volunteer their time and did an Annie Leibovitz-style photo shoot.

The headline on our release said, NORML Women Campaign for Cannabis in High Style. It was the first time that there was a widespread image of classy, successful women supporting legalization. It got picked up all over. It was in the London Times. It was on ABC, NBC, BBC, Salon—it was big.

WHAT WAS THE WORK THAT YOU DID WHILE YOU WERE IN COLORADO?

In 2014 I went out to open the National NORML office in Colorado. I created the NORML Business Network to encourage corporate social responsibility within the cannabis industry.

WHAT DOES CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY MEAN IN THE CANNABIS INDUSTRY?

I think it means the same thing it means in every other industry. This being a new one, standards are still evolving, so I think the cannabis industry has the best chance of institutionalizing corporate social goals. The triple bottom line. That means treating your employees well, being environmentally conscious, and giving back to your community. Just being engaged with nonprofits and issues that are impacting the community where the business exists. In the cannabis industry, it means being involved in law reform efforts and supporting organizations that are spearheading the fight to end prohibition.

WHAT ARE SOME COMPANIES RIGHT NOW THAT STAND OUT TO YOU THAT ARE RAISING THE BAR IN REGARDS TO CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY WITHIN THE CANNABIS INDUSTRY?

Berkeley Patients Group (BPG) is a great example of that and was what made me choose to come here to the Bay Area. They are big supporters of CANORML, they helped found Americans for Safe Access and have been longtime contributors to the community and area nonprofits, such as The Berkeley Youth Alternative, the Alameda County Food and Housing Project, and the Women's Cancer Resource Center, to name a few.

Another one that I would say I've really been impressed by is Bloom Farms. For every vape pen that's sold, Bloom Farms provides a free meal to a homeless person.

Flow Kana is another great example. They're amazing, and they really embody that whole philosophy. They have hired a lot of people who've come from different organizations in the activist world. Along with giving back to the community, they are also energy conscious, food conscious, and fierce supporters of small farmers. I also really like Kikoko, Meadow and The Apothecarium!

“Lawmakers are not cannabis experts, but they really do need to be more educated on the impact certain policies have on the industry; how to address the illicit market, the taxes, the consumer education.”

WHAT EXACTLY IS YOUR ROLE WITHIN BERKELEY PATIENTS GROUP, AND HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN THERE?

I am Director of Government Affairs which means I track and engage on policy developments. Sometimes, I refer to myself as the “in-house activist.” I've been there for four and a half years.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES YOU'RE FACING TODAY WITHIN THE INDUSTRY, OR WITHIN YOUR ROLE AT BPG?

Well, you know, things are still evolving on the legislative and regulatory level, both locally and statewide. Where there used to be just a bunch of us unified against the feds and saying, “stop arresting us,” as this industry continues to grow, it's becoming more of a factioned rat race. There are different interests coming in from all over. There's more noise, and trying to break through that noise is increasingly challenging because laws and interests are so nuanced. Lawmakers are not cannabis experts, but they really do need to be more educated on the impact certain policies have on the industry; how to address the illicit market, the taxes, the consumer education. I think those three things are the biggest challenges to California's cannabis industry. It's been challenging getting the people at the top levels of government to appreciate the economic and enforcement adjustments needed to make this industry work.

DO YOU FEEL LIKE PROGRESS IS BEING MADE?

Yes, definitely. I mean, we've been fighting for marijuana legalization for forever. I just have a perspective of, having been in this for 11 years at this point, that this takes time. Marijuana has been illegal for 80 plus years. This isn't going to get solved overnight. There have been some successes. We got the tax lowered in the city of Berkeley. There is a bill moving through again this year on the state level to lower some of the state taxes. It got vetoed by the old governor last year, but hopefully, it'll make it through again and get signed. It's not a huge amount, but it'll help. [The bill died after this interview took place]

I think some of the local jurisdictions are approaching the enforcement against the illicit market in a very unique way. Nobody wants to go back to the days of raids and smash and grabs, nor should we. That's not how our country should work.

Places like LA and a couple of cities in Orange County are getting quite creative by cutting off the electricity and the water to illegal storefronts and bolting their doors shut—kind of going at it from a civil enforcement angle. I think it's hard for consumers because there aren't too many ways to identify licensed businesses from unlicensed businesses online. That actually happened to my mom. She didn't tell me that she was looking for a product and found a place that was listed online in Vista, California where they sold her a 300-milligram chocolate bar. She told me after the fact, to which I then informed her that Vista did not have any licensed operating dispensaries. And so, I thought, "If this is happening to my mom, this has to be happening to so many people across the state." What's worse, is that she was 100% sure that she went to a legal store. There is this consumer information aspect that's lacking but the Bureau of Cannabis Control is unrolling a large consumer education campaign. I'm looking forward to that.

ARE THERE ANY CURRENT REGULATIONS AND LAWS THAT STICK OUT TO YOU THAT YOU WOULD WANT TO CHANGE RIGHT NOW?

California is the only state that has multiple agencies regulating one cannabis supply chain. That makes it really difficult for everyone to navigate. When one agency does something that slows down its part of the supply chain or creates conflicting regulations, it affects the rest of us. It's probably too late, but I would put the whole supply chain under one regulatory body.

I would lower the excise tax and cap it at the local level. Right now it's 15% excise tax plus a cultivation tax by weight. You have both of those taxes, but then you've got local jurisdictions with their own taxes. So it really compounds, heavily.

Maybe there should be a little bit less focus on local control and more on local incentives. There's been a lack of local jurisdictions licensing retailers, which, in combination with the high taxes, has really hindered the legal market. People don't have anywhere to go except for the illicit operators if there's no dispensary.

"If this is happening to my mom, this has to be happening to so many people across the state."

I think in the future, I would like to see, the potency caps on edibles to increase for medical patients. Not necessarily

for adult use customers. I understand that. Especially as new people are just getting introduced to these products. But I do think that patients needing higher amounts should be able to access higher doses of cannabis in edibles for their condition without having to pay an excessive amount of money.

DO YOU SEE CANNABIS EVER BEING AFFORDABLE FOR PATIENTS AND FOR CONSUMERS? WHAT IS THE SOLUTION FOR THAT?

I think that if you look at all the other states that have gone through some variation of this process, a lot of them started pretty expensive, and as the market settled, prices eventually went down. But again, everything isn't going to happen overnight.

We're trying to get a bill passed that will allow dispensaries to provide donated cannabis to certain patients. Right now if you have this special, state-issued card you are exempt from your sales tax and are allowed to receive free cannabis. But getting that card can be both challenging and expensive. You have to pay money for a doctor's recommendation, then you have to make an appointment to go down to the local health department, which apparently has a long backlog. This bill, if it passed, would open it to everybody that is a patient, with just a doctor's recommendation.

The governor vetoed it last year, so we're just trying again with the new governor. I think if that passes, it's going to be really crucial for patient access.

DO YOU BELIEVE THAT FEDERAL LEGALIZATION IS GOING TO BE GOOD FOR THE INDUSTRY AS IT STANDS?

It depends on how it's legalized. There are a lot of nuances in that aspect. There are several bills right now, at the federal level, that address different areas of reform. There's an ongoing debate of, "Which one is going to be the most effective? Or, what is the most immediate and for whom?" These questions extend beyond just allowing businesses legal ways to make and move money.

Banking is important and it's critical to the security of the industry. However, there's also the social justice aspect of it and the equity aspect of it. Making the market available to people that may not traditionally be able to get the kind of resources that they would need to be successful. I think it's more about how it's legalized and that it's done right.

WHAT DO YOU THINK THE BIGGEST ROADBLOCKS FOR FEDERAL LEGALIZATION IS?

Despite the fact that there's more public support for legalization than any politician, I think it's not necessarily a huge priority in D.C. in comparison to immigration, healthcare, and trade. There are a lot of issues going on in D.C. right now and I just don't think cannabis is really the priority. It probably ranks #15 or #20 of all the major issues. There are also a lot of special interests that don't want to see this happen, and they're pretty powerful. I call it the "prohibition industrial complex," made up of big pharma, drug testing companies, and private prisons. Another roadblock would be the institutional, old guard politicians, mainly Republicans who still view it as a moral issue. In places like California, it's open and accepted and it just seems like, "Why isn't it just legal on a federal level?" But there are lots of places where they're barely legalizing hemp CBD. It's just a long way to go on that level and building the momentum is a long term game.

There is also a lot of skepticism around the intentions of some of the industry groups that are now starting to lobby pretty hard. A lot of the new firms that have been hired by the big companies don't necessarily have a cannabis background. They come from traditional industries. Cannabis policy is a more dynamic conversation because people are interested in it for different reasons. I always say, "What is your political philosophy and I'll tell you why you should support legalization," because it really does touch everything. You've got states' rights, social justice, health, economics—all of that stuff. There's a reason for everybody, but I think it's hard for people to thread that needle and see through all the noise of the other issues that are going on in Washington right now.

Again, this has been a decades-long process. Some people that are newer to the cannabis space maybe don't understand the full context quite as well as they should. There are groups out there that have been around forever, have those relationships with Hill staffers and are making a real impact.

Criminal justice and social justice are really hot topics right now, everywhere. So I think that approaching this issue from that standpoint will make some more headway. There have been a couple of bills that have gotten hearings in committees, which is amazing. There really hasn't been anything like this, ever. We're getting there.

WITH BIG BUSINESS CREEPING INTO THE CANNABIS SPACE, HOW DO YOU THINK WE CAN PRESERVE QUALITY AND INTEGRITY AS MORE CAPITAL IS COMING IN?

I would say that being well capitalized and doing well are not mutually exclusive. You can be both. It's my hope that these companies embody that philosophy and pursue those goals. If you look at Virgin, Richard Branson's model, he's a billionaire, but he's known for doing an unbelievable amount of work on environmentalism, on criminal justice, on all sorts of things. They can go hand in hand. In fact, I think they should go hand in hand because that's really what makes the business stand out.

People want to support businesses they know are doing good and that believe in those issues. Encouraging that on all levels of businesses, from the "mom and pop shop" to publicly traded, international corporations is something that everybody can do a little bit, or a lot—depending on where you are.

I think that there's a bit of a stigma or wariness around big business and big corporations coming in. Some of them are probably based on certain associations and partnerships, but I would really like to emphasize that every company is not like that. There are people that do want to do good and not just so they can have it in their press release—they care and they really want to have a positive impact on society. I try to push that message as much as possible because we can still make that a norm and really set the standard for how corporate America should be doing business.

WHEN DO YOU THINK CANNABIS WILL BE ABLE TO BE SOLD AT LARGER EVENTS, LIKE MUSIC FESTIVALS?

It depends on a couple of things. In California, you can have an event anywhere if there's local authorization and you meet all of the Bureau of Cannabis Control's criteria, and, in turn, an event license. It also depends on the comfort level of the festival owners and the insurance company. Whether they want to take that risk. A lot of them have sponsors and liquor licenses and things like that, so I think that there are certain concerns surrounding other licenses. But if you look at the Emerald Cup, they are a mix of all that. They had a festival, they had shows, there was music—all of it. So, it can be done. There are a lot of considerations such as cost and compliance, not to mention the comfort level of the festival and property owners and especially the underwriters. I wouldn't be surprised if there was something in 2020, honestly.

HOW CAN WE AS CIVILIANS ADVOCATE MORE, AND IS THERE A BETTER WAY FOR US TO DO IT AND TO BE HEARD?

You should be engaged in the democratic process. Voting and knowing what candidates support your issue, and the ones that don't is critical all the way down to local races. Education is key. I would say that the first thing you can do besides joining organizations that are advocating for the issues you care about is just talking to your loved ones about it because that is more effective than anything.

If you're in a place that has a ban on licensing or commercial activity then you can get involved by going to your council meetings, having meetings with council members, and get other community groups involved. This is what it is all about. Regardless of what you want to do or what you're looking for, I would say, find your tribe. Find other people that are passionate about the same issues. Coalition building is one of the most effective ways to create change. We are much stronger in numbers. 🌱

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE BERKELEY PATIENTS GROUP AT MYBPG.COM

Most of the people reading this will know what many other Americans are surprised to find out—that cannabis remains a federally illegal, Drug Enforcement Agency Schedule I controlled substance. With the proliferation of state-legal cannabis, many people don't understand that cannabis use, possession, selling and growing is still a federal crime that can land buyers and sellers in jail. Even licensed cannabis business owners can still have their homes, businesses and bank accounts seized.

Financial institutions that allow cannabis businesses to hold accounts face similar risks. They can be charged with money laundering and could have assets seized, an impossible chance to take if you are a bank. The very few financial institutions accepting cannabis accounts are complying with an extraordinarily high level of oversight (and passing on exorbitant fees as a result), are not knowingly banking with a cannabis company or have turned a blind eye to the account holder's business. Always the uncertainty looms that the account will be shut down with little to no notice and the cannabis business will have to resume cash operations.

The lack of access to banking is not just about the inconveniences of duffel bags filled with cash and cash accounting. Banking prohibitions pose significant public policy issues. Start with the higher risk that businesses will be the target of crime for their cash on hand or cash in transit. A high cash environment can encourage companies themselves to behave like criminals. For example—some companies create elaborate corporate structures to enable access to financial institutions, others struggle to track sales and then their tax assessments fall short, still, some pay workers “under the table,” and business-to-business relations can become strained when there is no record of cash transactions.

The negative effects radiate throughout communities. Governments lose the transparency and tax revenues they so desperately want in a regulated cannabis environment. Businesses themselves can't easily re-invest for growth, not to mention it is difficult to get investment dollars when there is no bank in which to place the funds. As a result, critical infrastructure for safe production and testing is hard to fund. Landlords, non-cannabis service workers (think plumbers, electricians, and builders), utility companies, and employees suffer in a cash-only system.

The SAFE Banking Act: 2019's Triumph and Disappointment

BY ELIZABETH CONWAY

The current US Congress is trying to alleviate this significant issue. Representative Ed Perlmutter (D-CO) has tried for several years to pass a federal bill that would allow banking for cannabis businesses regardless of their status on the DEA Schedule if the businesses operate in a state-legal cannabis program. This year HR 1595, the Secure and Fair Enforcement Banking Act of 2019, or the SAFE Banking Act has a chance of passing. Not only does SAFE have a parallel bill in the Senate sponsored by Senators Jeff Merkley (D-OR) and Cory Gardner (R-CO), but sponsors have been negotiating to court GOP votes by adding language that includes hemp and considering a partial rollback of an Obama Justice Department program that impacts some gun sellers and pay-day loan businesses. SAFE also has support from 38 state Attorneys General, 19 state Governors, large banking and treasury organizations, and Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin. The Congressional Budget Office also found US budget favorability for the move. SAFE should be on the House floor by the end of June. If passed it would pass to a Senate that has expressed a lot of support, particularly if the bill contains language to ensure hemp businesses can use financial institutions.

So where is the disappointment? Cannabis should be regulated and legal at the federal level, and I am disheartened that we care less about continued mass incarceration and the lack of study of an herb that shows so much promise, and more about giving financiers a massive loophole for themselves on this issue. Once passed, chances are many business owners may get comfortable and lose their impetus for fighting for full legalization.

I want to remember that the powerful world of Capital Hill financiers and their lobbyists (and even our federal budget if the CBO is right) stand to make collective billions when these deposits hit the system. So let's be clear, legalized banking for cannabis businesses is not

enough. A banking solution without full legalization soon thereafter easily widens the racism and unacceptable social injustice that allows businesses founded by white entrepreneurs to earn millions off an illegal industry while their black and brown counterparts go to jail for the same transactions. In short, I fear the ability to bank our money will be a sedative to the movement.

Do I support SAFE? Thus far yes, despite the risk that many may slow their activism. Will I support it if it is heavily compromised? I want to see the language, but I am likely to say “no.” Why would a movement that has a healing herb at its heart make this deal with the devil under the moniker SAFE? Any way we slice it, lives are at stake. I am anxious to have a Congress that delivers banking and legalized adult cannabis use for more than just moneyed interests, but because they care that over $\frac{2}{3}$ of voters and 11 states have fully legalized cannabis use for all adults. 🍊



Elizabeth (Liz) Conway is the Director of Operations for Surterra Wellness. The views expressed in this article are her own. With a background in public policy, operations and technology she began work for national and international cannabis companies almost 6 years ago. A natural coalition builder, she brings a balanced perspective to how emerging businesses can grow even in volatile regulatory environments. Working from a California base, she had lead cannabis growth strategy in 12 states, Canada and Europe in areas including compliance, access, licensing, community relationships, and communications with public and private stakeholders. She is viewed by government officials as an expert in best practices for law enforcement, local ordinances, state law and regulation. Liz has a BA in Political Science and a JD, both from Tulane University.

MEET AH WARNER

FOUNDER & CEO OF CANNABIS BASICS
CO-AUTHOR & CHIEF ORCHESTRATOR OF THE CHABA LAW
PHOTOGRAPHY BY KETI CHIKHLADZE



It's a profound piece of legislation that almost no one knows about. Ah Warner, Founder and CEO of Cannabis Basics has been selling full spectrum cannabinoid products at local retailers all over Washington State since 2016—two years prior to the passage of the 2018 Farm Bill that de-scheduled hemp CBD as a controlled substance. So how did she co-author and orchestrate the 2016 CHABA law, successfully removing Cannabis Health and Beauty Aids (CHABA) from the Washington Controlled Substances Act, allowing them to be sold on the mainstream marketplace?

HOW DID YOU GET STARTED IN CANNABIS AND CANNABIS TOPICALS?

I was pregnant with my daughter Darienne in 1994 and I walked into the Fremont Hemp Company, a brand new store in Fremont Washington and my mind was blown. I knew what marijuana was, but I had no idea what industrial hemp was. There were hemp fabrics and clothing, stationery, candles, body care products and so much more. The most important find that day was Jack Herer's book *The Emperor Wears No Clothes*. That book literally changed everything—life has not been the same since. That year I gave birth to my beautiful daughter, Darienne and my company, Cannabis Creations.

In the beginning, I produced eight different lines of products, clothing, hand-dyed yarns, candles hand-painted pillows, but eventually chose to focus on hemp body care. Somehow I knew topical cannabis applications would have a significant place in the future cannabis marketplace. I made hemp body care products from 1994 well into the 2000s with some national success. In 2012, I added cannabinoids to my already award-winning formulas and produced cannabis topicals for a very unregulated medical marijuana marketplace with over 125 medical marijuana dispensaries carrying the line.

YOU WERE PREGNANT AT THE TIME, DID YOU USE TOPICALS? WHAT DID YOU FIND BENEFICIAL FOR YOU?

One of the first products that I designed was to help with my baby's diaper rash. Cannabis is antibacterial, antifungal and hempseed oil is the perfect oil for skincare. It is rich in omega-6 and omega-3 in the perfect balance for human optimum cellular performance. The goal was to make a basic salve with hemp seed oil that would not only work on diaper rash but would also nourish and protect her skin.

FOUR YEARS AGO YOU LEGALLY DEFINED THE TERM CANNABIS HEALTH AND BEAUTY AIDS (CHABA)—WHAT ARE THEY?

CHABA refers to topical applications enriched with cannabinoids and terpenoids from the marijuana plant, containing less than 0.3% THC—so less than 85 milligrams of activated THC in a one-ounce finished product (so they are non-intoxicating). While these types of topicals application existed throughout history, they have now been legally defined.

CBD-only products are specifically not CHABA. CBD-only products are hemp products. CHABA is specifically about the level of THC in a topical formulation.

HOW WERE YOU ABLE TO GET THC TOPICALS IN THE MAINSTREAM MARKETPLACE?

When Washington's adult use initiative, 502, passed, it was stated in the language of the law, authored by Alison Holcomb, products to be sold in the new 502 retail stores (cannabis dispensaries) must have above 0.3% THC. Because my products did not meet that threshold, My lower-level THC company suddenly had no clear pathway to move forward into a regulated system. Since it became clear this would leave patients without access to many helpful products, I needed to create an avenue to get my products in regular stores.

With the promise of an uncertain future, I was able to get a meeting with my 36 legislative district Senator, Jeanne Kohl-Welles. Senator Kohl-Welles happened to be our medical marijuana champion here in Washington state and one of the main reasons why we had medical marijuana in the first place.

As luck would have it, I was her constituent and knew she was a cannabis ally. I shared my products with her and explained my dilemma. She figured we could find a solution in a legislative fix. So I set to work with a political analyst, lobbyist, activist, Kari Boiter, and we wrote language taking advice from a cannabis lawyer Doug Hyatt, who is very familiar with the Controlled Substances Act (CSA). He suggested that we word it

**“I took my
14-year-old son
out of school for
the biggest civic
lesson of his life.”**

—Ah Warner

so that we were defining it and removing it out of the CSA, insisting on language that clearly stated CHABA “could not be regulated and penalized like marijuana.”

Initially, legislators removed the word ‘health’ out of Cannabis Health and Beauty Aids, but I was successful in having the word put back in. It is true some of these products are for beauty but overwhelmingly, these products have health benefits, even though we cannot yet make claims. On Jan 22nd, 2015, we introduced sister bills, in both the House and the Senate. Each bill had bipartisan primary and secondary sponsorship, which was a small miracle considering the climate and divisiveness around anything cannabis.

The next step was good old fashioned, boots on the ground, lobbying. Besides testifying in all the appropriate committee hearings, I took my 14-year-old son out of school for the biggest civic lesson of his life. We took our two top products, a brochure and a fact sheet explaining our goals, why these products were so unthreatening and why they should be available everywhere.

It was our goal to visit every single office in Olympia. We had gotten about a third way through our lobbying efforts when state patrol and campus security stopped us. They were very polite, but said, “We believe that you are dispersing marijuana and you cannot continue.” I disagreed and suggested we needed to get these products in the hands of the people that were going to make decisions on the CHABA legislation. He told us we could give out brochures but couldn't give the product out. I let them know I would reach out to the Senator, who would reach out to the lawyer and hopefully we can come back down.

And so we did just that. The Senate lawyer confirmed that we were not handing out marijuana, and we were able to go back 48 hours later and finish our action. We got our CHABA products in the office of every single Representative, Senator, the Lieutenant Governor, and the Governor. I truly believe it was because we put the products directly

in their hands and they were able to see that it was clearly unthreatening and the CHABA legislation would be easy to get behind.

In the end, our stand-alone house bill was added to a tax fixer addressing many other 502 issues that would be passed, signed by Governor Inslee on June 30th and in acted on July 1st, 2015. BOOM! We did it! Just six months from introduction to inaction. The timing was right, we did everything right and we got really lucky.

➤ Ah is the Founder and CEO of Hemp Basics, nationally and internationally, and CHABA Cannabis Basics for the mainstream marketplace available in Washington state.

WHAT IS AN ADVANTAGE TO SELLING TO THE MAINSTREAM MARKETPLACE IN WASHINGTON STATE AS OPPOSED TO THE REGULATED 502 ADULT-USE MARIJUANA STORES?

There are a few advantages to being in the mainstream marketplace as opposed to the regulated 502 stores.

One advantage is not being regulated by the LCB (Washington State Liquor & Cannabis Board). The LCB had never regulated marijuana before so it's been far from smooth. With CHABA, I was able to avoid many of the headaches and ever-changing landscape of the regulated 502 system.

The second advantage is that in the mainstream marketplace, my products are taxed the same as any other product like Aloe Vera or Arnica. We have roughly a 10% sales tax here in Washington state as opposed to 502 (cannabis dispensaries) where topicals still accrue around 36-37% tax.

Why should patients, people that need these topicals for aches and pains, be charged a sin tax on topicals?

The last great thing about being in the mainstream as opposed to the regulated marketplace is that my company Cannabis Basics got the first mainstream distribution deal in the country. Crown Pacific Fine Foods, here in Washington state, began to carry my products. I was then able to tap into a system that was already dialed-in. I finally was just another one of their many vendors. We are now sold in natural health stores, independent grocery stores, and specialty boutiques.



She is also the Founder of both *Women of Weed*®, the private social club established in 2013 and *Women of Weed Gives*™, it's revenue generator raising money to benefit non-profits owned and run by women in cannabis





WHAT DOES THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE FOR CHABA?

Our next big legislative push will be to get CHABA removed from the federal Controlled Substances Act. I think we are a few years off yet and need a little bit more movement on marijuana on the federal level.

I think about all the different industries that a little bit of THC and other cannabinoids will be added to. CHABA is just the beginning, mainstream brands are going to start putting cannabinoids in their products as soon as they can. Trust me, it's gonna happen.

In the meantime, my main objective is education. I do about thirteen mainstream festivals a year talking one-on-one to people who have never heard about CHABA, possibly never heard about a cannabis topical. CHABA is for every generation but Baby Boomers and athletes of every age, are going bonkers for CHABA because they can get relief for their chronic aches and pains and take care of their skin. The older generation loves talking to their friends about CHABA and cannabis topicals because they can, it's cool, they're a part of a movement and it works!

We also do education at senior centers and community centers through NORML Women of Washington. We educate seniors in Washington state about everything marijuana and cannabis, and 502 stores. We specifically talk about CHABA and their access to topicals that aren't going to get them high but could be very helpful for their quality of life.

TELL US MORE ABOUT ICHABAPA'S TRADE ORGANIZATION.

A few years ago, I reached out to everyone that I knew that was making CHABA defined products here in Washington state. Many of them my direct competitors, some are 502 producer-processors, some are only in the mainstream marketplace, some are both, and formed the International Cannabis Health and Beauty Aids Producers Alliance (ICHABAPA).

We come together to brainstorm and to talk about the difficulties in the different marketplaces and to share our challenges, triumphs and to share some sourcing information. When we come together we have better buying power. Really it's just a support group for people that make these types of products. Anyone can reach out to me and join this group. There are only two qualifications: First, you must produce at least one product that falls under the CHABA definition and second, your product has to already be in a marketplace. We welcome anybody to join us, we meet physically, but we also meet virtually for people that are out of state or country. 🌿

For more information about CHABA or to join ICHABAPA, email Ah at Ah@cannabisbasics.com



Cannabis THAT GIVES A **D**amn

NICOLE FOX, MPH RD
FOUNDER & CEO OF AEON BOTANIKA
INTERVIEW BY BETSY KABAKER
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JENNIFER SKOG

Nicole Fox, Founder, and CEO of Aeon Botanika, an LA-based cannabis wellness company, believes the cannabis industry has the potential to be a catalyst for social change. The only healthcare professional in California to have founded a retail cannabis operation, Nicole has spent the last 17 years in the cannabis industry. She co-founded two of LA's first medical dispensaries, The Green Goddess and The Higher Path, and was recently awarded an Adult Use and Onsite Consumption Lounge license (the first merit-based application process in the United States) for Aeon Botanika, her new cannabis wellness destination in West Hollywood.

Nicole's intention behind Aeon Botanika is to reclaim the traditional power of cannabis alongside other wellness practices and products to elevate health and happiness. Health coaches replace budtenders, and the shop includes an integrated wellness center, a superfoods cafe, and a Moroccan tea lounge where customers can enjoy cannabis in a restaurant-like setting.

Set up as a social impact business following the Conscious Capitalist¹ model, Aeon Botanika will partner with non-profit organizations to support causes that promote equity for women of color in cannabis and women's health in vulnerable communities in Los Angeles. Technology platform Pledging will track Aeon Botanika's social impact progress to provide customers, employees, community, suppliers and investors accountability in real time.

WHEN DO YOU PLAN TO LAUNCH YOUR RETAIL STORES, CANNABIS LOUNGE, AND PRODUCT LINE?

It's so exciting! We'll open two LA area retail locations in early 2020, and hopefully a third by 2021. Our flagship location in West Hollywood will open first, along with a second location near the Miracle Mile neighborhood shortly after. This November, we are opening our microbusiness in downtown LA where we will cultivate our house brand of specialty flower, and manufacture and distribute our health, fitness, and beauty-focused product line, Botanika.

The experience we are creating at Aeon Botanika brings together everything I know to be true about cannabis, wellness, and living a fully empowered life. You'll be able to get a cannabis-infused deep tissue massage session that will reorganize your fascia and get to the root of that nagging back pain, purchase our ethically sourced, craft cannabis and wellness products that you won't find at a typical dispensary, enjoy our delicious, nutrient-dense cafe offerings, and celebrate ritual and art in our Moroccan Tea Lounge and performance venue. Aeon Botanika brings together everything I love and believe about life and wellness.

AEON BOTANIKA PUTS ITSELF AT THAT CROSS-SECTION OF MEDICINAL AND ADULT USE ALL IN ONE SPACE, WHEREAS IN TRADITIONAL DISPENSARIES IT CAN BE HARD AS A MEDICAL PATIENT TO KNOW WHERE TO GO AND WHAT TO BUY. HOW WILL MEDICAL PATIENTS BE ABLE TO NAVIGATE YOUR DISPENSARY VERSUS WHAT EXISTS NOW?

This really gets to the heart of why I created Aeon Botanika. As a healthcare professional, I've been educating people about cannabis and wellness for my whole career, and I always wanted a place that I would feel comfortable sending my patients. As a dietitian with my own practice, people would ask me about cannabis and didn't even know that I was involved in it. I started thinking about what would serve people who were using cannabis for a health condition. That's where we came up with our concept of organizing the store by health goal. I hate the word health condition. It's so negative, right? Let's focus on the health goal—like better sleep, less pain, better digestion. All the products that support that person's health goal will be in one area. We're really giving tools and education by having classes around these different health goals, like our monthly wellness series, taught by healthcare professionals from our onsite wellness center. I think newer consumers, especially women and seniors, will appreciate hearing about cannabis from a health care professional, while also offering some other things to consider with their nutrition, sleep, and maybe even suggesting a meditation practice.

Our retail staff will not be budtenders. We're going to have certified health coaches that have wellness experience outside of cannabis, and we will train them in cannabis. They will have a basic understanding of the human body. They still can't dispense health advice or make health claims, but they will be able to help people whether they just want a mood lift or they're dealing with something more severe like Crohn's disease.



AS A PIONEER IN THIS INDUSTRY, YOU'VE FACED A LOT OF HIGHS AND LOWS AND VERY UNIQUE CHALLENGES. HOW HAVE YOU PUSHED THROUGH EVER-CHANGING OBSTACLES?

There has been a lot of waiting in California, as everyone knows. It's been an exercise in patience and really learning to surrender instead of resisting. I have a phrase I say to my ten-year-old son when times are rough, "This is just what's happening." During the wait last year, I spent a lot of time refining the vision for Aeon Botanika, and what internal culture I wanted to build and what and how we would engage with the nonprofit community. A lot of cannabis companies are focused on how much revenue they are going to make, what the logo looks like, and how they're going to raise money. What is really going to drive the brand is the soul of the company, the culture of the people who work there and the impact that the brand makes in the community.

Because our retail staff can't legally offer health advice, we solve for this with our onsite wellness center that is home to a functional medicine MD, acupuncturist, bodyworkers, and an integrative dietitian for people needing a more personalized cannabis wellness plan with exact dosage and product recommendations. A big difference with Aeon Botanika is our position as experts in cannabis and wellness. For example, we will not publish any articles without scientific references, and we will only publish articles from licensed healthcare providers. With our product offerings, we give preference to smaller brands focused on wellness with pure, ethically sourced materials and conscious cultures that align with our vision to reclaim cannabis as a powerful wellness botanical.

We are also very passionate about training our staff. In the cannabis industry nationally, employees of retail stores are only trained for an average of 16 hours (BDS Analytics, 2018). We give our staff 120 hours of training in the first 120 days and also pay them 40% more than the average dispensary in California. I believe in investing in my team, so they are invested in our brand and stay with us while we grow. Educated, invested employees will do a better job engaging our customers and helping them navigate towards better health and happiness. At the end of the day, that's what Aeon Botanika is here to do.



Delicious Protein Bars with 15g of collagen protein, full spectrum cannabinoids, microdosed THC and functional ingredients to optimize health



Tinctures with 27 trace minerals, herbs, nutraceuticals and full spectrum cannabinoids. Tinctures have 5mg per dose for managing PMS discomfort and promoting sleep.





Magnesium salts from rare Zechstein lake beds paired with medicinal herbs, cannabinoids, THC and essential oils.



HOW DO YOU FEEL THE BARRIERS TO ENTRY HAVE EVOLVED IN THE CANNABIS SPACE?

I'll tell you that it was so much easier 15 years ago. I started The Higher Path with a \$50,000 angel investment that my then boyfriend got from one of his massage clients at the time. We had been talking about our dream of opening a collective for a while, and one day this couple offered us the cash, interest-free, and told us, "We think you can totally do it." We rented a little 800 square foot former fish aquarium store near Sunset and Alvarado in Echo Park, and I put on gloves and scrubbed fish smell out of that place for a week! With the angel investment, we were able to pay rent for six months in advance, paint the walls, get a safe, hire some friends, gather our cultivator friends to join our collective, and we were up and running. There was no state or city licensing, other than the very broad language of SB420 and Prop 215 that allowed patients to join collectively and share medicine. There was barely even social media back then and you sure as hell were not going to put anything on the internet.

I sold my interest in both collectives in 2007. I wanted to focus on building my integrative dietician practice, study plant medicine, and have a baby. I grew my practice and did, in fact, have a baby. Cannabis kept her connection to me, even though I didn't have the collectives. I ended up falling in love and marrying one of my vendors, a talented craft cultivator for 20 years, both sun-grown and indoor.

In 2017, when the Aeon concept was born, it was a surreal experience for me to enter the highly regulated and competitive market and raise capital. Instead of \$50,000 to set up a collective, we paid \$100,000, just to throw our hat in the ring in West Hollywood's merit-based process. We're positioning ourselves as a leader in the cannabis wellness and conscious business space. We are building a beautifully appointed retail store, wellness center, cafe, and cannabis lounge and it takes an investment to do that right. If you would have told me in 2003 that I would be raising capital to open a dispensary, I would think you were crazy. The process of raising money has put me on one of the biggest learning curves of my life.

Where I see a lot of female entrepreneurs fall short is in raising enough money. Women tend to raise less money than they actually need, whereas male counterparts in similar industries will raise more than they need. It's like women are afraid to ask for too much. I got some great advice early on to make sure we had a year of runway: all the staff paid, the rent paid up, a cushion. It's a big jump from my first dispensary, financially. It's a lot more responsibility now. We aren't opening a collective; we are building a company. It took time to find the right investors that really believed in my social impact vision and my passion to position cannabis as a wellness product. The Aeon Botanika brand is about so much more than cannabis. It's about health, happiness, community and caring for all of our stakeholders. When my investors read my business plan for the first time, they called it "The Manifesto."

WHAT IS YOUR ADVICE FOR BUDDING CANNABIS ENTREPRENEURS?

I think it's important for all of us to realize that cannabis is not a "get rich quick" path like many people think it is. This is a long game. You have to pace yourself. We all got really excited in late 2017 in LA when the ballot measure legalizing adult use passed. I remember throwing a giant Christmas party for the Southern California Coalition, an LA-based trade association that I sit on the board of. We were SURE that 2018 was the year. Yet here we are in mid-2019, and regulations are still coming online. It's all about realizing that you do have time. I feel like there's this frenetic pace to the cannabis industry right now because everybody's grabbing market share.

It seems like people are running themselves ragged and once you burn out as a founder, you can't be creative, positive, and innovative to stay competitive. I've been an entrepreneur all of my life, and I have done the workaholic 80-hour a week burn out thing and it's just not worth it. You have to sleep, people! People ask me all the time, "How are you so energetic?" I tell them I sleep eight hours a night. I really do! It's my edge and it forces me to be ultra-productive during the day, so I am not up burning the midnight oil to "catch up." Do not sacrifice taking care of yourself while building your company, because that's a slippery slope. We build our companies and think we're going to be less busy when our brands take off. No, we're going to be busier. So you need to build in habits now of sleeping and drinking water, stretching, and doing some exercise. That's key.

WHAT GETS YOUR HEART POUNDING?

I love collaborating with other female-led cannabis brands that are wellness-centric. As the new legal market blossoms in California, it feels like this secret sisterhood is emerging and we are all conspiring for one another's success as "collaborative competitors." It reminds me that the cannabis culture I come from remains deeply communal, and despite our growing pains as we sail the ship toward a fully open market, this community is still there.

My heart starts pounding in a feisty activist way when I see a cannabis company that lacks diversity and seems to exclude everyone but older white men with capital and a profit motive. I also get frustrated when I meet new cannabis entrepreneurs with stars in their eyes about how much revenue they expect in the next quarter, but with no social responsibility program in place to direct at least a portion of that abundance to assist vulnerable populations in their community.

My passion around inspiring cannabis companies to be a force for good in the world led me to start Cannabis With Conscience, a newly forming non-profit platform and ecosystem focused on corporate social responsibility and the ethical production of cannabis products. Cannabis with Conscience will fully launch in the fall of this year. It is a network of professionals that can hold a new company's hand and make it simple to create social impact programs if they don't know where to start. It is also a network of retailers and brands who know that cannabis can be a catalyst for change and want to do business with one another. As we certify and grow the number of Cannabis with Conscience brands, brands can align with retailers who also operate ethically and care about social responsibility. If you are a brand that fits this ethos, we'd love to meet you. Our website, www.aeonbotanika.com has a place to sign up for more information about Cannabis with Conscience certification and network.

WHAT IS THE INSPIRATION BEHIND THE NAME AEON BOTANIKA?

In 2015, I was going through a challenging time leaving a health technology company I had co-founded. I had a powerful experience with a Tarot card reading and was relatively new to working with Tarot. In a moment of frustration, I asked the deck what I needed for my next move, and I drew the twentieth card in the deck, the Aeon card. I learned that this card is about taking control of your destiny and your karma. It's kind of a "take life by the horns and stop whining and step into the light" card.

I came home and Googled "Aeon" and discovered that it refers to the timeless life force that exists throughout all beings through all of time. Deep. It's essentially our life force. It hit me that this encapsulated what I was here to do—to help people elevate their own life force. We added Botanika to pay homage to the apothecaries of old. Aeon Botanika stores are modern, expert apothecaries, dedicated to the elevation of the life force for all of us; dedicated to our health and happiness. 🌱



JACKET / MAYA REYNOLDS @CLADEMAN
HAIR / AUDREY RAE @LAMUNYEKA @RA_LOFT
MAKEUP / KARLYE BUFF @KAR_BUFF @RA_LOFT
JEWELRY / LUCY SKRBKOVA @LINKAJEWELRY

AN INTERVIEW WITH

Mary Pryor

CO-FOUNDER OF CANNACLUSIVE
INTERVIEWED BY EVA GREEN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY NADIR PEARSON

Mary Pryor is a passionate advocate and shrewd media expert based in Los Angeles and New York. Mary is the co-founder of Cannacclusive along with Tonya Rapley-Flash and Charlese Antoinette.

TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF.

I grew up in Detroit, Michigan. Throughout my life, my mother dealt with horrible health issues including Multiple Sclerosis and Lupus. My father was a Vietnam Veteran who also had Type-I Diabetes and worked in the auto industry. I grew up with a lack of awareness around self-care and daily health practices. Seeing my mother go through flares of her diseases and witness severe health complications caused me to develop a hyper-awareness and I matured fast.

Because of my parents' health issues, they were unable to raise me so my grandmother was my caretaker growing up. My grandmother raised me to be a smart kid. She instilled in me the value of hard work and self-reliance. I was bullied as a young child but became resilient and learned to channel myself with artwork through painting and drawing. I was always intrinsically focused on being dynamic and intelligent. I grew up understanding the difference between middle and upper class living as a contrast to how I grew up and I eventually went to the University of Michigan for my bachelor's degree.


WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST EXPERIENCE WITH CANNABIS LIKE?

My first experience with cannabis was when I was fourteen years old at a party in high school and it was not a pleasant experience. At sixteen, I tried again by smoking and I really liked it. In college, I occasionally smoked every now and again at social events.

In the early 2000s, I lived in Los Angeles and worked in production. I chose to partake in cannabis as opposed to harder drugs that were growing in popularity in the city. Some members of my family struggled with opioid addiction and my understanding of drugs was skewed because of my experience in Detroit and the subsequent impact of the War on Drugs.

In 2013, I was diagnosed with Crohn's disease, a gastrointestinal auto-immune disorder. Most patients deal with constant inflammation, pain, discomfort along with a host of other related symptoms.

It is a horrible disorder and I wake up in pain every day. When I was originally diagnosed, the medicine doctors were prescribing me was really affecting my quality of life. Around 2014-15, I started to take cannabis medicine more seriously when I discovered that it helped with my symptoms and relieved my pain. I found myself flying to Colorado to get this medicine, particularly strains high in CBG, CBC, THC-V, and CBD. Cannabis helps me maintain my health and well being. Using cannabis as a medicine is a really big deal for me. If I didn't have access to this plant, I would be so miserable.



**“PROGRESSIVE CANNABIS
LEGISLATION LOOKS
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TO SHINE A LIGHT ON
THIS ISSUE AND FIGHT
FOR PROGRESSIVE
LEGISLATION.”**

—Mary Pryor

CAN YOU DESCRIBE WHAT “WELLNESS” MEANS TO YOU? DO YOU HAVE ANY RITUALS OR SELF-CARE PRACTICES?

Wellness means everything. It is a 360-degree process. From self-care to fitness to what one eats. I'm a plant-based eater and I work out everyday—twice if I am stressed out. I participate in daily meditations and have an active spiritual practice. My cannabis use is also part of my wellness routine. I don't agree with taking pharmaceutical medicine frivolously, but understand that sometimes it is necessary. My approach is to assess the risk profile of any medicine and understand them, as opposed to aggressive pharmaceutical medicines that may have potentially harmful side effects, holistic medicines are often lower. This includes plant-based nutrition and overall wellness routine. Some of my favorite strains are Harlequin, Durban Poison, White Widow, and Ringo's Gift.

WHAT DO YOU WISH PEOPLE UNDERSTOOD ABOUT CANNABIS?

There is truly a lack of quality educational resources about cannabis and we have a long way to go in teaching the general public.

Politicians tend to have the worst views on cannabis and that can be dangerous for our country. There is often a barrier to access cannabis knowledge or a lack of research because of draconian laws.

Racism and stigma often preclude decision making when it comes to understanding this plant and it can drive people to be ignorant. Often as you deal with a lot of ignorance in the cannabis space. Some assume that if you are a Black woman in cannabis that you are only interested in participating because “you just want to smoke weed.” Personally, I have had numerous experiences where my knowledge has been doubted or I was not taken seriously.

This is an indigenous plant for everyone. People like myself, who are melanated, given the stigma and issues that we deal with being criminalized and erased, deserve to be heard equally. The current laws are giving many a free pass to now sell cannabis at a large scale while there are still prisoners in jail for crimes associated with the criminalization of this drug. Those optics don't look great and we have the opportunity to change that as legalization spreads.

WHAT ARE YOU EXCITED ABOUT RIGHT NOW IN THE CANNABIS INDUSTRY?

This plant is amazing. It is now undoubtedly a part of our culture now all over the United States. The buzz is a flutter and we can't stop talking about it! Finally, there is an opportunity for cannabis to be taken more seriously. We are early enough in the legalization process where we can start to pay more attention to the overall conversation and make an impact on the social fabric of this country.

WHAT IS THE MISSION OF CANNACLUSIVE?

Cannaclusive knows inclusion is an issue in cannabis. Our part of the solution is being able to educate and provide insights to businesses and everyday people coming into this space as an educated consumer, business owner, or employee.

Cannaclusive was created to facilitate a fair representation of minority cannabis consumers. We were inspired by the growing opportunities yet disappointed by the diversity issues taking root in mainstream cannabis culture.

At Cannaclusive we celebrate the cultures of this thriving community through curated experiences, groundbreaking insights, thoughtful content and dynamic visuals. We make it easier for brands to communicate with diverse audiences and ensure that minority consumers are not an afterthought, but a valued ally in the fight for legalization and destigmatization.

Cannaclusive started off with our Stock Photo Project, which was the first stock photo series to show inclusivity in cannabis consumers. We are getting ready to launch our ancillary program online and we have a few other special projects we are releasing soon! We are continuing to provide education and support so we can get more people to understand and come in from the outside to support cannabis legalization.

CAN YOU EXPLAIN WHAT EQUITY DAY ONE IS?

The only way to see change is to hold our representatives accountable at the state and federal level. Adult recreational use cannabis legislation is right around the corner. This will be an important moment for those people who have been gravely impacted by the unjust war on drugs. Equity, reparative justice and rebuilding of communities should be at the core of any legislation that is passed. It is not enough to say opportunities will be created for primarily Black and Latinx communities that have been hit hardest by incarceration. We must see those changes in the form of incubators, job readiness programs, jobs with a livable wage, entrepreneurial opportunities, interest-free loans and grants and a substantial amount of proceeds from cannabis taxes going back to disenfranchised communities. We must demand equity from day one.

WHAT DOES PROGRESSIVE CANNABIS LEGISLATION LOOK LIKE?

Progressive cannabis legislation looks like a law that supports community reinvestment. This means programs, incubators, and job training to work within the cannabis industry. Not everyone needs to be a grower or dispensary owner, but there are a lot of jobs created by legalization including ancillary businesses.

Progressive cannabis legislation looks like releasing non-violent drug offenders for cannabis. You can't have large amounts of black and brown bodies behind bars, while cannabis businesses turn a profit. Progressive cannabis legislation includes the government opening up banking opportunities and including tax provisions for minorities whose businesses will make a tangible impact on the communities they benefit. Lack of capital is a big barrier for start ups—and often marginalized communities and women do not receive the proper support they need to start businesses and it is even more of an issue in cannabis.

Lastly, there needs to be support for the formerly incarcerated and those ravaged by the harms of the Drug War. Cannabis needs to be equitable for all and existing cannabis companies have a social responsibility to shine a light on this issue and fight for progressive legislation.

WHAT WOULD BE YOUR ADVICE TO OTHER WOMEN IN THE CANNABIS SPACE?

My number one advice would be to open up your circles. The world is not all black or all white. It is multicultural, with many ethnicities, genders, and orientations. If you look around at your community and you don't see diversity then in your friendship network, workplace, and everyday life then you don't live in the real world. Our global landscape is moving and changing constantly. This world is way bigger and more diverse than you could ever imagine. Inclusion starts with you!

If your daily life consists of being wrapped up in your own world then you are missing out on what the world really is! Make sure your networks are inclusive. At the end of the day, it will increase your understanding of others who may be different than you and that is so valuable. 🌱



Visit cannaclusive.com and @cannaclusive on Instagram to connect with Mary, Tonya & Charlese of Cannaclusive



FROM TECH TO CANNABIS

Jocelyn Sheltraw

MJ Lifestyle's Jennifer Skog spends an afternoon in San Francisco's Nob Hill, talking data, stigmas and new loves with Headset's Director of Regional Strategy, New Markets Jocelyn Sheltraw.



“I feel very fortunate for my time in tech because it taught me how to be nimble, adaptable and comfortable with unknowns.”

WHAT WERE YOU LIKE AS A YOUNG GIRL?

Structured, reserved, and creative would be accurate descriptors of my younger self. I've always been passionate about the activities I participate in, which growing up were music and art related. Not a whole lot has changed, really.

WHAT DID YOU DREAM OF BECOMING?

I didn't have any specific dreams or thoughts of what I would do for a career when I was younger, but I always knew that I would be a businesswoman. I remember being 11 years old and helping my Dad with a garage sale, and I just had this knack for people, sales and organization. Business, leadership and operational efficiency have always come naturally to me.

CAN YOU SHARE YOUR CANNABIS JOURNEY WITH US?

I've been in the cannabis industry for about a year now. I spent almost 10 years working in digital advertising and technology. My first job out of college was doing account management for a startup agency doing text message marketing. That was early 2009, a little over a year after the iPhone came out, and so I had this incredible experience getting to evolve with a new and emerging industry.

There are many parallels between tech and cannabis. I feel very fortunate for my time in tech because it taught me how to be nimble, adaptable and comfortable with unknowns. These skills have lent itself well to the cannabis industry and startup world. All this to say, I recognized in myself that I enjoyed working in high growth industries and acquiring new skill sets, and so what better next industry to join than cannabis.



HOW IS CANNABIS INVOLVED IN YOUR DAILY LIFE? HAVE YOU ALWAYS BEEN OPEN ABOUT YOUR CONSUMPTION & ADVOCACY?

Cannabis has been a part of my life in some capacity for the last 10 years. I've been pretty open about my consumption use, but since working in the industry I've felt more compelled to share my journey because I believe it will lead to de-stigmatization, which will lead to federal legalization, which will ultimately result in people getting safe access to the plant.

I use cannabis socially, spiritually and medically. I used to use cannabis every day, but over the last year, I started to realize that it took away from my being present and living consciously. Now I primarily use cannabis when I have anxiety and to amplify my various creative pursuits. I find cannabis helps me tap into a different creative state when playing music, doing photography, or going on long walks around San Francisco.

WHAT LED YOU TO PURSUE A CAREER IN CANNABIS? WHAT STEPS HAVE YOU TAKEN TO ACHIEVE YOUR CURRENT POSITION?

Cannabis attracted me because I believe in the power of the plant, and believe I can contribute my skill sets to the industry. I think I bring a diversified background and mindset—equal parts of corporate and creative. I don't know that there are any steps I've taken necessarily, other than taking the time to learn and be interested.



“I’ve never seen myself as a female in a male-dominated field, nor have I had any limiting beliefs as to what I could accomplish as a woman.”



COMING FROM THE TECH INDUSTRY, NOTABLY KNOWN FOR ALSO HAVING LITTLE DIVERSITY, WHAT HAS HELPED YOU BECOME A SUCCESSFUL FEMALE LEADER?

A strong sense of self. I've never seen myself as a female in a male-dominated field, nor have I had any limiting beliefs as to what I could accomplish as a woman. I have had plenty of experiences in which I was treated differently, not taken seriously, or felt like I had to prove myself compared to some male counterparts. I look at those experiences as a blessing because they helped me build grit and character.

I look forward to the day when as a society we no longer factor one's gender into the conversation. In order to get there, I recognize empowerment for women is part of the process toward equality, therefore, I'm happy to see when any groups ban together to share their beliefs.

YOU HAVE SUCH A PASSION FOR DATA, WHAT IS IT ABOUT DATA AND THE CANNABIS INDUSTRY THAT EXCITES YOU THE MOST?

I've developed a great passion for data working at Headset [an analytics service provider for the cannabis industry]. I enjoy data because it's as close to the truth that I can get. The more I want to find the truth, the more questions I must ask. That may seem conceptual, but it's a philosophy for how I live my life. I believe that the answers are all out there, it just requires curiosity to find them.

WHAT HAVE BEEN SOME OF THE MOST INTERESTING FINDINGS TO YOU?

Right now I'm fascinated by the speed in which consumption methods and consumer behaviors are changing. According to Headset data, when Washington and Colorado first legalized for recreational back in 2014 those states saw around 75% of sales going to flower. Now in 2019, we're seeing that flower in those markets makes up less than 45% of sales. So within a five year period, we're seeing a significant amount of new categories, products, brands and consumer profiles enter the market.

YOU ARE ALSO INVOLVED WITH OAKLAND'S SOCIAL EQUITY PROGRAM, CAN YOU TELL US MORE ABOUT THAT AND YOUR ROLE?

Through my work, at Headset, we've partnered with The Allyance, which is a group of like-minded companies that are sharing their resources and knowledge to help Oakland's equity applicants be successful.

Women and minorities have been disproportionately targeted for cannabis infractions, and have less access to capital and business resources that are required to be successful. I'm proud that Headset supports these initiatives, and my role is to educate applicants on cannabis sales and consumer trends so they can apply it to their strategies, as well as to help them understand emerging technologies like Headset and ways to think about data to make more informed business decisions.

WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR OTHER WOMEN LIKE YOURSELF THAT ARE WEARING MULTIPLE HATS AND WANT TO MAKE AN IMPACT ON THE CANNABIS INDUSTRY?

My advice for any man or woman wanting to make an impact on the industry is to be laser focused on your goals, execution strategy and follow through. The industry is booming with opportunity and it's easy to become distracted. Cannabis is in its infancy and we're starting to see thought leaders emerge. When I look at common personality traits that lead to the success of these leaders it generally comes down to authenticity, passion, and reliability.

WHAT DO YOU DO FOR FUN? LIVING IN SF, ANY SWEET LOCAL SPOTS YOU'D RECOMMEND TO YOUR BESTIES?

I love learning, and being creative, so a lot of my free time goes to honing my current passions, or taking classes to acquire new ones. Over the last year, I've taken drum, voice, guitar, improv, and photography classes. It's great meeting new people with similar interests too. Meeting likeminded people have been especially great for music - I spend a lot of time playing guitar and singing with other musician friends. I have this bluegrass/folk/country Americana vibe going on.



I relish in being home since I travel so much for work. I'm a homebody and love my neighborhood, so on weekends, you'll find me jamming at Huntington Park, working from Cup-A-Joe, getting a slice at Za, or having a beer at Zeki's. I love being part of the community in Nob Hill.

YOU MENTIONED WANTING TO NORMALIZE CANNABIS MORE, WHAT MOVES ARE YOU PERSONALLY MAKING TO ACHIEVE THIS?

The biggest step I've taken is simply talking about cannabis openly and honestly. I've been sharing more about my personal use, what I'm learning in the field while working with different dispensaries and brands, and the findings Headset publishes on sales and consumer trends.

A lot of people reach out after asking questions about cannabis, recommendations for trusted brands, how I use it, etc., and I love that. It's confirmation that people are feeling more comfortable. I'm going to start sharing more because I believe education is the key to federal legalization.

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR FAVORITE PRODUCTS?

I'm a purist, so I tend to be most into flower. I love feeling and smelling the bud and grinding, packing or rolling it. I'm not as much into the "experience-based" high, but rather, strain based. I've also been educating myself more in terpenes. I love trying different products and have a preference for sun-grown cultivators like Swami Select, Anderson Valley Reserve, or Willie's Reserve. I also really like the care that Caliva puts into their indoor flower. Cultivators are becoming so sophisticated and thoughtful. Product quality is maturing quickly.

Other than consumable product, I bought the BananaBro OTTO device. The device electronically grinds and packs prerolls. I got it at Hall of Flowers last year and think it's really fun and exciting to try new technology. There's so much to discover and learn!

"My advice for any man or woman wanting to make an impact on the industry is to be laser focused on your goals, execution strategy and follow through."



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— MJ LIFESTYLE EDITORIAL —

feeling

MYSELF



*Who are you when you
feel most like yourself?*



◀ KIKOKO HIGH TEA

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MODEL / RACHEL BUSSEY @KUSHYY_
MODEL / ARIANA CASANOVAS @ARIANAPAMELA
STYLING / DACY KOLSKY @DACYKOLSKY
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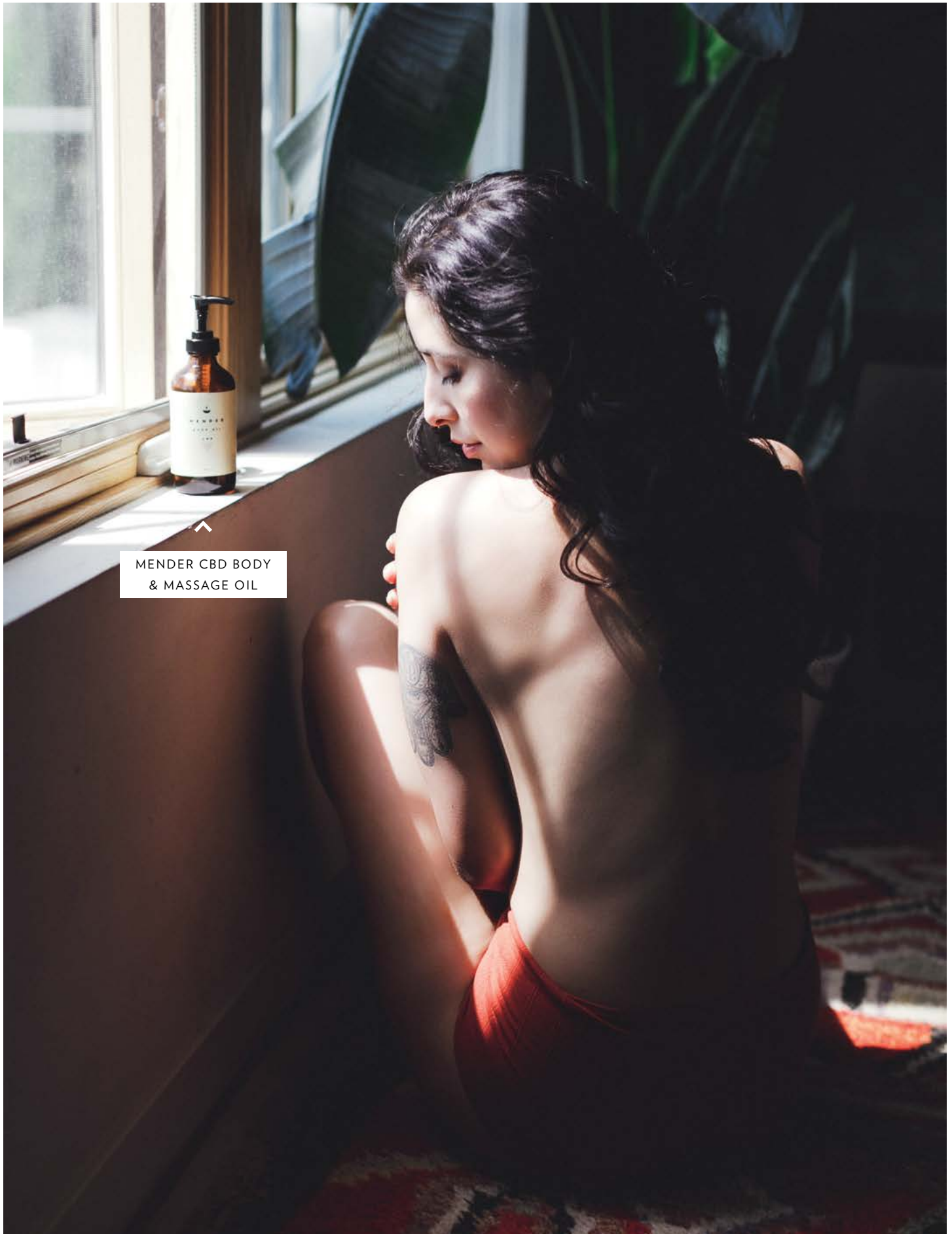


STONE ROAD
LUXURY JOINTS





HIGH SOCIETY
COLLECTION



^
MENDER CBD BODY
& MASSAGE OIL



ÄRDER BOTANICALS





< ÄRDER BOTANICALS

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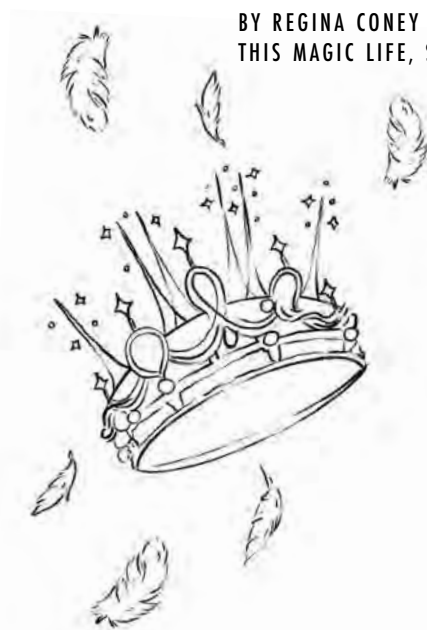
THE EMPRESS & THE EMBLEM OF VENUS

BY REGINA CONEY
THIS MAGIC LIFE, SF

Seeking refuge in the warmth of the summer sun, we look to Mother Earth, the creatrix of life to take us on a new adventure. The first half of 2019 has been taxing with Mercury retrograde in Pisces for the month of March and for the first part of April. Moving into July we find a new challenge in regards to money, government, corporation, and astro/biological systems. With sharp Saturn and Jupiter retrograde transits in Capricorn, ruling the 10th house of social status, structure, and foundations, we find old structures surrounding government, finances, career, and location begin to shift in a major way for the remainder of the year.

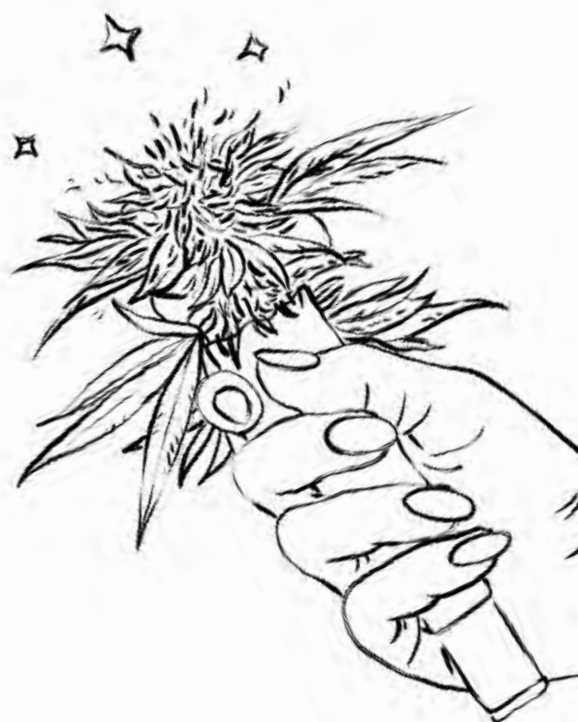
The most significant transit this season was on May 15th with big-bodied planet Uranus moving into Taurus then turning retrograde on August 11th. Uranus the Goddess of Change and Creative Chaos entered into the bulls sign relentlessly, stirring up unexpected change and forcing us out of our comfort zone. Uranus shifts, invents, innovates, rearranges and breaks open the foundation of our very lives bringing in exciting new beginnings. Here we will see the most impact in regards to political elections, government, big banks, corporations, biological research, the stock market, and astro/space program production.

As we enter the 200th galactic year moving into 2020, we will feel the inevitable breakdown of unsustainable systems, ideologies, and beliefs. Chiron “The Wounded Healer” also turns retrograde in Aries on July 8th. During this transit we may be called to appraise old hurts and reconnect with our sense of selves, connect with others and higher source. Chiron retrograde reawakens and triggers movement in stuck or blocked energies that feel painful or uncomfortable within our heart, mind, body, and soul. Use this transit to seek closure and forgiveness and release karmic ties that are no longer in alignment with our renewed sense of selves. This is an ideal transit to have full closure with the past and to allow The Wheel of Fortune to move into the next soul cycle with ease.



Moving into July and August the collective will witness the final fall of The 3rd Dimensional Empire. As the world witnessed the foreshadowing of the end of the 3rd dimension with the downfall of the Cathedral Notre-Dame de Paris amongst several other religious establishments—representing the portal for ancient soul archetypes to be freed into the next paradigm of a new soul cycle. We will begin to witness tower moments around the world that will pave the way to accommodate the Empress to her throne. Beginning on August 18th Mars, The Sun, The Moon, Mercury and Venus will align into the zodiac of Virgo representing The Great Awakening of Humanity and the arrival of sovereignty. The Empress has risen and fought a long hard battle to bring rebirth, justice, and reform to a fallen regime. The Empress represents Mother Earth (Gaia) who has seen and felt the pain within the lower vibrational state of the 3rd dimension. In August the collective will be reborn into 5th-dimensional consciousness and it is here we will begin to root into new consciousness through the supreme ethos of maternal contact.

Earth signs Capricorn, Taurus, and Virgo’s calling card this summer will be the Transformation card. Earth signs will be impacted by profound life changes this summer. Uranus enters into Taurus for the next 84 years, this will be the first and last time we will witness the transit of Uranus within our lifetime. We will begin to see exciting unexpected events arise on a personal and collective scale. Uranus is known for behavioral patterns that provoke unexpected shifts in finances, career, foundation, and perspective while in the sign of Taurus. As both Jupiter and Saturn transit retrograde in Capricorn simultaneously, earth signs will be called to uproot their grounded ways and reroot into the hydroponics of imminent change. When a hatchling is being born we understand not to interfere with the birthing process even though it looks painful and grilling. It’s said that if one assists a hatchling, the hatchling’s biology will be negatively impacted thus creating immunity defects, sickness, and in some cases death. The Transformation card prepares us for the shedding of old skin, rebirth, new life and flight. If we did not experience the harsh effects of the birthing process, we would not be biologically prepared for what’s next. Here we find ourselves more knowledgeable, resilient and prepared for the density of the 5th dimensional energies.





THE STARCHILD TAROT DECK BY DANIELLE NOEL



Earth signs are encouraged to seek advice and assistance from therapists, financial advisors, mentors, and friends at this time. Consider consolidating finances, tasks, career, and transportation methods, and put time aside to create an innovative financial plan and find new ways to store money and information. You are also encouraged to invest in insurance and financial programs to ensure protection and stability during this transit. Earth signs can find fun new ways to harness this energy through stone healing with Tigers Eye for protection and Malachite to help bring ease to physical and emotional transitions. Stay grounded through meditation and daily mantras, journaling, and nature immersion group, your friends by nature hike. Rest in a deep meditation and to the savage turn, and unfold

Fire signs Aries, Leo and Sagittarius will find themselves anxiously anticipating what's in store this summer. Whether it's exploring the islands of Hawaii, staying at your summer chateau in the Hamptons or spending your days floating on the river with friends. Fire signs will be amped up for summer and ready for some fiery excitement. On July 1st Mars enters Leo, enhancing Leo's self-confidence and leadership skills. Plan new innovative goals and take a leap of faith in a new daring direction. Sex drive is strong now and passions are high during this transit, perhaps surprise your partner with a new sex position or treat yourself to some explicit new lingerie and hang the do not disturb sign on the door. Fire signs will feel more spirited and lively during this time and excited for what's to come. This summer take the lead and plan a big adventure with a group of friends and make fun your ultimate goal. Bring balance to increased energies with some solo time with a good book, a cup of yummy CBD tea or enjoy a much-deserved yoga smoke sesh with a small group of trusted friends. Chiron also turns retrograde in Aries on July 8th and can bring us into connection with ourselves and others, encouraging us to clear all blockages to allow for the full liberation of the past.



Fire signs are encouraged to cultivate the energy of The Starseed card this summer. The Starseed card will assist us in transmuting fiery energies that can wreak havoc if the energies are not properly harnessed. The Starseed card will encourage fire signs to explore new outlets of expression and release the passion of the deep-rooted flame through alternative outlets. Passion projects you've been procrastinating on will now be assisted with action and movement with Mars present. Socializing, physical fitness, art, music, dance, exploring new forms of sex and intimacy, adventure and introducing fun innovative lifestyle changes is the alchemy of The Starseed card. Allow your fire energy to flow and create the supreme elemental state of "The Holy Fire." To reach apex energies include a top-notch MJ hybrid and apply the element of fire and burn the midnight oil. Celebrate your holy fire in true quintessential fire fashion and activate your divine uprise. Confidence is key.



Air signs Libra, Aquarius, and Gemini are called to the final forefront, assisting The Empress to her rightful heir. Air sighs will hold grave responsibility anchoring the new earth within The Age of Aquarius. The Age of Aquarius rose in the year 2009—now we are entering into the 10th year, the final closure of the numerical tarot. This summer we will witness The Age of Aquarius shift into a quantum leap of the new galactic year in 2020. On August 18th Mars, The Sun, The Moon, Mercury ruled by Gemini and Venus ruled by Libra will align into the zodiac of Virgo. The air will soften and the energies will lighten as the element of wind carries the weight of the fallen empire into dust. The Empress card will guide you forward during this time. The Empress is your deepest heart's desire, your truth in the pit of your root and your maternal calling to all those who suffer. Justice, empathy, and forgiveness will be restored to all of humanity in August on a cellular and astronomical scale. The Empress trusts in her key intuitive knowledge and never wavers, she understands and respects social cues and strives to make an impact in healing cycles of past requiems. Libra rules The Empress card and is sought out for lawful guidance and advice as she balances out the karmic scales. She represents the healing of mother, grandmother and children relationships through karmic cycles that trace back through eons of lifetimes.

Air signs are encouraged to stand in your soul womb to usher in the rebirth of humanity. During this time air signs should stand up for what you believe in and speak your truth! Public speaking, political opinion, community service, and programs to continue education will be in the cards for you. Take the lead and mark new family milestones and bring in new family traditions, whether it's planning an

annual family camping trip or investing in a timeshare. Honor family members who have passed in a group setting and offer and accept forgiveness to family members who may have burned bridges in the past. Marriage and love relationships will be highlighted at this time and you will find your partner more attracted to you with Venus, the planet of fertility present. Air signs will take more interest in creating healthier foundations for the next generation as we enter into the new age.

Embody the essence of The Empress and schedule a detox and implement a new daily routine to bring in clarity, balance, and self-love. Bring out the old textbooks and take a moment to write, study and recollect information to sharpen the mind. Update resumes, documents and contracts and integrate the practice of new breathing techniques to help realign pranic energies. Rose quartz and rhodonite stones will help assist with letting go of past pains and will allow your heart chakra to open to bring in love and acceptance. Meditate while enjoying a strain of Lambs Breath flower to consummate the Eucharist of The Empress. As the old tradition seemingly falls away, we are called to open up our heart space and allow profound new insights of love and life to move us, as we align into the immortal presence of The Empress and The Emblem of Venus.



This summer water signs Cancer, Pisces and Scorpio will begin to manifest the throne for The Empress to reclaim her empire. Water signs will be assisted with their element of water- learning to be more fluid and conscious of the changing tides. On May 18th, the Full Moon will rise in Scorpio marking the beginning of a new cycle. Scorpio's will feel the veil lift from over their eyes as truth is revealed. Scorpio's will push the etherium into total darkness with the last cycle of the moon to welcome The Sun. The Sun will enter Gemini on June 21st moving into Cancers 4th house ruling family, home, purpose and security. Emotions run deep during this time and we find ourselves feeling more profound emotions. Here we witness the beautiful opportunity to live and speak from our heart chakras to welcome truth, love, clarity and solace bringing us into a peak alignment of collective unity.

On July 2nd, there will be a New Moon Total Solar Eclipse in Cancer which will welcome The Empress to her throne to offer improvements and stability within our support systems, domestic life and family dynamics. In late July to August the collective will feel the softening of harsh energies after the jarring transits of Jupiter and Saturn retrograde in Capricorn. Here we will begin to feel the embrace of the maternal Empress rise to her throne in a monumental way. On June 21st, Neptune turns retrograde in Pisces allowing the fish to swim with the tide, maintaining the intuitive flow of the collective. As the final sign of the zodiac, Pisces will be the catalyst of cycling out the old and bringing in the new. Pisces will be called to internalize and focus on spiritual realignment and self care. Water signs will become more introspective and prepared as we call on The Sun card. The Sun Card represents profound new beginnings, rebirth and allows for joy, harmony and unity. The Sun card will assist water signs in aiding forward movement into the new galactic paradigm of 2020. The Sun Card also brings in positive new outlooks and optimistic views of the future.

Water signs are encouraged to be more present and to live in the moment. This summer get out in the sun with loved ones and enjoy a liberating summer swim in a natural body of water and celebrate life! Create a gratitude journal, wake up early to watch the sunrise and jot down what you're thankful for and explore your dreams and goals for 2020. Go out of your way to help others, study philanthropy and participate in volunteer programs or think about volunteering abroad! If you've been thinking about relocating, changing jobs, or starting a family, August is the month to put new plans into motion. Go on a summer picnic with friends and pack a bag of fruity CBD gummies for the road and watch the karmic cycle turn in your favor. Be prepared for new beginnings. ☺





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