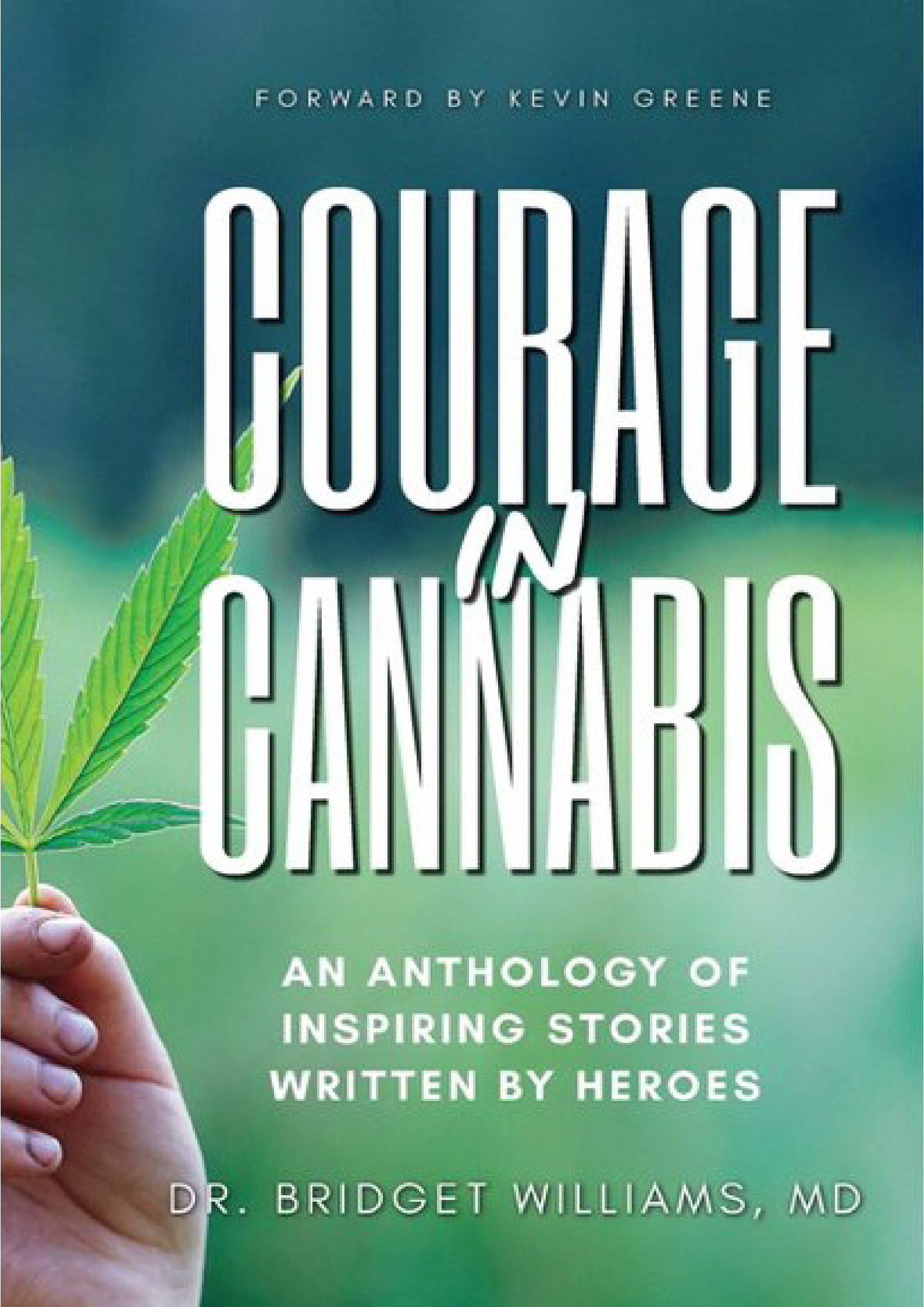


FORWARD BY KEVIN GREENE

A hand is visible on the left side of the cover, holding a green cannabis leaf. The background is a gradient of green, from dark at the top to light at the bottom. The title 'COURAGE IN CANNABIS' is written in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters. The word 'IN' is smaller and positioned between 'COURAGE' and 'CANNABIS'.

# COURAGE IN CANNABIS

AN ANTHOLOGY OF  
INSPIRING STORIES  
WRITTEN BY HEROES

DR. BRIDGET WILLIAMS, MD

**COURAGE  
IN  
CANNABIS**

Presented

By

Dr. Bridget Williams

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# Foreword

*By Kevin Greene*

Winter of 1992 was the first time I felt cold air. I had just landed at JFK airport from my homeland of Jamaica. I can still remember the shock of what is that, and why do I have to wear this big coat? I am 6 years old and my family is ready to attack this American dream. I can only imagine the visions my mother had after years of watching planes take off from Jamaica for America. The TV shows and the Americans spending all this money in her homeland every week like clockwork. For a woman who had one pair of shoes and pumped drinking water each morning as a child, America is almost heaven. The sad reality is, we were middle class in Jamaica and just became 100% poor the second we hit American soil. As the saying goes, no one works harder than Jamaicans with 8 jobs mon. So, my mom and uncle would grind, and it was never enough. From basements, halfway housing, and a few places I try to forget. Cannabis seemed to be the only way and my uncle understood it. Remember, the choices made were for economic stability. The crazy thing with the American dream is that you have to live through some nightmares hoping to wake up and see the light. It didn't take long before my uncle was behind bars and we were taking the 6-hour ride upstate. Telling my sister that he was away working. I was 10 at this point, so they couldn't lie to me. For the next 20 years of my life, I have watched many people close to me go behind bars because of cannabis. I can still hear my mom's voice when she found my dimes (\$10 weed bags) all bagged up in my shoebox. I will let you fill in the gaps of what she said to me that day. Today, I am a 36-year-old Co/owner of an all-black-marketing firm, yes just like the movie "Boomerang". To the movie critic that said this movie was bad because that would never happen, Ha! Jokes on you buddy! I am also the Vice President and co-owner of the Cleveland School of Cannabis. Yep, a Jamaican immigrant with an uncle who still gets taken to the back room at the airport every time we travel. The son of the woman who pumped water

each morning to survive owns a school for cannabis education. One of the most influential people I have met on my Cannabis Journey is Dr. Bridget Williams of Green Harvest Health. To see a medical doctor jump into this game and empower individuals to take part in their wellness is by far revolutionary. Just think about the relationship you have right now with your medical professionals. You spend most of the time in the waiting room and they rush in and out. Truthfully, how connected do you feel to the persons that have so much power over your life? Think about it just a bit longer. This person makes decisions that can kill you or keep you alive and you can't get more than 10 minutes of their time to have a real conversation? Dr. Williams' approach of caring for the whole person and educating them so they can be empowered to take part in their wellness, is lost in our world today. The stories you are about to connect with are going to harvest so many emotions. You will be angry, sad, in agreement, shocked, and empowered to share your own. As a leader in cannabis education, I know from personal experience you have to be courageous to take part in changing the world. So many before us are still in prison or are not here with us anymore. So many were deemed drug addicts and low-lives. So many, even within this billion-dollar market, cannot make a dime in legal Cannabis. I can go on with the "so many's," but it is time to read the stories of these courageous authors. When the title "Courage in Cannabis" caught your eye, it spoke to you. It caused you to reflect on your own journey and moments of courage. I want you to remember, you can always be your authentic self and tell your story with your head held high. We got your back !!!

# About Kevin Greene



Kevin Greene is a father, mentor, compassionate community member, and successful entrepreneur. He has been focused on the equitable development of community and business his entire professional career and continues to commit to having a social impact through economic growth and the advancement of his communities. With ownership of two successful startups-Faces International Marketing and Development and the Cleveland School of Cannabis- he has years of experience developing successful teams. As a VP for the Cleveland School of Cannabis, his role has been crucial in the growth of the student body, partnership development, and community engagement. Mr. Greene's successes have led the way to a multiple-city expansion of CSC and a robust student body serving students between the ages of 18 and 67. Understanding that relationships are vital when developing an ecosystem of prosperity has been his core value. As COO of Faces International, he has led strategies over the last decade with clients ranging from small businesses and city governments to non-profits of all sizes, he has been tasked with creating a culture of inclusion and participation to assist in Economic development and comprehensive initiatives. With the urge to make an impact on the youth, Kevin has Co-Founded R2C2 Inc, a youth development Non-Profit Organization that works to advance teens from disenfranchised populations. Continuing in the space of service he has furthered his impact by board participation with organizations such as the United Way, Valley Youth House, Lehigh Valley Chamber, and the Community Action Lehigh Valley. Mr. Greene continues to make it known that he is always willing to roll up his sleeves and do the grunt work in efforts to advance all facets of

community and business.

~

To connect with Kevin: <https://csceducation.com/>  
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/kevin-greene-48b5b7b7/>

# Embarking on a New Path

*By Dr. Bridget Williams*

I left Medicine for Cannabis!” I projected into the microphone. Speaking to an engaging room of enthusiasts and skeptics, I bravely took the stage as medical colleagues stood in the back with their noses in the air. I was used to it; the medical community is harsh and notoriously brutal to one another. A profession that exudes a false sense of confidence and behind the scenes is painfully miserable and insecure. The doctors in the back whispering and scoffing did not bother me because I had a secret; I knew I was happy and was confident they were not. That is what cannabis gave me, my joy back!

I easily could have titled this book “Freedom in Cannabis”, “Liberation in Cannabis”, or “Empowerment in Cannabis”, none of these titles were as catchy. But these titles describe how one plant affirmed me, along with its army of activists, patients, and supporters. I found freedom, liberation, empowerment, and courage in cannabis. I found myself again. Life can often strip you of your superpowers or you simply don't recognize them anymore. Cannabis helped me not only appreciate my talents but I hope I help others tap into their gifts as well.

I have been a physician for 20 years. I have gotten different reactions to that statement over time. Some people honor physicians and have a glamorous fantasy of what the life of a physician is like, others demonize traditional western physicians with preconceived notions of what motivates doctors and that we have misguided purposes. I learned over time that cannabis physicians have an even worse reputation of being swindlers and unscrupulous. I would love to say none of these bother me but it does unnerve me. However, in some cases, I agree with these perceptions as well. Being a black woman in medicine required me to fight harder for the reputation that I built. Undoubtedly, it was a struggle because I have societal prejudices to battle beyond professional

misconceptions. In my medical training, I had to develop a thick skin to navigate the elitist, white male-dominated world of medicine in the conservative environment of Michigan and Ohio. Medicine is still a vocation plagued with microaggressions fueled by insecurities and often exhibited in the form of hazing. I experienced more than my share of all this including being inappropriately touched, propositioned, and belittled. I have been subjected to emotionally damaging personal and professional relationships. By the time I entered into practice, I was a shell of my former self.

Despite these experiences and the anxiety and depression that inevitably cultivated, I never stopped. Along the way, I definitely had colleagues that dropped out, were kicked out, or committed suicide. However, I believe I persevered because 1- I am not a good quitter. 2- I was firmly connected to my younger self, a fiery young woman that started on this journey and I needed to honor her. 3- I was told long ago “I was never meant to fit in, I was made to stand out”. I struggle not just professionally but personally finding the tribe that did not just tolerate me but celebrated me in all that I am. I had not yet understood what that statement meant for my life and was determined to find out. Therefore, I remained dedicated to my goal of being a family doctor and helping patients. I joined a prestigious, large health organization and was exposed to even more microaggressions than in training. What kept me going was knowing I was helping patients/people. I discovered I never saw “patients”. Patients are the manifestation of a diagnosis that can be managed in 10-15 minute visits. I could not do that! I only saw people. People that needed to be understood and seen. I needed to know how they got to the point where they had diabetes, hypertension, or high cholesterol and how I could empower them to change. I learned this was my superpower! Though not appreciated by my health system, this approach to healthcare fed my soul and my “people” appreciated it as well.

I started working with small groups to help them get off of medications instead of adding more. We first defined their determination. Not their motivation. Motivation can be fleeting, but determination is when there is

no other option but success. Patients are often categorized by quantifying values: weight, age, blood pressure, blood sugar, and cholesterol levels, to name a few. If these numbers are normal, we inform the patient they are healthy and doing well even if they don't feel "well." When the numbers are abnormal, we suggest fixing them! These values are definitely pertinent markers of wellness and should not be dismissed, but they don't necessarily motivate patients to change. I spent weeks with the patients to help discover their determination and focus. They had to discover something that made them wake up and be ready to change their lifestyle and their health. Often their reasons to be ready for change were deeply personal. Wanting to set a good example for their family, the ability to go up and down their stairs without pain, or the stark reality that their child had no one else to support them, and if they died, their child would be alone. One person stood out to me and set me on the path towards medical cannabis.

Renee was a 43-year-old black female and breast cancer survivor. I met her soon after she had completed chemotherapy and radiation and was given a clean bill of health, except she was now a diabetic. Despite surviving breast cancer, she felt defeated. Renee felt the diabetes diagnosis was a slap in the face after all the hardships of cancer treatment. Her family life was in turmoil and her work performance was suffering as well. Therefore, we focused on Renee's power that she willed to beat breast cancer and employed that same focus for confronting diabetes.

During this time, many holistic and herbal options were gaining traction in the market. I was being asked about cinnamon for diabetes, turmeric for Alzheimer's, and garlic to lower blood pressure. I have always respected my patients' desire to treat their conditions more naturally, but safety was always my priority. Therefore, I would do my research and provide them with my professional opinion on these herbal options. Renee asked me about using cannabis medicinally; this one question would change the trajectory of my career. I admit that I was not that "cool in school", so I knew very little about marijuana, and the idea of using it for anything other than getting high was unheard of to me. This request from

Renee was outside my comfort zone. Due to a bad experience in my youth, I was utterly afraid of cannabis and all “illicit drugs”. Despite that, I told her I would do my research and share my medical opinion. What I discovered were medical possibilities I never even thought existed. Why did I not know about CBD and THC and the research going on in other countries? I was intrigued and fascinated!

I knew Renee needed medical guidance, and she believed that cannabis could be helpful for her condition. So I decided to walk with her on her journey. She shared how she was using cannabis, and I suggested dosing and titration schedules. I did research to understand more about how it worked. Renee was educating me as well and I was honored to be her accountability partner during this difficult time. Renee lost weight, her blood sugars were normalizing, she was sleeping better, and her stress was more manageable which was evident in better work performance. Eventually, I removed all diabetic medications from her list, and she was completely diet controlled along with cannabis as her only supplement. This experience opened my eyes to not only what cannabis could do medicinally but what patients want from their doctors. They want guidance and time invested in their journey. They want their ideas for their care to be taken seriously even when there was no significant research behind it. They wanted to be seen.

This experience encouraged me to work with other patients in this manner and to no longer give the bullies at my office any more credence. The transformative experience I had treating Renee stayed with me. Fast forward 10 years, and when medical cannabis legislation came to Ohio, I wanted to learn more. I got certified to recommend medical cannabis and soon realized many of the “card offices” were simply that. They were fast money opportunities with limited medical cannabis knowledge. Being incredibly disappointed, I decided to take a leap and open my own office. I became certified as a cannabis educator and life coach and opened Green Harvest Health, The only medical cannabis and integrative health office in Ohio. We currently have three offices in Ohio partnering with various holistic wellness services. Whether patients sign up for personal life

coaching or not, coaching is a part of how we approach medical cannabis. We walk with you on your journey to wellness.

This leap in my career was far from anything that I could have ever imagined, but it freed me from the stressors of being in a conservative, confining, and depleting environment. It allowed me to create a medical model that focused on people and their empowerment. Often my medical cannabis patients have nearly lost hope of being relieved from their anxiety, pain, seizures and nausea, and much more. They are looking for safe alternatives from opioids and other drugs as well as discussing options without judgment. I still practice family medicine along with cannabinoid medicine.

If it were not for medical cannabis that empowered me to believe that I could do more I certainly would have changed careers. The sting of so many painful experiences lingered. But medical cannabis gave me the courage to serve people the way they desired. I was never meant to fit in socially or professionally, I was always meant to do something different and stand out. Medical cannabis allowed me to reconnect with myself during this journey, to connect with the young woman that believed in change and I found not only a niche but my superpower to see people and serve. I also discovered like-minded physicians along the way that renewed my faith in our profession and the art of medicine. My goal is to empower others to discover their own gifts, to educate them on the vast medicinal qualities of cannabis, and do this all with empathy for their struggles and appreciation of their new cannabinoid path.

# About Dr. Bridget Williams



**D**r. Bridget Williams is an established board-certified family physician, author, and CEO of Green Harvest Health, medical cannabis, and integrative clinics located in Ohio. With nearly 20 years of experience in family medicine from The Cleveland Clinic, Dr. Bridget combines her medical background with certifications in life and cannabis coaching to her practice. She provides valuable “medical motivational talks” on medical cannabis, CBD, life balance, and confidence. In 2019, Dr. Bridget branched out into developing her own line of CBD products as well as white labeling, wholesale and affiliate sales. Green Harvest Health is very proud of offering custom CBD product development for other businesses. Dr. Bridget also with a staff of marketers, biochemists, processors, and educators provides a CBD education and product development process that creates unique products and the skills for an inspiring business. When not seeing patients, Dr. Bridget hosts podcast shows, creates education videos for the Cannabis Hub and holds a curriculum development and advisory position with the Cleveland School of Cannabis. Dr. Williams is the founder of the nonprofit GHH Community Foundation. The focal program

of the nonprofit is “The Cannabis Can Project”, a gathering of cannabis businesses united to network in a collaborative environment while providing community service opportunities to support the communities that support us. Dr. Williams is honored to be Top Female Business and Top Minority Business with the Ohio MBE Awards 2021 and a Women in Medicine Top Doctor for 2021.

~

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# My Cannabis Story

*By Khadijah Adams*

**M**y cannabis story began at the end of 2013 while watching the local news in Sugar Land, Texas, as the anchor announced that the state of Colorado had voted to legalize cannabis for recreational consumption. I was blown away because I knew the progression of the legal medical marijuana industry in just a few states, namely California and Colorado and I thought “man, if they can earn millions, if not billions in medical marijuana, just imagine how much can be earned when they legalize marijuana for recreational consumption”! Immediately, I knew that it would change the direction of the industry.

At that time, I had been an entrepreneur for sixteen years, I understood “timing and positioning”, so I had convinced my husband (*also my business partner. I will refer to him as such throughout*) at the time, that we must get in on the ground floor to position ourselves for generational wealth. And although he was not fully convinced, we ultimately made the decision to move to Colorado to get in on the “Green Rush” of 2014!

I sent out a blast text message to over 200+ people on my cell phone, stating that “everything must go”! Many of my contacts responded with “*Where are you going? What are you doing? Put me in!*” because they knew that if Khadijah Adams was making a move, making money had to be involved. Needless to say, we made a decision to sell everything, including our computer retail stores to move to Denver, Colorado.

Initially, we decided that one of us would go to survey the city and promote a product that we wanted to introduce to the industry, but we were met with a lot of pushback. Colorado natives did not appreciate having “foreigners” from Texas come and sell them on anything. Besides, they had already been in the industry legally since 2009, what did we know?

As my business partner continued to survey the city, prospecting and establishing relationships, I was on the phone making calls to potential

businesses for him to meet with to leave samples of the product. There was this one company (a cannabis edibles company) and spoke with their marketing director and she was definitely not receptive to our offer and refused to meet my business partner. Little did she know, he was already in her lobby waiting to speak with her. As you can imagine, we failed miserably. However, we made a lasting impression on her, and I will tell you why a little later. By the way, she was very well known in the Colorado marketplace and anyone who was anyone in the industry, knew her or of her.

After surveying the area, my business partner left Colorado and came back to Texas with absolutely no interest being shown in our product, and definitely no sales. However, he did make a few connections that proved to be valuable to us in the long run.

As we sat around contemplating and planning our next move, we decided to sell our current computer retail business, which had 3 locations at the time including an online computer parts store; which was an eBay best seller. We eventually sold our main store and closed the other two. We didn't make nearly what we should have because unfortunately, I was not a part of that decision.

My responsibility at the time was to sell all personal belongings, like furniture and accessories, so I decided to host two weekend garage sales with another business partner of mine. I sold almost everything we owned and left some things with her to continue to sell in future garage sales that she would host. Everything else, we gave away or put on consignment at a second-hand store.

Finally, we made an announcement to our team in another company that we were involved in, that we would hit the road the second weekend in March 2014, and we did. We left Sugar Land, Texas, car loaded to the roof. We couldn't even let the seats back for comfort, we were jammed packed, and headed to Denver, Colorado, which was an almost 16-hour drive.

As we began driving to Denver, we realized that every place that we'd called to book housing was full, motels, hotels, Airbnb's, etc., and they all

had waiting lists of people wanting to rent. It was crazy! Hell, there weren't even any vacancies in the hood! The hotel representatives and homeowners told us that there were people traveling to Denver from all parts of the world to get cannabis for their loved ones who were either sick or dying; and that most of them were homeless because there was just not enough affordable housing for everyone. An obstacle for sure, but we decided that we would find a place to stay, so we kept driving.

As we did, we continued to brainstorm on the contacts my business partner had made while on his initial visit to Denver. He quickly remembered an older man that he'd met named Gil, who was a self-published author. He was a veteran and fought in the war, and he was also a pioneer in the cannabis industry. Gil founded the first POS system to accommodate the cannabis industry and wrote about it. Very impressive.

As we continued on our drive, we decided to give Gil a call to see if he could recommend housing, or knew of anyone renting a single room. To our surprise, Gil had an extra room and offered to rent it to us for a few months, or until we found our own place. The only catch; he would have to clear it with his wife, Kathryn, who was not at home at the time. A few more hours had passed when we received a call from Gil, excited to share that his wife was glad to have guests over for a few months! They lived in Aurora, which was about 20 to 30 minutes from Denver, depending on where you're located. We were excited! We overcame the first obstacle with not too much sweat.

Not having a place to live was a serious obstacle, but it didn't stop us. We continued driving and believing that a solution would be found. Had we not called Gil and asked for his advice, we never would have learned that he had an extra room for rent.

Several hours into the drive, I received a call from someone who was heavily into the Multi-level Marketing industry, someone with a proven track record of success. She offered me an opportunity to earn additional income. I figured, well, we just sold our business and everything we had to get in the cannabis industry, surely, we'll need cash flow to sustain us through the process of getting established, so I immediately agreed to join

her in business! The truth is, my partner had sold our business for far less than what it was actually worth, only leaving us enough to pay off bills but not enough to sustain us for very long. So, I agreed to the business opportunity and took my last \$540 to join her in business.

My partner at the time, was extremely upset because he didn't believe that we should spend what little money we had left on an opportunity that we only just heard about. But I convinced him that the person who presented the opportunity was reputable and had earned millions in the past. Surely, this person wouldn't lead us in the wrong direction. Reluctantly, he agreed but said that he would not work the business with me. I was annoyed, but "okay," I thought, I've got this!

While still driving, I started calling members of my previous team to share the same opportunity with them. Some quickly came on board with me as partners. It was crazy because none of us had ever heard or even seen the product! We just trusted and believed that we could grow the business together and we did! With that said, they began calling their contacts and y'all, I was building a business while driving to Denver and had earned a few thousand dollars in commissions before we had even arrived in Colorado!

After sixteen grueling hours on the road, we finally arrived at Gil and Kathy's house in Aurora, Colorado. Gil was there, but Kathy was not home yet. He was very welcoming but warned us that Kathy didn't have time to clean the room and get it ready for us, so we would have to clean it ourselves. Apparently, it had been used as a book storage and not used very often. But it had an attached bathroom and was upstairs. We were cool with that, besides there was no other housing available anywhere in the city.

After cleaning the room and the bathroom, we settled into our spacious upstairs room and immediately started making plans, brainstorming about our next move. I had surfed the net to find local cannabis events and to my surprise, there was one the same weekend. Without any hesitation, I paid for my admission and prepared myself for the event. I researched all the speakers. I wanted to know who they were, what they did in the industry,

what they needed, and how I could help them. Saying that I was excited is an understatement!

March 15, 2014, I hit the ground running, literally. If there was a conference or event, I was there shaking hands and meeting the “movers and shakers” in the industry. While at an event, I was introduced to and fell in love with the idea of investing in cannabis-related companies. I immediately began looking for mentors who could help me navigate this process. After a few weeks, I found two very instrumental mentors who gave me the good and the bad of investing, what to look out for and when to buy and sell. I literally just mimicked their steps to a point. They both made me understand that whatever monies I invested could or possibly would not yield me a return. They both told me to never invest money that I couldn't afford to lose. After investing \$100 in a particular company, I sold my shares in that company and had earned a five-figure return. I was blown away and wanted to teach others how to do the same. By November 2014, I formed my first company in the cannabis industry called Marijuana Investment and Private Retreat aka MIPR Holdings. I onboarded my first investor out of Texas and started teaching others the basics of investing in marijuana stocks. ***There is more to this story but for the sake of this book, I will keep it brief and hit only the main parts.***

After two years in the industry, attending over 300 conferences and networking events; I had made a ton of connections especially with accredited investors. However, the more visible I became in the industry, the more envious and resentful my partner became. In March 2016, I came home to find that my husband, “partner” had packed up and cowardly moved out while I was gone. I remember blocking him on every social media platform and on my phone, then saying, “c'est la vie” and going on to my next meeting.

However, by not processing my instant separation, I had suppressed what I was actually feeling, and then it all came out in the destruction of my team, *literally*. I thought that everyone was against me, or was going to leave me and unfortunately, I began to self-sabotage by making foolish mistakes, and by default, my entire team was dismantled from the inside

out. One of my so-called “mentors” at the time believed their lies and everything that came along with them and had the audacity to tell me to go work in a dispensary. Although there is nothing wrong with working in a dispensary, this was a job that was meant to “hurt me and put me in my place” I thought, but really it only motivated me to stay focused and stay the course!

I gave myself 24-hours to blame the world and everyone in it and on the very next day, I looked into the mirror and blamed myself. And although my team played a part in its demise, I took responsibility by acknowledging my error and realizing the role I played in its destruction. I pulled up my “big-girl panties” and humbled myself by personally apologizing to my entire team individually. I did this not to get them back on my team, but to allow myself the headspace to move forward with a clear conscience and not worry about looking back.

Nevertheless, it was 2016, only two years into the industry, I found myself broke and broken both personally and professionally. Having cannabis assets that were worthless and only \$10 in the bank with bills stacking up. Instead of crying about my situation, I called all of my creditors not to complain or to sing “woe is me” but to make arrangements to clear my debt. After negotiating an acceptable agreement, I rewrote my business plan and went to work like nobody’s business to execute it. I immediately started calling investors to pitch my new plan, but unfortunately, the majority didn’t answer. I left messages, sent emails, inboxes via social media, and attended events where investors could be found. The ones who did answer ALL said “No” or “not a good idea”. After receiving over 127 no’s, the 128<sup>th</sup> investor said “Yes”! Finally, I had found someone who really believed in ME and the plan that I had outlined. I was excited and went to work! In four months, I had earned enough to pay off ALL of my creditors, invest in an upcoming company that now pays me and will pay me for the duration of its existence.

After my divorce was final in 2017, I sold MIPR Holdings to the same investor, became a super majority partner in his firm, C.E. Hutton a business development, and management company, and together we co-

authored “The Minority Report” which is an annual marketing analysis of minority-owned companies in CBD, Cannabis, and Hemp. We also formed an online educational academy that teaches the basics of investing in cannabis stocks called The GreenStreet Academy. Our firm went on to help several entrepreneurs get started or expand their businesses in the industry. After 3 years with the firm, I left the daily operations but maintained my role as the Vice President of the Board. Oh, and did I tell you that I earned my way back to becoming an accredited investor?

On May 1, 2020, I launched Khadijah Adams, LLC dba ***Girl Get That Money***, a business empowerment coaching, and consultancy firm focused on the empowerment of women in business and women aspiring to be in business. The very day that I launched, I onboarded ten new clients, all of whom, according to them, were waiting for me to go solo. I was surprised but definitely prepared. Later that year, I wrote a book called, “Rewriting Your Mental Script – 8 Mindsets That Defeat Self-Sabotage” to help more people recognize when they are self-sabotaging and help them navigate their way out of this horrible habit. My book was accepted by Sisterhood Publishing, and it was released in December 2020.

Currently, I am an accredited investor who earns a six-figure annual income. I sit on the Advisory Board of The Color of Cannabis (TCC) 2020-2021 (Colorado). I am the former Chair of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee (DEIC) of the National Cannabis Industry Association (NCIA) 2020-2021, and now Chair Emeritus (2021-2022). I sit on the Advisory Board of Calyxium, a cannabis company owned by two African American Women in Michigan. I’m on the Board of an amazing nonprofit in Ohio called Cannabis Can Ohio. I continue to speak and breathe life into other entrepreneurs in the industry throughout the country. I host the Cannabis Minority Report podcast powered by the NCIA, and I have a room on the Clubhouse app called “Cannabis and Coffee with Khadijah Adams.”

In closing, have a crystal-clear vision of what you want to do and where you want to go in this industry. Have a detailed plan on how you intend on getting there with the understanding that it’s a map that can

change often. Then finally, don't allow anyone, any situation, or anything to prevent you from reaching your final destination. Take courage when facing obstacles, understanding that they are only meant to test you to see how bad you really want it!

I started this journey understanding that it could be challenging, risky, and even devastating at times. I DECIDED to make a COMMITMENT at the very beginning to endure until I got what I came in this industry to get regardless of the obstacles that presented themselves (*divorce, mistakes, loss of associates, friends, mentors, and even team members*). Be determined to do the same.

# About Khadijah Adams



Cassondra "Khadijah" Adams is originally from Sugar Land, Texas. She started her first business while raising four sons as a single mother. Khadijah Adams has been a full-time entrepreneur since 1997. She entered the cannabis industry in 2014 by way of the Colorado market. She began investing in cannabis-related companies shortly thereafter and formed MIPR Holdings where she served as the founder and senior managing partner for 3-1/2 years and was responsible for consulting and connecting accredited investors to viable investment opportunities in the space.

In June 2017, MIPR, LLC, and MIPR Holdings, LLC was later acquired by C. E. Hutton, LLC, a business development and management firm in Denver, Colorado where Ms. Adams currently sits on the Board of Managers as the Vice President. She is also the Founder of The GreenStreet Academy, an online educational platform that teaches the basics of investing in the marijuana industry, and the co-author of The Minority Report, annual marketing analysis of Minority-owned companies in the cannabis and hemp industries.

Ms. Adams sits on the Advisory Board of The Color of Cannabis (TCC) 2020-2022 and was the Chair of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee (DEIC) of the National Cannabis Industry Association (NCIA) 2020-2021. She currently holds the position as the Chair Emeritus of the DEIC. Ms. Adams also sits on the Advisory Board

Member of Calyxeum (MI) and on the Board of Cannabis Can (Ohio).

Khadijah is the founder of Khadijah Adams, LLC dba “Girl, Get That Money,” a business empowerment and coaching movement. Her goal is to empower women in business by providing them with the resources and tools needed to help them become successful. Ms. Adams is a motivational speaker and published author of “Rewriting Your Mental Script – 8 Mindsets That Defeat Self Sabotage”.

Khadijah is the host of The Cannabis Minority Report podcast. The goal of The Cannabis Minority Report podcast is to share weekly news and updates about Minorities in the CBD, cannabis, and hemp industries. Ms. Adams interviews minority entrepreneurs, minority-owned companies, companies that support social equity, social equity applicants, and a host of other cannabis industry leaders and pioneers. The Cannabis Minority Report podcast is powered by the NCIA.

Khadijah hosts “Cannabis and Coffee with Khadijah Adams” on Clubhouse every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 7 AM CST.

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# **You Can't Stop The Waves, But You Can Learn To Surf**

*By Dr. Jennifer Anderson*

**I**t was a Friday night in October 2016. I'd just quit my clinic after 6 months of my 4-year-old son seizing nonstop requiring almost continual hospital and ICU care. As a single mom caring for my kids almost full time, I was torn between caring for my 9-year-old daughter and my 4-year-old twins, one with Intractable epilepsy due to cerebral palsy as a result of a missed twin-twin transfusion syndrome. All this while running a family practice, doing hospital, obstetric and ER work. The last 4 years had been tough, but the last 6 months had been full of sleepless nights wondering if my son would survive the night. It took 2 years for his seizures to be properly diagnosed by Neurology after multiple visits and pressuring them to do more tests. Spring/Summer 2015 he was finally diagnosed with electrical status epilepsy in sleep (ESES) and cyclic vomiting seizures. After an initial stabilization on antiepileptic medications through his new Epileptologist, he started going downhill spring of 2016. He was losing the ability to walk and any progress he had made eating was vanishing by the day. He was back to being fully tube fed and preferred to crawl around as his legs wouldn't function for him as they used to. This Friday night I was exhausted. We had just met with my son's neurologist who had asked if we wanted my son resuscitated after multiple ambulance trips with him in status epilepticus and an ICU stay where he was unresponsive for days seizing. I looked at my life, my practice, and my priorities and couldn't do it anymore. I realized that if I just worked in the ER I could go from children's hospital to my shift and back easily leaving family medicine clinic work behind. Moving shifts around was much easier than rebooking clinic days and those days were piling up. I had exhausted all options. My son was on multiple anti-epileptics but still seizing multiple times an hour. He was up half the night seizing and aspirating due to his vomiting

seizures. He was on breath-stacking masks due to chronic lung disease related to his multiple aspirations and required nonstop care day and night. Fortunately, since I was a single parent with full-time work responsibilities, I received more respite which helped immensely. I had asked his neurologist about trying CBD with him and the answer was “It may work but I can’t help you”. Neurology had basically told me that I had to find a family physician that was an expert in seizures and cannabis to help and they could not help me do this. I was in a dark hole when my friend reached out and offered me a bottle of hemp-derived CBD to try. I picked up this small bottle that was close to \$200 and as a last resort, I gave my son 1 drop that Friday night. Little did I know that this was the start of a journey that would change not only his life but the trajectory of my life and career as well.

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When I started medicine, seizures scared me. Little did I know they would consume my life. In residency while pregnant with twins I was diagnosed with twin-twin transfusion syndrome at 20 weeks of pregnancy after a routine fetal assessment. Prior to this, I had been told I was having fraternal twins based on early ultrasounds and despite my abdomen growing at a rapid pace causing pain with any movement, my ob-gyn figured it was par for the course. I was in my obstetric rotation as a resident and went down for my fetal assessment. At that point, I was wearing belly support to hold my growing belly as that was the only way I could cope. Within 2 minutes of having the probe on my abdomen, I could tell something was wrong. The tech left the room and when she got back the news was devastating. She was quickly flipping through my chart looking for signs of an identical twin pregnancy and when she found none she broke the news. I was having identical twins and had the worst complication. One baby was taking all of the blood and one had very little. There are 4 stages of twin-twin transfusion syndrome and I was in stage 3 with stage 4 rapidly approaching risking the death of one or both twins. I was brought back in the morning for a quick scan to make sure the babies were alive and at that point given the options. I could terminate the

pregnancy; I could selectively terminate one to save the other once the small twin died or I could fly that day to Toronto and have an intrauterine surgery to try to save both. 2 hours later I was boarding a plane completely overwhelmed with everything that had happened in the past 24 hrs. How could I have been looking after obstetric patients and have this happened? All the signs were there and I had specifically voiced my concerns.

When we arrived in Toronto, Dr. Greg Ryan, the maternal-fetal medicine specialist who performed these surgeries met us for a fetal assessment that evening. He was visibly perplexed that this whole situation had happened but offered to help and scheduled me for surgery as an E1 the next morning. The outlook was dim. He didn't think the small donor twin would survive the surgery. Once they separated the blood vessels, he thought that there wouldn't be enough blood flow to sustain him and expected that he would pass during or shortly after the surgery. The surgery went well and 24 hrs later we had a fetal assessment and found out both twins had survived. We were assured that everything looked great and I would be monitored often and likely deliver within 10 weeks.

On January 13, 2012, my two beautiful boys came into this world. After a week of watching my donor twins' blood flow get worse and worse, we finally decided on a c-section to deliver them at 35 weeks. Initially, things went as well as they could. Nicholas needed a ventilator initially being the smaller donor twin, but Zachary came out thriving a whole 1lb heavier than his brother. This began our 2-month stay in NICU. At what would have been 40 weeks, both boys had a routine MRI and at 6pm that night we got a devastating call. We were called in to discuss Nicholas' MRI report which showed that his whole brain had developed abnormally. The neurologist gave us the dire news that we could expect nothing but reflexes. At that point, I questioned the role of PT and OT but was told that this wouldn't be in place until 6 months of age. I questioned this limited approach since we know how moldable the brain is at such an early age. They made an exception and we started therapy immediately. Had I not put on my physician hat to advocate for him a major resource would have been withheld.

The first 2 years were difficult. Nicholas had episodes each night at 10pm and 3am where he would wake up shrieking and vomiting/shaking. We were assured by neurology that these were not seizures even though as a family physician and mom I was sure they were. Nicholas had cycles of vomiting that prevented him from being able to keep food down and after much bouncing from Neuro to GI, a 5 day home EEG was done that confirmed that Nicholas had Electrical Status Epilepsy in Sleep (ESES). Basically, he was in status epilepticus from the time he went to sleep to the time he woke up. We insisted on seeing a seizure specialist (an epileptologist) and he confirmed that Nicholas had both ESES and cyclic vomiting seizures. He then started having parietal lobe seizures and other gustatory seizures where he would become stridulous and turn blue. One time I remember having him and his brother in their car seats driving through the city to an appointment and seeing Nicholas start gasping and turning blue. I slammed on the breaks and ran around, grabbing him out of his seat in the middle of traffic and holding him upside down so that he wouldn't aspirate as he had then started a cyclic vomiting seizure. At this point I was desperate. We were in and out of the hospital with no real answers. One neurologist actually told us that it was good if he turned blue because "the brain can't seize if it doesn't have oxygen". Frustration was mounting and being a single mom with an absent father who was showing no initiative to help I was falling apart. I was desperate. I began to look into alternative therapies and found a CNN special done on a girl with Dravets who responded to CBD. I didn't know how to get this, but I asked my neurologist about it. We had switched to a new neurologist who was very open and she offered support but due to politics she could not help or be involved. I began to blog online about my quest and a close friend I grew up with offered hemp-based CBD to try. At this point, Nicholas was on 3 antiepileptics and was a zombie. He had developed bone marrow suppression on valproic acid so that had been stopped. He wasn't present and often stared off into space. Often you couldn't tell if he was seizing or not. His neurologist had a meeting with us and asked if we wanted him resuscitated. It was then I realized things were bad. I quit my clinic practice which included hospital and obstetric patients and began to just

work in the ER as I could easily go from children's hospital to ER and back with no paperwork hanging over me when I left.

It was a Friday night in October when I drove over with 200\$ cash to pick up this 30ml bottle of hemp CBD. I hadn't slept in weeks and watched over Nicholas every night so that when he started to seize I could quickly flip him over and make sure he didn't drown in vomit. I got home and decided to give him one drop of CBD before bed. That night I watched him and he slept... he never woke once. The next day was a usual day. He was seizing two to three times an hour but I gave him another drop in the morning. I continued to give him 1 drop twice a day and he slept Saturday and Sunday night. Monday morning I brought him to daycare and they immediately noticed a difference. He was alive. He was present. He was actively participating. They asked what had happened and I quickly said that we were trying some alternative therapy. That week I called neurology and gave them the exciting news! Nicholas wasn't seizing at night and he was awake and alive! Their answer? You need to stop this until you get a physician to prescribe it to you. My answer? He may die if I do. I can't! Their response? "Yes, he might. We will give you two days to find someone". At that moment I changed. I began to question medicine and how we make decisions. I realized that there was a huge ethical problem with this and the system. I couldn't watch my child seize when the answer was literally in my hand.

The next day I called every specialist I knew in oncology and palliative care thinking of all physicians they would help me. The answer was no. After much agony and stress, a family practice colleague I barely knew saw how much Nicholas was thriving and offered to help. She had never authorized cannabis, let alone for a kid, but she was willing to risk this for Nicholas. This one act of kindness and working outside the traditional box saved my son. For her, I am forever grateful. The rest is history. We continued to use CBD and Nicholas' seizures decreased by at least 50% year to year. In fact, it has now been 3 years as of Fall 2021 since our last hospital visit. Nicholas now experiences a quality of life that no anti-epileptics was able to provide. In fact, he likely would have died of

seizures without CBD. The more seizures you have, the higher your chance of dying of Sudden Unexpected Death in Epilepsy (SUDEP).

In the spring of 2017, I was approached by a clinic in my hometown that asked if I would please come and see the kids who wanted to try CBD for epilepsy. I initially said a flat “no”. I wasn’t going to be the “pot doc for kids”. After a few weeks of thinking about this, I came back to them and agreed to see kids who had failed everything. I could not bear to see other families in my position. How could you bury your child without trying everything? How could a physician withhold a potentially life-saving therapy? These questions haunted me. If I couldn’t get this treatment as a physician, how could anyone else? At this point, I started seeing kids and decided that I would be the physician I wish I had. I started seeing whole families and connected with them on a level that I had never experienced before. I started using doses from Israeli papers put out by Dr. Raphael Mechoulam’s team among others and tried to come up with a way to objectively follow these kids. As I followed them, they got better! Kids who had been all over the world looking for help finally responded to CBD. It was the most rewarding aspect of my career. Over the past 4 years, my practice became a consulting practice seeing kids with everything from mental health to autism, epilepsy, and cancer. Many kids responded. All to varying extents. It was then that I realized that I had become the unicorn I needed. The family doctor was an expert in epilepsy and cannabis. The family physician willing to work outside the traditional framework for these kids who had failed everything and the families who were struggling to find help. “No” was not an answer for me and it wasn’t for the kids in my practice.

To me, Cannabis is a blessing. It is a plant given to us to help heal. The political background and politics behind it, prevent many patients from being able to benefit and this is not ok. As a mom and physician, it is now my passion and purpose to help remove barriers in politics, medicine, education, and the community to facilitate the use of this amazing plant.

# About Dr. Jennifer Anderson



A single mom to 3, Dr. Anderson is a Canadian Family Physician who works to advocate and educate about the role of Cannabis in pediatric epilepsy. In addition to this, she works as a consultant for other physicians to co-manage patients of all ages navigate Cannabis medicinally. In the past 5 years, she has advocated the government, educational systems, and the medical system for change and remove barriers to patient access. She has advised major Canadian Cannabis companies and advocated for reduced costs for kids with much success. She has worked to help families navigate the system for their children in her province, other Canadian provinces, UK, USA, and Australia. In all this, she has taken both personal and professional risks helping families around the world. Despite all of this, being a mom is her highest calling and she works hard to put her kids as the biggest priority. In her spare time, she enjoys being on the top of a mountain snowboarding or in the ocean on a surfboard. “You can’t stop the waves, but you can learn to surf” has become her mantra. It is her hope that her work will make a permanent impact on the world of pediatric cannabis especially through the documentary coming out on her life and

work in Spring of 2022 called “Anything Can Happen” produced by an independent film company called Barehand Films.

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# Preparing for the New Normal

*By Adilah Anwar*

A “New Normal” is on the horizon and it is disrupting industries and countries around the world. We are in a constant state of influx due to the Cannabis Industry and this disruption has gained a vantage that counters contradictions from realities.

My approach to the Cannabis industry is through observation and does not follow the traditional trajectory of trial and error.

My mother was an engineering project manager, and my father was a professional graphic designer. Both of my parents had a goal of ensuring that all of their six children were provided personal enrichment and quality education. So much so, that both of my parents took a leap of faith and opened a Charter School Program on the East side of Cleveland, Ohio. At a time when Black-Owned Charter Schools were far and few in Ohio, this moment changed normal for me and created a new reality that gave me the courage to think outside of the confines of traditional education. As pioneers and visionaries, I attribute to my parents, Uthman and Fajr Al-Amin, my love and gratitude for architecting children who are well-rounded and ready to lead when no one else can or will.

Coming from a non-traditional educational background allowed me to think outside of the box and understand the space between informed thinking and arriving to the aisles of enlightenment to discovery.

I began my early career in the risk and compliance space working on behalf of the financial service industry. Risk and Compliance is an organization’s potential exposure to legal penalties. It is knowing the rules and regulations that protect organizations similar to human resources for employees. I worked my way up to learning about the design and architecture of fiduciary systems while harnessing a risk and compliance mindset.

Informed thinking through challenges is an exercise that I practiced in my educational foundation, as it has prepared me for challenges in understanding the dynamics of the fast-growing Cannabis Industry. I learned earlier in life that thinking outside of the box is never easy, however, the challenges always present themselves in many places and a solution-driven mindset is necessary.

One place my curiosity led me was the **National Association of Black Compliance and Risk Management Professionals (NABCRMP)**. *NABCRMP* is a 501C3 non-profit organization that is geared towards the advancement of risk and compliance professionals in various industries through leadership and knowledge sharing.

I was in my third year as a Business Systems Analyst working on behalf of a Global Fin-Tech company when I had the desire to contribute my talents to a good cause. I applied to be a volunteer Board member as it was advertised on LinkedIn. The application process was as formal as a salaried position. Soon after applying, I was invited to an interview. In my initial interview, I spoke with Jennifer D. Newton, the Founder, and CEO of NABCRMP. She told me about the important initiatives and contributions that could be made in this non-profit space. Jennifer's excitement about the organization lifted the call to action for me. I explained to Jennifer that I had some industry knowledge about Cannabis outside of Technology through self-study and traveling to different states where it was already legal. I naturally took a general interest to understand different laws, risks, policies, and procedures. I really had a general interest in this industry particularly because it was new and disruptive. Being a career analyst, you are taught to look at the trends of disruption.

After my interview, Jennifer told me that I was very tenacious, and she loved my energy. A few weeks later, I was invited to join the Board of Directors as a founding Board Member in August of 2020. My initial ask was just to be on the Board of Directors for this amazing organization. I did not know that it would lead me into the role of the Board of Directors, Chair.

After being encouraged to nominate myself for the role, I felt

empowered for the first time. I was being called upon by management to be a leader. With a passionate approach to industry leadership and networks connecting us to the rest of the world, I stepped up to the mantle of leadership where others had shied away. I also was asked to create a Cannabis Industry workgroup that no one else wanted to touch after serving the Board for the first six months. Jennifer accepted my offer to Chair the Cannabis Industry Workgroup Committee. After my initial offer, I was not aware of the kind of connections we would gain or the power in creating something that has not been done before. Just like the stories of this anthology, the movement begins. From disruption to understanding the resistance of legalization.

My approach to the Cannabis industry is from the level of understanding disruptive changes in industries that will sooner or later interface with Cannabis. I realize that the road to the Cannabis industry will be through education, just like the quality education that my parents helped me achieve. I want to bring a non-traditional experience into this Cannabis Workgroup. My goal is to achieve a platform of leadership professionals from all industries to communicate and gather information from this space.

Our first approach as an organization is to communicate with networks of leadership. This idea yielded an opportunity to create a discussion series through the Clubhouse Platform. The clubhouse is a virtual discussion platform where you can discuss different topics, such as lifestyle, finance, politics, and cannabis. The opportunity to enjoy a podcast, with the ability to participate in the discussion as an audience member, into a contributor of the discussion was a perfect match for engaging our audience. I gained this idea from NABCRMP's Membership Committee Chair, Devon Euring, who is the Administrator for our Clubhouse platform. With the help of our Industry leadership workgroups and advertising our events throughout LinkedIn on our organization's page, I was able to develop a platform on Clubhouse to assist my Workgroup in communicating to the rest of the industries one at a time with different series and tackling different topics. This format of discussion helped me put useful and

reliable programming together. It took a lot of hard work and dedication to discuss topics that were relative to decision-makers in leadership roles.

One problem that I wanted to address, is ensuring leadership no matter what industry has general knowledge about the cannabis industry and can make informed decisions. This initiative has surpassed my initial ask to have conversations, connecting other businesses and companies with the proper information made possible by a Workgroup like ours. The readiness and ability to ensure we can facilitate and handle the needed opportunity to live in the spaces of Diversity and Inclusion, along with ensuring that we are connecting each generation with information that is geared toward enlightenment and education from a factual and not contradictory standpoint. Also, my goal is to allow leaders to take information from trusted leaders into the board room for discussion. This to me is a way that we need to impact our decisions while enabling our ability to think outside the confinement of traditional to transitional.

My journey to Cannabis is not such a trial-and-error scenario-based, because this need comes from the point of understanding this industry disruption. The difference between being ahead of the curve or further behind when it is legalized across the board. My approach as the chair of this Committee is to understand the lines of communication when it gets to having a conversation about the industry without the prejudice of traditional schools of thought.

NABCRMP currently has 9 Workgroup Committees. The Cannabis industry committees' initiatives consist of Cannabis education campaigns, Cannabis industry resources for leadership, and professional members. Lastly, Cannabis information sessions gear towards education and risk & compliance management.

Our Cannabis Committee workgroup is in the business of facilitating different industries in our knowledge base. Our mission is to empower leaders into industries with the knowledge to create informed individuals with information that may help stakeholders make informed decisions by creating a fruitful conversation that is backed by education and statistics and not bias.

The cannabis industry needs allies on every level to change current perception and to grow. As the industry grows, we need incredible support from employers. Businesses need to hire and maintain the employment of cannabis users. NABCRMP and the Cannabis Committee workgroup is dedicated to educating and partnering with companies that want quality informative programs and ultimately our goal is to serve the cannabis community to maintain job security, improve inclusion, and rewrite the new normal.

# About Adilah Anwar

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Adilah serves voluntarily as a Board of Directors, Chair. She oversees 8 Committees on behalf of a Risk and Compliance organization called the National Association of Black Compliance & Risk Management Professionals (NABCRMP).

Adilah utilizes her extensive experience and knowledge in Financial Technology, Actuarial & Risk, and Compliance industries. To help picture opportunities in different industries. She has had the opportunity to work on behalf of some of the world's largest bank-branded fiduciary projects.

Adilah is highly focused on details and ensuring that the project scope and requirements are met. Her history in the financial services sector gives her the confidence to face any challenge with Subject matter expert knowledge and industry experience.

She is a Certified Scrum Product Owner who holds a Business Analyst certification from Duke University and is IBM certified in Artificial Intelligence Development.

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For more information about the *National Association of Black Risk & Compliance Professionals* and the *Cannabis Industry Workgroup Committee* please contact us at [www.nabcrmp.org](http://www.nabcrmp.org).

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# How The Deaths Of Two Family Members Led Me On A Journey Into The CBD Industry

*By Joe Brennan*

Hello, my name is Joseph Brennan. My story started back in 2013 when I lost two family members back to back to pharmaceuticals. My father Bill was 61 years old when his liver shut down due to the prescribed pills he had been on for 15 years after a tragic accident with a saw. While cutting the last board to complete a fence surrounding his yard, the saw hit a knot in the wood causing the blade to jump, fileting his entire arm open, up to his bicep. After reconstructive surgery, he would spend the next 15 years trying to manage his pain from nerve damage with prescription drugs, which ultimately led to liver failure. After an extended time in ICU, my 12-year-old brother and I had to make the decision to end our Dad's suffering.

Very shortly after his passing, his brother, my Uncle Tim, started undergoing chemotherapy for lung cancer. The treatment was very hard on his body as he became weaker with every round. On the last treatment, the doctors noted that this final round might be the one that "does him in". They were right because within 24 hours he passed away at the young age of 53. As I sat at his bedside I remembered the tender words he had spoken to me about losing my father, just a few months prior.

Shortly thereafter, I was skipping through the television channels and I saw a glimpse of what looked like a child having a seizure. I quickly went back to the program and saw the mother using an oil under the child's tongue, which stopped the seizure. As tears started streaming down my face in joy for this little girl, I had an epiphany. I heard my dad's voice in a loud whisper, reminding me of what he always told me, "Joe, if you want to do something good in this life, go help somebody!" I had never taken

those words so seriously until that moment. I knew it was too late for my dad and uncle, but I was going to go help the world with this oil starting now! My 11-year career as a real estate agent afforded me the opportunity to put my father's words into practice to really help someone with this newfound oil, CBD.

I started doing in-depth research on the endocannabinoid system. To my discovery, it seemed like this system interacted with every other system in the body. I was fascinated by this "new" science and the discovery of this system. I always believed there was something more to the cannabis plant as it had always intrigued me. After doing further research on the few CBD companies there were at that time, I found one I could get behind. I used my portion of my Dad's life insurance policy to make my first bulk purchase. I proceeded to give away samples and bottles to people everywhere I went, grocery stores, gas stations, public events, you name it. If I saw a person in pain or struggling I would introduce myself and offer a couple of sprays of oil. To both of our surprise during the interaction, the person would share with me that they were already feeling better. We both wondered if this was a placebo effect! After more and more of this type of experience, I decided that I needed to know more about how this works in the body. After giving away almost all of my CBD inventory, I started getting phone calls and emails from people that I had shared the CBD with. They told me about the wonderful experiences they were having while using the products and wondered if they could start purchasing them from me. This drove my desire to want to educate myself even more on the healing properties of this compound, and that is exactly what I did. In 2013 I started a company called Hemp For Health LLC and became known as "the CBD guy" all over my hometown of Columbus, Ohio.

As more and more people started reaching out to me from referrals, I became more convinced CBD oil was really working for people and making a difference in their lives. I started seeing all walks of life from young to old reaching out with questions about how it might help them or someone they know. I was visiting with hospice patients and people who

were at the end of life. Their family members would reach out to me because they heard about how it helped other families. This was when I really started to see the true effects of the oil on people who were very ill. I saw it extend life, improve cognitive function, shrink tumors, and if nothing else improve their quality of life at the end of their lives' journey. I started to get a sense that this plant has more than just physical healing properties. It also helped emotionally in comforting the families coping with the stress. I knew at this point that I was on my path and had found my calling. Hemp would become the next decade of passion in my life.

To digress a bit, after high school I joined the military and served for three years on active duty as an Army infantryman. After being honorably discharged, I started college using my GI Bill and started working for an insurance company. After a couple of years, I decided to get my real estate license and started working for myself from that time forward. Being in sales most of my career, I was accustomed to dealing with people from a service-based interaction. I developed interpersonal skills from the many challenges in the real estate market. Mostly in comforting emotional buyers and sellers through the process. Those experiences helped me learn how to really listen, and serve my customer. As it turned out, I would desperately need this skill to prepare me for the journey that was awaiting me. The real transformation in me was the education-based approach I adopted, as opposed to a sales approach. This was the key. The next thing was to provide a way for them to give it a try. After all, seeing is believing, and I had.

Over the next two years in 2014 and 2015, I really started to get the word out. I was attending shows and festivals all over the state of Ohio. I set up a booth at these events and would hand out CBD samples to anyone who would take one. Of course, this was accompanied by an education pamphlet explaining how it works. I knew that this new compound cannabidiol found in the hemp plant could break the stigma surrounding cannabis as a whole. I started to change the minds of people who were on the fence as well as those who were totally against the plant. They simply could not deny the science on our own Endocannabinoid system or the

anti-anxiety effects they would experience moments after taking the oil. I was in love with the fact that it was no longer pseudoscience. With the government's patent on cannabinoids as well as the anti-seizure properties starting to become well-known, I saw an opportunity for the redemption of cannabis as a medicine.

The year 2016 was a big year for me and my journey through the challenges that we faced supporting a schedule 1 narcotic. I was being asked to do talks and lectures at different public events and I was becoming ever busier in a space where my original goal was just to help somebody. My sales from repeat customers that I had known for a couple of years were adding up. These customers were taking the CBD and truly experiencing benefits. I was meeting people in grocery store parking lots to sell them bottles of oil and capsules at all hours of the day. However, it struck me when one of my elderly customers said to me; "this kinda feels like a drug deal!" as we meet in a parking lot to do an exchange through the car window. "I wish you had a store" other customers would comment as I stood in the rain sometimes sharing my passion. It dawned on me, how hard could it be to find commercial space and open a store? Well, that turned out to be the easy part. The very first space I looked up stood out to me, and I just had a feeling that this was it. I reached out to the landlord and scheduled a showing in a hip town called Clintonville, in the heart of Columbus. The landlord was kind of quiet when I explained to him what my intentions were with his property. In 2016 Ohio did not have a medical program nor were there many if any laws written about CBD, hemp, or otherwise. To my surprise, the landlord was okay with my idea of an exclusive CBD store. In my mind, all I was doing was creating an extension of my living room in order to help my friends and family with a new discovery, a plant-based supplement that has unlimited potential, a place people could come to and share their stories and feel safe doing so. This was the environment that I wanted to establish because I saw a need.

Columbus Botanical Depot was born and opened its doors in 2016. I remember telling my family at Thanksgiving dinner how I intended to not advertise, to see if I could grow a business organically by word of mouth. Also at this time, CBD was a new topic of discussion and had some

challenges ahead of it in Ohio. Word started to get out that there was a shop in Clintonville, enthusiastically educating the public of the ECS and its involvement with potential health benefits. Also, there was always a free sample being offered for every customer that walks through the door. Was it the publicity and free samples driving people in the door or people recognizing my passion-driven desire to truly help people at the end of their rope? Maybe a little bit of both I would suspect. However, I started to get busier and busier as I poured my heart out to everyone that came through my door as if they were my family. I've never seen an impact such as this in all of my years of sales, and I was astonished by the results that I would see day today. From customers suffering from panic attacks, migraines, back pain, sleep issues, it seemed to be helping with them all. Seeing a customer being calmed down in under 5 minutes with a very low dose was routine. This pace started picking up to the point where I had to hire help, and that was the beginning of what would lead to over 10 employees in 2 years! This was necessary to keep up with the growing number of people experiencing benefits from this hemp-derived compound. Hemp For Health Distribution exploded as we maintained wholesale accounts all over the country. We were participating in local events and abroad sharing the message of hemp. We were the first CBD promoters at the Arnold Classic held in Columbus every year. We made the front page of the business section of our local Columbus dispatch. We also made the local TV news several times. Shark Tank reached out to us wanting to collaborate, which resulted in the first CBD television commercial. We were denied national broadcasting after production, so we settled to go with digital ads. Everything kept getting better and busier. As soon as the retail space next to the Depot came up for rent, we quickly jumped on the opportunity. The goal was to open a CBD education center next door and offer free classes to the public on a weekly basis. We brought in doctors including Dr. Bridget Williams and many others throughout the years. People were getting informed and we couldn't be happier with our impact thus far.

This success did not exclude us from the challenges that were faced along the way. Our banks started closing our accounts without any notice. Our point of sale systems would abruptly stop working. Letters from the

Ohio Board of Pharmacy tell us to close our doors. We had very little protection before the farm bill of 2018 was passed. After being told to close our doors when the pharmacy board came on the scene, I was interviewed by the media. I concluded that I would not close my doors and I was willing to go to jail for this cause. This simple misinterpretation of the law put many innocent people at risk. To my surprise, I would find a line of customers reaching High Street the next day before our doors were open. I stood my ground and was willing to do whatever it took to do what was right. Nevertheless, our mission never skipped a beat. We pushed forward until clear legislation emerged in 2018 with the new Farm Bill. We finally felt like we were seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. This did not stop the banking institutions from continuing to close our accounts at will. This resulted in being blacklisted from every bank in Ohio and beyond. This was the same story for our point of sale systems that we would use to ring our customers out and track sales. As soon as we gained any momentum they would close us down and we would have to scramble to find a new vendor. Somehow, somehow, things always seemed to work out for us in terms of keeping things running. No matter how many times we were shut down something new always presented itself in the nick of time.

Since the very beginning of this entire journey, I looked upwards for my answers and guidance. I had fears and doubts just like anyone else would when starting something completely new to the marketplace. I risked my freedom, my finances, and some relationships in making this dream happen. But I can tell you it was worth every long night, the anticipation of losing everything, or just remembering why and how this all took place. I learned that holding space for someone who has a story to tell and is desperate for help, is a gift that was given to me. From tragedy to triumph, good was made out of a bad situation. I'm blessed to have experienced it. All the lifelong friendships that have been made, the tears shed for the sick, and the healings that were witnessed by many. I am more than willing to continue this journey for my friends and to help pave the way for freedom, for healthy living, and for more hemp exploration. Normal is the new buzz, of which we should all partake.

# About Joe Brennan



After graduating high school in 1997, Joe went into the Army for the next 3 years of active duty. For the following three years he worked at Nationwide Insurance in the claims department until obtaining a Real Estate license in 2003. After achieving The Brass Award in 2006 with HER Real Estate, Joe maintained selling properties even throughout the "Real Estate Crash". Still today Joe holds a Real Estate License with The Brown Company Real Estate and maintains rental properties in Columbus.

In 2013 Joe lost his father to liver complications from pharmaceutical drugs, followed by losing his uncle to chemotherapy. Shortly thereafter Joe discovered CBD, coming from the hemp plant treating children with seizures. His path changed course overnight with a desire to help others in memory of his father and uncle having passed so young, unnecessarily. To this day Joe travels the states gaining education on the Endo-cannabinoid system and product training. Helping others is and has been a passion for Joe, especially educating people on this compound and its potential.

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# Cannabis Addictions & Desires

*By Candy Flores*

If becoming disabled at a young age wasn't enough. August 2016, my body endured many more challenging medical issues. What started off with a scheduled morphine pump revision, ended with a replacement for unknown reasons. It's an understatement to say that this was the most difficult 4 months of my life, not to mention the longest. My body was nowhere near healthy due to continuous surgeries & multiple internal infections within a 4-month time period. My last surgery in December 2016, was a life-changing eye-opener. My body was exhausted both mentally & physically, which at that point I had given up the continuous fight. My battle was over & there was nothing anybody or anything could do. Long days and nights were overwhelming for both my family and I, not to mention that the whole time I was in bed with no strength to even walk. The widespread pain was only getting worse, along with the unforeseen morphine withdrawals. My life was just NOT the same & nobody seemed to understand how I could no longer keep fighting my battle.

Some back history on my health, I was diagnosed with Fibromyalgia & multiple autoimmune diseases which changed my life forever. I began to have multiple health issues that were affecting my internal organs due to my diagnosis. From doctor visits, extensive labs, scans, genetic testing, not to mention every specialist in the book, I was left to realize my normal middle-class life would never be the same. At that point, my husband, parents, and my children took on extra responsibilities to help care for me. Of course, it was not easy, from being a very independent & determined young wife, daughter & mother. We took on my battle as a family. Prior, I had never had any major medical issues & trusted in what my doctors were prescribing and recommending. I have gone from my one daily medication to my new lifestyle of an exhaustive medication list which only got longer with every doctor visit. The medications came from every direction, my

primary care doctor, rheumatologist, gastroenterologist, pulmonologist, and pain management. I was now carrying my own personal medicine bag to all my appointments, something my parents and grandparents were more accustomed to during their time. Let's just say my one daily pill had climbed to at least fifteen medications in no time. Almost every single medication needed something to assist with its side effects. To make things worse, pain management was prescribing me all types of opiates. I was taking Oxycontin<sup>®</sup>, Fentanyl<sup>®</sup>, Norco<sup>®</sup>, Dilaudid<sup>®</sup> plus bi-weekly injections. This new life of mine was overwhelming and I became severely depressed. I no longer felt in control of my own body, not to mention the daily struggle for simple living tasks.

After long lists of opiates, I participated in a trial for a neurostimulator, and sadly for me it did not work. The next trial was the morphine pump and that's when I began to feel relief. However, the two-week trial was just the beginning of an addiction I knew little to nothing about. At that point in my life, I was just looking for any type of relief to ease the intolerable widespread pain that consumed my life. The pump was placed in the hospital by a neurosurgeon instead of outpatient by pain management due to complicated medical history. In 2011 I was on morphine twenty-four a day, seven days a week until 2016.

January 2017 was when I was introduced to cannabis by a friend and cancer survivor. Prior to that day, I had tried it once when I graduated high school and it wasn't for me. Not to mention I was raised knowing nothing about it other than it was a street drug. That so-called street drug was my deliverance, yet I still knew nothing about it other than it was relieving my pain & assisting with my withdrawals. I consumed it multiple times a day until I was finally able to get out of bed and walk on my own again. That was when I promised myself to continue to educate myself about this plant that had saved me and given me hope to continue fighting this uninvited battle. So that's exactly what I did. Along with the natural way of healing myself, I continued studying cannabis and learning everything I could. It was very challenging and conflicting since I too had raised my children that cannabis was harmful and bad. I was miseducated in that area and

taught them just as I had been taught. Continuing the stigma around cannabis unintentionally. So, you can only imagine the difficulty and uncertainty I had to overcome not only with my children but with my family. It took me over a year to even come out of the closet with being a cannabis user. Familiarizing myself with this new lifestyle was not easy, but amazing indeed. Educating was the key to my first year along with lots of trial and error on teaching myself to dose properly. I am not a smoker and will only smoke as the last resort. I am definitely more of an edible type of gal. So nonetheless you know how difficult sorting out the appropriate use of edibles can be going in blindly and alone. Yet the challenges and obstacles could not stop me, I was so driven and eager to continue familiarizing myself with all the benefits. I was so grateful that cannabis had given me a new life. A life with fewer flare-ups, fewer hospitalizations, fewer medications & not to mention less stress. I began to feel like ME again, which meant lots of love to give to myself and my loved ones.

As my journey continued, my overall health was stable & my body was in remission not to mention my chronic widespread pain was finally tolerable. This amazing plant gave me life again, I was back to being a wife, mother, and daughter. I was starting a new chapter “Highly” motivated on my journey (LOL, if you know what I mean!). I couldn’t get enough of learning about ALL the cannabis benefits. My new addiction was learning about cannabis and I could and wanted to save everybody I could. Yes addicted, it was now my desire to help others and share my personal testimony. It was not about pushing the actual cannabis; I wanted to share experiences to help educate others and end the stigma.

That desire to help others helped me in return. Supporting others enabled me to overcome the emotional pain I endured during my excruciating opiate withdrawals from my long-term morphine pump. It gave me the courage to move forward and reveal the mask. At the same time, it gave me the courage to believe in myself again and with that being said I started weaning myself off all the pharmaceutical drugs I was consuming. This new me brought back the go-getter in me and I was more

determined than ever. I now stand tall and proud! Yup! A whole 5'1" tall and I no longer have my fifteen medications long list. I am down to one, yes ONE pill a day which is my thyroid daily medication due to my Hashimoto's Disease.

Despite the many roadblocks, I hurdled over and continued twice as strong. In which I reminded myself daily of my accomplishments. They may have been small to others, but in my eyes, they were BIG, because only if you've been in my shoes do you truly know my struggles.

Those who knew me personally saw my daily battles prior to cannabis. Some asked questions out of curiosity, others compassion. Either way, I was past the mask and I was ready for all the questions, even to just discuss the pros and cons. Whether or not I convinced my friends and family with my living proof that cannabis works, I strongly believe they will come around.

Five years ago, I was very ill & unhealthy, I thought it was over. Physicians told my family there was not much they could do. I was sent home with no intentions of overcoming the poisonous withdrawals. The internal infections and back-to-back surgeries within a 4-month time frame had taken over my body both physically and mentally.

I personally saw and felt my struggles, but I never stopped to think about what others observed. My life was just so overwhelming, but several weeks ago I actually had the opportunity to hear it from an established very well-known individual. It was very unexpected yet gave me more motivation. This person was a previous neighbor of ours and heard my name from a mutual known source and drove to where I was at for confirmation. Yes, she was in shock when she walked in and saw me. There were tears of joy and disbelief all at the same time. I was just as astonished as her because I wasn't aware that others could actually see what I was going through. At that very moment, I didn't know how to react, instead of thinking about my reaction I immediately shared my testimony with her. She was blissful to see me and hear my victory. I was in a slump that week struggling to put my words on paper for this book, she gave me that extra courage right when I needed it to write this story for

you.

# About Candy Flores



I am a middle-aged Hispanic female born & raised in Corpus Christi, TX I am a medical cannabis patient, cannabis advocate, cannabis enthusiast, cannabis activist. I am married with 4 adult children & 1 amazing granddaughter. I became disabled approximately 13yrs ago, prior to that I was Asst Chief of Operations for a local pediatric office. Between those 13 yrs, I worked part-time when my body allowed it due to my multiple health conditions. 5yrs ago cannabis saved my life, thankfully, to a very dear female who was a cancer survivor & cannabis user. If it wasn't for her I don't know how much longer it would've taken for me to have tried cannabis. She will definitely be getting an autographed copy of the book to remind her how thankful I am for her introducing it to me. With the passion & desire I have for our natural cannabis plant, I decided to open a wellness CBD shop. The shop will be unique in many ways & want to make sure our clients don't go through what I experienced prior to my cannabis journey. That's where my Cannabis Addictions & Desires kick in. I am driven by this plant & never get enough. I just know the benefits firsthand & want to help others be better versions of themselves.

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# Creating My Place In Cannabis

*By Joyce Gerber*

**M**y journey from political candidate to cannabis entrepreneur, or as my father would have said *from politics to pot*, began as such journeys do. I was moving forward from disappointment and failure. But I'm nothing if not persistent and when I jumped into the cannabis industry I didn't know how important that skill set would be.

Cannabis was introduced to me by my older brother around 1978, just as the war on drugs was heating up and drugs - all drugs - were very scary to me. I still tried some, including alcohol, but despite feeling pretty good when I smoked cannabis, I used it sparingly because I worried about damaging my brain.

Cannabis came back into my life when I became this person I never expected to be, a mom. Twenty-three years ago, when the turmoil and tedium of domesticity were cast upon me, I found a group of mom-friends who did like their wine but a few also liked their cannabis. And I liked it too. But I was misinformed, as we all were, and cannabis remained a secret I shared only with a few mom friends when we had our occasional nights out.

Before momhood, I was an ambitious young woman who decided to get a law degree as a way to elevate my voice and to make a positive difference in the world. I thought that if I expanded my mind with an old-fashioned legal education, I could assume my place in the "real" world, like my father, and not get stuck in female domesticity.

But, during the second semester of my third year of law school, I realized I did not have nervous indigestion during the weeks leading up to my mid-terms; I was pregnant. My husband and I were not planning on starting a family before I took the bar exam, but sometimes life just happens. I like to boast that my son was with me when I took the bar exam in 1998, thus proving that a woman's uterus and brain can work

simultaneously. But when Josh arrived a few months after taking the bar, my world became transfixed on him. So, despite my claims of equality and my rants against the constraints of domestic expectations on my personal agency, I became the person I *never* expected to be.

A stay-at-home mom.

For many years I was the mom who stayed home and did all the things moms are supposed to do. During those years it felt like no matter what I did or how much I knew, my life would be defined by my uterus and not my brain. It was, to be honest, frustrating. And for many years I carried around a story in my head that something was wrong with me because I was continually failing in the world of professional-monetized work while trying to raise two human beings.

Although there were days when I felt very alone and isolated, I now know we are an army, women like me. Moms who've done what we've always done; raised our families, served our communities, kept the world organized. But we expected to do more, than the generations before, because we were given so much when we were younger. I am a child of the '70s, the generation that was taught by our feminist-leaning mothers that we would not be defined by our bodies, but by our minds.

They were wrong.

Those grand predictions of a more equitable society have not come true for most women in this world, so what was the purpose of the more equitable society our mothers were trying to build? They may not have known themselves, but I believe they hoped to deter the catastrophe of continuing the status quo and create a space for change. Change is neither good nor bad, it is simply inevitable. And our mothers' purpose was to create that space to help me and my sisters believe we could be seen as leaders and change agents in our worlds.

Despite my education and privilege, for many years I couldn't shake that small voice in the back of my head that I was failing because I was not quite good enough.

I was able to rewrite the narrative of my life, the nagging belief that I

was not quite good enough, on a warm June morning in 2018. On that morning, it had been almost two years since I'd reinvested myself in a search for monetized employment. As I got dressed I listened to the news on the small television in my bedroom. I was getting ready for another day of searching for something that felt impossible to find when I heard that Anthony Bourdain - celebrity chef, author, world traveler – had killed himself. This news made me sad, really sad. Why it made me so sad is still a bit of a mystery because I didn't know Anthony Bourdain, I'd only seen him on my television screen. But I felt a kinship with Anthony because he was a storyteller, and so am I. My family loved watching him share his perspective of this big and beautiful world through his food adventures, and he seemed to own the narrative of a life well-lived. But he had his demons, as we all do, and when he chose to end his time with us it shocked me. It shocked me enough to worry that if I did not change the trajectory of my own narrative, my story would end like his.

When my husband found me sobbing in my home office, he put down his bags and he listened. Rick sat quietly next to me as I told him how shocked I was by Anthony Bourdain's death. I told him how I felt a sadness I didn't seem able to shake. I told him how ashamed I felt in my continual failure to hold down paid employment. How disappointed I still felt about losing what I had thought would be my "forever" job. How it still pained me that I'd lost that hard-fought election. He listened, but I couldn't stop crying.

I felt like a failure.

It's true that I fail a lot, but that's because I'm not afraid to try. Although I'm familiar with the dark place in my head, I've been able to find healing through tennis, faith, writing, and lately cannabis. But at that time, I suffered feelings of wasted potential that I had internalized as sadness. I felt my educated mind was trapped in a body that created life and therefore I had to choose between caring for that life or facing an ever-uphill battle of being both a parent and a professional and worrying about failing at both. Since I could never multi-task, I gave up on being a respected and well-compensated professional.

What I think is that the women of my generation shifted the reality of what it means to be a human with a vagina. We had hoped things would be better for us than they were for our mothers, but I think maybe our lives are a little bit worse as we all lived with a constant hum of disappointment instilled in us from the rules of the different worlds we inhabited. No matter how we achieved as either a parent or a professional, somehow we were never quite good enough.

But I'm not wired to give in to the vortex of uncertainty and accepting failure requires a certain level of flexibility and willingness to transition, a skill forced upon me. That morning when I heard the news about Anthony Bourdain it broke something deep inside of me. On that morning, once I'd stopped crying, I recognized I was not just sad about his lost life but was angry that the world had made me feel unwelcome and purposeless. I understood I had to stop judging myself because it didn't matter if strangers couldn't see my value. I had to embrace the uncertainty and stop apologizing for failing in a system that never really wanted me. I am good enough. That's what Anthony pushed me to do, to see the futility of my fight against the system as a struggle for one.

Paradoxically, I also know that one person can create a space for positive change, so that's what I'm focused on now. The women of my generation are not perfect but we are more than good enough. We are working to make this world better for our children, both girls and boys, and we are giving them the space, creating change, so they can see themselves as leaders and change agents. That's why we, mothers and caregivers, must be leaders in this emerging cannabis industry.

I remain sorrowful that Anthony Bourdain chose to end his life, but I know that his untimely death changed me for the better. I'm not ashamed anymore about my perceived failures because when I stopped crying for Anthony I took the time to look at the life I've created. The narrative of my life is good. My children have given me beauty and music and without them, my world would be devoid of so much color and joy. I'm not glad to have failed so often in the quest to feel needed in the "real" world, but I know that what I have is a life that adds value to our world and so do you.

With my renewed quest to leave this world a better place with the skills and talents I do have, I am now focused on empowering women-centric cannabis culture with the podcast I created and host, The Canna Mom Show. The stories told by the canna mom advocates, entrepreneurs, and practitioners will help all of us move beyond our misguided fears and demonization of this miraculous plant. Cannabis is a plant that crosses every industry and will have a place in every community in our country, very soon. I'm proud to have found this community of women and am focused on doing my part to build a cannabis culture that is founded on the values of caregivers because that is what our cannabis plant is too.

As for me, I found that by sharing the canna stories of the women building this industry I created a space for myself in cannabis and found purpose, healing, and community. What I know is this industry needs all of us to bring what we can to the table because our wisdom is needed to create something new from this ancient plant that begins with cultivating a culture of caregiving. And wouldn't it be ironic if this plant that has divided our country along class and color since the beginning of prohibition, devastating families and communities across the continent, could be the plant that heals us, our communities, and our planet?

# About Joyce Gerber



Joyce Gerber is the Creator and Host of the award-winning podcast, *The Canna Mom Show*. Joyce believes the narrative around cannabis and caregiving needs to change and she's using her unique voice to do just that. Joyce has raised two children who are a bit amazed she is a maternal voice of cannabis. Her husband, who has supported her through multiple professional transitions including law, politics, and factory work, is proud of her persistence. Joyce is a 1998 graduate of the Northeastern University School of Law with a degree in Urban Policy from Tufts University and an undergraduate degree from Connecticut College. When asked to describe his mom, Joyce's son said, "She is a force to be reckoned with."

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# Shine a Light for Change

*By Charlana McKeithen*

I was born and raised in a New Jersey community hit hard by the war on drugs. I also come from a long lineage of successful entrepreneurs. From an early age, the importance of education, faith, and advocacy was instilled in me.

As a kid, I remember my father selling drugs. I would travel with him and usually a girlfriend to New York to purchase them to bring back and sell. I didn't know what was happening at the time. My father was protective and caring and shrouded his activities from me with horse and carriage through Central Park and sightseeing, like riding by John Lennon's house. I had no clue why we were there, just that I was able to do fun activities. When we didn't travel to New York my father ran a store that was a cover for his illegal activity. Over time I learned more from family and friends. I learned the ins and outs of drug dealing early.

Throughout my younger years, I had a few friends that consumed cannabis. I tried it, but it made me go to sleep. I didn't want to sleep when I was supposed to be hanging out with my friends!! While I wasn't perfect, I was also scared of my mom so I didn't follow my friends into too much mischief; especially if there was any chance of it getting back to mom. In my mother's household, it was "say YES to GOD and NO to drugs!"

In high school, I didn't use marijuana (cannabis). I spent most of my free time going to New York and seeing my Godmother and Godsister. After graduating high school, I attended Northeastern University. I believe my passion for advocacy started to take shape in college. In two years, I became president of the Black Student Association and vice president of Black Engineering Students. I realized at an early age that I could find my worth and value through helping others. To this day, I continue to advocate for those who cannot speak for themselves. As a black woman working in the information technology industry in the early 90s, I broke barriers

holding various leadership positions in a white male-dominated space. Much like the state of the current cannabis industry.

Several years ago, I was diagnosed with severe depression and bipolar disorder. I would not come out of the house for months at a time. I didn't want to take medication, but I finally gave in after repeatedly being told "if you're serious about getting the help you will take the medication." I was serious about getting help. So, I started taking the medication. The first few months of taking medication I would feel great. Then, as time went on, things would change and I began to feel suicidal. This would then prompt my physician to change the medication. I would again do great for two to three months, only for things to fall apart, and I would be suicidal again.

Initially, I really didn't notice the pattern. When you're in the midst of suicidal ideation, it's difficult to notice the forming of a pattern and it's difficult to notice trends you might normally see outside of your own situation. All I knew was that I was suffering and the medication was only working for short periods of time before the thoughts of suicide were back in my mind. This pattern went on for many years. It was unnerving because the thoughts were becoming more real each time and I was increasingly anxious and discouraged but holding tight to my faith. I could not be the only person who experienced increased suicidal ideation while taking medication. It was at this point that I decided to start doing my own research. As I searched online, I found that many people cannot tolerate antidepressants. I realized that I was one of those people. So I had to put my wellness in my own hands. I stopped taking the pills. I had to be intentional and learn skills to balance my thoughts and day-to-day activities. This would include not watching certain violent and negative TV shows or movies. I had to take care to not subject myself to graphic images or scenes. I realized I had to take care of my brain to keep myself in balance by removing as much negativity as possible. This is a lifelong journey for those of us who struggle with mental health and autoimmune diseases. Moving forward a few years, it was discovered that I had fibroids on my uterus. The fibroids were so bad that the bleeding caused me to be

anemic. I had a minimally-invasive fibroid surgery to try and mitigate the symptoms. Unfortunately after the surgery, not only did the bleeding never stop, but it continued and got much worse. I was bleeding so much it was suggested I have blood transfusions. This idea terrified me. My uncle I shared a birthday with and was named after died from untested blood transfusions in the 1980s. Even though I knew blood donations were screened and much safer, I was overwhelmed with fear and refused. The doctor looked at me and said if you don't do the blood transfusions now you will DIE! With tears running down my face, I agreed to move forward.

The blood transfusions, we think, were the potential cause of my fibromyalgia. Our bodies are not prepared to deal with trauma. With all the excessive blood loss, month after month, my body continuously went into shock. The blood transfusions left me so weak that I couldn't get out of bed by myself.

Now that I have an autoimmune disease the general treatment plan for fibromyalgia is with antidepressants and pain medication. For individuals who are unable to tolerate these types of medication, this is a problem. I also do not want to take any controlled substances like opioids or steroids for pain management. Having limitations caused by multiple medical conditions, I slowly and steadily began losing my quality of life. I sometimes struggled not only to leave the house but just walking from room to room was excruciating at times. There were many days when I couldn't get out of bed by myself. I could no longer take care of myself. I had to bring in a caregiver. I had been independent all of my life and yet I now needed to depend on others to help me every single day. Under duress, I started accepting this type of assistance. It has been one of the most difficult things I've ever had to do. I felt like I was giving up my independence. I would often feel hopeless and I was miserable. I just stayed in the house every single day. People would not see me for months at a time, even years. I didn't know how to handle what was going with me physically, so mentally I started to shut down. It was at this low time on my journey that a relative introduced me to the medicinal side of cannabis.

This was when things started to take a turn for the better!

Throughout all of the ups and downs with my health, I closely watched the cannabis industry. It piqued my interest, so I started exploring ways I could become more involved. I found that using cannabis allowed me to do more than what I had been doing before. Cannabis allowed me to be able to go out of the house and interact with the world again. I wasn't at full capacity, but I was doing much better than I had been in a long time. As I continued using medical cannabis, I was able to start attending cannabis events, conferences, and was able to participate in one of the largest cannabis conferences in New York.

I have come to realize that life as a medical cannabis patient has its pros and cons. Cannabis medicine can help you get off prescription medication. It also has the potential to make you feel a lot better from day-to-day. A huge disadvantage, I have found, is that medical cannabis is expensive. A full cannabis regimen for someone with my conditions can be very costly. Many people who want to utilize medical cannabis are oftentimes disabled with very limited income. This is when my passion for advocacy and cannabis came together. I knew that it was important for me to start advocating for myself and for others to have access to safe and affordable medicine. It wasn't easy putting on a smile when I was actually in pain. I pushed forward to speak at events while being sick. I put together informational sessions to help erase the stigma surrounding cannabis in the Black and Latino communities. These communities have been hardest hit by the War on Drugs and would fully benefit from the cannabis industry. However, we did not have access to information about the benefits of cannabis. They did not understand how much this plant could help people medicinally. I wanted to share this information with them and be a voice for them as well. This is when my passion really grew and I started exploring ways to become involved legislatively. I began researching and learned that I could lend my voice and my story at another level of advocacy. I was granted the opportunity to testify before the New Jersey State Assembly and Senate. My testimony, along with others, helped to reform and pass bills like the Adult Use Bill and the Decriminalization

Bill.

What people may not understand is the significance that cannabis advocates have made in helping pave the way for the cannabis industry to materialize. There are now people in this industry making millions of dollars from the plant, while the communities hardest hit by the war on drugs are still incarcerated and struggling to rebuild their lives. As advocates, we have to make sure that reparations are established and that Black and Latino communities are presented opportunities in the phenomenon that was built on their backs. Sometimes it is very difficult to take care of myself and continue the work of advocacy. The pain that I experience can be excruciating and my energy level depleted. There are still times that I have to be in bed for days, sometimes a week at a time. I understand that I cannot do this without help. If I am going to continue to fight, I need to depend on allyship. The relationships I have made along the way are invaluable to me. I realize that I am not alone in this struggle to ask for help the same way I learned to ask for help with my disability.

While doing this work, I have had to learn some of life's hardest lessons. That said, being a voice fighting for safe, affordable access to cannabis medicine was worth even the hardest lesson learned. No one teaches you how to be disabled, especially when your condition is not always visible. It is okay to ask for help and It is okay for "helpers" to ask for help too.

It was not easy to make the decision to step out of the "cannabis closet" to defend people's right to access affordable, safe cannabis especially being a person of faith. It takes a great deal of courage and vulnerability to share the message of healing in advocacy. After spending years in catholic education and being dedicated to my church, I shared my journey with my pastor who no longer denounces medical cannabis use at our church (he doesn't promote it). Other churches have invited me to speak where I share demonstrations with hemp to help others realize that cannabis and Christianity are not in conflict with one another.

I have taken personal risks to shine a light and give visibility to people that need the same help and resources as myself. Understand that someone

is out here advocating for you!! The BIPOC community needs to see other BIPOC individuals representing them in the cannabis industry and I hope I do that well. I share my story in hopes of encouraging people to step up regardless of the obstacles. Sometimes I am cheered on for my passion, and sometimes I am criticized. But it is all worth it.

Don't give up the fight!! Keep pushing!! Sharing your story could inspire someone to speak theirs. There will be days that you want to throw in the towel. We all feel that way sometimes. I believe our voices must be unified to move the needle. My sincere hope is that my story of courage in cannabis will inspire others to join the movement. We all should have access to this healing plant. There are people out there who have no voice. Together, We can speak for them. Together, we can spark change.

# About Charlana McKeithen



Charlana McKeithen is the founder and executive director of the political action committee and nonprofit: Cannabis Laws Matter (CLM) formerly Garden State NORML. CLM advocates focus on helping blacks, latinos and communities hit hard by the war on drugs benefit from the cannabis industry. CLM also work to create and change cannabis laws and regulations that will work on behalf of the cannabis patients, consumers, and those who have been historically and disproportionately affected by our nation's War on Drugs. Her perspective is that of a 46-year-old disabled black woman who uses medical cannabis as a replacement for multiple prescriptions including opiates.

Charlana is a patient. advocate, educator, citizen lobbyist, public speaker who interacts with many diverse groups including community leaders and politicians. She serves on several cannabis boards using her 25+ years of training as an analytical thinker to challenge equity and racial injustices due to the prohibition of cannabis.

As an analytical thinker and problem solver, Charlana works tirelessly to lobby statewide, representing the vastly underserved communities of seniors, women, and minorities. Charlana wants every resident in the great state of New Jersey to have a platform to end the prohibition of cannabis, creating social equity, and social justice for those hardest hit by the 'war on drugs.'

~

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# Out of the Bud is How We Bloom

*By Franny Tacy*

I was born in a tornado. Let's rewind a few decades to a fateful night in Cincinnati, Ohio. Sirens were blaring and there were warnings screaming on the radio and television. Bottom line: No one was allowed outside and you had to be a fool to even consider leaving your house. My Mama had a real problem. She was nine months pregnant with me and just as Mother Nature's water broke, so did hers. A vicious storm was rolling in and it was worse than she thought – all the way around. Up above, it sounded like someone was bowling on her head. That's how loud the claps of thunder were in her ears. Lightning streaked the black skies. And to make it just about the most challenging night in her young, ever-changing life, there were tornado warnings for her county.

There was no choice, but to seek medical help. All of a sudden, my Mama found herself on the floorboard of the car, out in the middle of the storm, in labor, gritting her teeth and watching dirt devils blowing down from the sky. By the grace of God, she made it to the hospital. In the nick of time. She was only in that labor room for a little while when I took my first breath – her fierce, rider of the storm girl who decided to make her debut in a most dramatic way. “What are you going to call your brand-new baby girl?” the doc asked her. “Frances,” she said. “Or maybe I should name her The Force.”

Both names stuck. As for the second one, well, I'll take that as a compliment, Mama! It would also serve as some great foreshadowing for the rest of my life.

\* \* \* \* \*

Hey there! I'm Frances Tacy, but call me Franny. By the way, people still think I'm a force of nature, especially as a businesswoman in a tough, often tumultuous world. Whatever you want to call me, I'm here to blaze trails for myself and the women who come after me. Ladies, I promise that

we can't do it quietly, which is fine with me. I'm here to shout about being one of the first female farmers specializing in the growth and sale of cannabis and certainly the first in North Carolina. I've been able to ride quite a few storms in order to lead a franchise retail business of ten stores in five states with national distribution.

Our company tagline at Franny's Farmacy is "Seed to Shelf, Hemp to Health". We plant, process, manufacture, distribute and have wholesale and retail stores and accounts across the nation. People look at me as the ultimate success story in the CBD market and hemp industry, which is experiencing staggering and rapid growth. One breath ago, we were fighting for legalization in my state, and the next thing you know, we have a full-on "gold rush" on our hands.

As the world has opened its eyes wide to the potentials of CBD, interest in cannabis as a lucrative and sustainable business has grown exponentially. Google searches for CBD have more than quadrupled since 2017 with the stigma of it being "a gateway drug" fading at the same time. Hemp has flowered into a diverse business opportunity for all including female growers, artisans, and hemp processors dedicated to this miracle plant that provides healing and relief to millions of grateful users. Hemp farmers are thriving with what I call this "top crop." That's the good news. Now, here comes the inevitable "but." But, it's not just a matter of clearing some land and doing a little planting. With growth comes those invaluable lessons learned in the trenches of a new industry.

## **EARLY YEARS**

I like to think I was raised with farming and entrepreneurship in my blood. My childhood was spent in Nashville, Tennessee where I grew up with a cattle farming father and a banking executive mother.

My youthful, independent years included time spent in the beautiful west where I earned a Forestry degree from Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff. I was a motivated college student who got straight A's and learned a bit about my future business on fun weekends with my friends. Later, I lived on a farm where I did research on agricultural crops – and we

grew a little weed. We had a little extra room. I guess it was my first crop.

Back to the serious stuff. After time spent doing agricultural crop research and also hosting a monthly Full Moon Festival, I completed my graduate degree in education at Tennessee State University. And then I set out to conquer the world!

Four years of teaching later and I found myself in Asheville, North Carolina where I had a successful career in pharmaceutical sales managing a \$10 million territory for over 12 years. Yet, I felt like I was working for the “un-healthcare system” with an overabundance of new and highly addicted ways to relieve pain. I’m more of the philosophy of plants, not pills, and real health with what we put in our bodies and our minds. I’m also a believer that our thoughts bring us good health.

I felt drawn toward the land, which always has the answers – and always has provided humans with the solutions for health issues. This focus on going back to basics forced me to quit my corporate career to focus on . . . something that sounded totally nuts!

By 2008, my husband folded his business in construction because of the biggest downturn in economic history. He was out of work and we had lost millions of dollars. We decided to buy a farm. What could go wrong when you leap and then look?

## **BUYING THE FARM**

Yeah, okay, I know how that sounds. You buy the farm and that’s it for some people, as the saying goes. In my case, the exact opposite happened. I like to say that “I bought the farm” and found my life.

In 2012, I took a giant leap and bought uncultivated land in Leicester, North Carolina, and called it: FRANNY’S FARM. My own farm was a childhood dream, but my husband and I didn’t have the money to buy this gorgeous parcel of land, so I found another way through a USDA farm loan while still working in pharmaceutical sales to help pay the bills. I refused to take no for an answer and prepared a 400-page document to apply for the loan. The reason I qualified was that farming had been my

hobby for the last decade and I had farming experience. My Dad was a farmer and I was already involved in the industry. The end results? I was one of six women that year in the entire US who was granted that kind of loan to buy her own farm.

We were living in a 1000 square foot house in town. The farm had no house, no water, no electricity . . . nothing. There wasn't even a driveway. It was just a gorgeous south-facing slope of pristine land that was 20 minutes from downtown Asheville where our son went to school. Eventually, my husband, our son (now an engineer with John Deere), and yours truly put our mutual contracting skills to work and built a farmhouse. We would live on top and use the bottom as a workshop that now is an event center.

I was in seventh heaven. What better stability than being able to grow your own food. I was going to take pharma to farm now even though I'd plant seeds and then go visit doctors across the state and sell my pharmaceuticals. All the doctors would yell out, "Here comes the hippie in high heels." This time in my life defined my battle cry.

In a nutshell, I hate it when people tell me "no, you can't do that, Franny. No, you can't recover from that Franny. No, you'll never get the money, Franny. No, you can't get a loan."

*Franny-ism: Can't is a mindset. Hell, yes, I can!*

A quick word about life on the farm. It might sound like a romantic dream to certain people – or a nightmare if this is not your thing. Farming is actually damn hard work, long hours, fatigue, and never-ending worry about your crops and animals. Quickly, I became a poultry queen who raised heritage chickens, but I also grew veggies, herbs, and fruit trees. All were started from seeds that were grafted. We couldn't buy mature trees because they were so expensive. Now, we have orchards.

I tell people that it takes three years for anything perennial to grow. The first year, it sleeps. The second year, it creeps. The third year, it leaps. On our farm, it took an extra year to leap. I was still out there every single day figuring out how time heals, grows, and changes everything. That's

what gives me hope in my business when I'm still in the grind seven days a week living the life of an entrepreneur.

On the farm, when your head hits the pillow at night, you sleep like the dead.

My farming experience taught me the ropes from the ground (literally) up. In the beginning, this meant that my business of farming was always in the red. It's just "money out" in those early days and never a return. At this point, I got really creative and built Airbnb cabins, threw events and weddings, and even did goat yoga with TV stations coming to our farm to film it. My goal was to discover how farming could be a viable business. Remember, at the time hemp was illegal, and I had to build my farm based on other crops.

It didn't take long for me to realize that owning your own farm is one of the toughest endeavors in the world – and can be one of the most expensive and emotionally depleting.

By 2017, I was speaking at a regional expo about the business of farming to farmers in Raleigh, North Carolina. I passed a man who had this little, bitty silver folding table. He sat in one of those hard metal folding chairs with a sign above it that read: Let Farmers Grow Hemp. I usually don't stop to ask anyone questions or seek approval. My energetic curiosity sometimes gets the better of me, which is why I stopped for this man and began to ask him questions. Our conversation was pleasant and on the way out, he asked me to sign this petition he was supporting. "I need 100,000 signatures," he said.

I had questions – and he had answers although I never believe what I hear. I knew I'd go home and do my own research.

This is what I found: North Carolina was the seventh state in the United States at the time to enroll in the Industrial Hemp Pilot Program based on the 2014 Farm Bill. Four times, it had gone through the North Carolina state legislature, which refused to pass a bill to make it legal. On the fifth try at precisely 11:59 p.m., the bill finally passed and farmers could legally grow hemp. As with all things, you're either in or you're out.

I would leap, but not look again. My goal was to be the biggest problem solver in this new industry where there were no mentors. At least, not yet. There aren't any answers because you're a pioneer.

At the time in the west, there were a handful of states that had legalized, but mostly those who ran them weren't experts. They were outlaws. And good businesses don't do business with outlaws.

Hemp made perfect sense to me from a business standpoint, except to my son Zach. He called me out one day after he heard me say, "Marijuana is going to save this country." "Oh, right Mom," said teenage Zach. "I thought you didn't smoke weed."

He had a point. I always wondered why people grew things they didn't use. But, then the lightbulb moment: There was so much more to this business than just smoking weed. As a crop, hemp made perfect sense. I found myself so passionate about a plant that can be food, shelter, clothing, fiber, building materials, and medicine. Hemp has over 50 uses that have nothing to do with smoking weed. This was an economy changer, which is what I said in my Ted Talk.

Without knowing it, I became the first female legal hemp farmer in North Carolina in over 75 years. It was a scary beginning. We had black, government choppers flying over our land. It was a visit from the DEA. Remember, hemp was not legal as a plant until the end of 2019. I started planting it in 2017. I was even the voice in 2019 at the national press conference in Washington D.C. as a representation for small-scale farmers growing up. Way to distinguish yourself, Franny!

So many people have asked me how I did it. How do you start anything? You just do it! You leap more than you look. It's all retrospective. You figure it out and you do it.

This might be a good time for another Franny-ism: There are no mistakes; only lessons.

A year later in 2018, I pivoted to hemp varieties grown for cannabinoid production and opened my first Franny's Farmacy Dispensary in downtown Asheville, North Carolina. My "seed to shelf" CBD products

hit the press and fans wrote that they could be trusted for their purity and quality. I made sure we never used fillers or unnecessary ingredients. We were the manufacturers and I used my experience in paramedical to open a manufacturing facility so we could control the quality. I did this with no manufacturing middleman at a reasonable price. And I prioritized the product itself, ensuring that every customer enjoys a safe, natural, regulated CBD experience.

My first year converting the farm to hemp was in 2018. I raised money to fund a Ph.D. student and geneticist who worked on finding a variety of hemp that would be unique to Franny's. That was a great success, proving that building a team is key to business success in my opinion. It wasn't long before I was a featured farmer in Hemp History Week. I was also asked to do a Ted Talk in 2018. I was frickin' terrified as shit, but I did it.

In 2019, I also opened my second and third dispensary and was working with product development on our future manufacturing plans while doing R and D now with 22 women. I was growing! However, my husband and I weren't as a couple.

During my divorce, it was hard to come up with an agreement. It was time for the truth: I was the one who needed to run this company. By 2021, I bought him out and showed my ex the door. I was already a year deep into new research and development for the business and knew this was my future. From that point on, it was about surrounding myself with a good team including a new COO and a great lawyer to sort out the rest.

My roots spread. My "spare time" was spent launching marketing plans and developing new businesses. In a blink, I had all these calls from reporters who wanted to interview me, which led to many public speaking offers again after COVID shutting all of that down in 2020.

*Franny-ism: Sometimes in life, everything converges and it is just balls to the wall.*

## **TIMES OF STRUGGLE**

Being female in *any* business endeavor can present a unique set of

challenges. You could say that I've been through the ringer over the years including a vicious divorce where my ex tried to take my business name along with the actual business and the farm where the hemp is grown. Two words: Good lawyer. Let's just say that he was unsuccessful in all of the above endeavors. Insert yoga breath here, honey!

I've also sat at serious boardroom tables with men offering me millions to buy my good name and thus basically own me. I've had to remind myself during the tough times that there are no mistakes. Repeat after me: It's all just lessons. It's a better experience to look back at all of the lessons you've learned because that's positive. It also equals growth in the right direction.

## **THE FUTURE**

I'm super excited about where this industry is headed for women who want to join the cause. In fact, I believe it's essential to integrate authentic leadership's streamlined dynamics into the CBD industry. There's a staggering number of female entrepreneurs as founders and general managers of hemp companies. Many do not own their own businesses. Women in leadership positions are spearheading the business of CBD and women are also a strong buying force for themselves, their husbands, and even pets. We just need more female owners to really call the shots.

There remains a unique set of challenges for every state-legal market including licensing structures, consumer demographic, regulatory environments, banking dynamic, government influences, regulatory history, etc. What works for other retail organizations doesn't necessarily work for the hemp industry.

The two keys for me: Integrity – It's essential to any business because ethical leaders attract business people who want to work with reliable leaders who mean what they say and say what they mean. I take no shit because that's bullshit. But I'm fair and reasonable. It's leading to an empowered staff that impacts our business and community. What keeps them going is they have something that means something.

Empathy – It has been a wild ride since CBD products exploded in

2018 on the retail market. This leads to a stressed staff and burnout. I have shaped Franny's Farmacy into a more cohesive, unified, and dynamic organization leading to a supported and understood staff.

### **A FEW OF MY FINAL TAKE-AWAYS:**

**\*IT IS THE JOURNEY –AND IT STOPS WITH YOUR LAST BREATH.** I'm writing this chapter while on a road trip with my son Zach to delve into my new hemp clothing line. Being in his presence during my business trip was elevating. I was also able to talk to him about how the journey in life is everything. You're never done until you take your last breath. The race doesn't end with a finish line. It's about getting there. I'm lucky to get there while participating in this monumental business that will change our world.

**BECOME A HYBRID:** People try to pigeonhole me as a farmer as part of some preconceived notion that women can only be one thing. We're not just a wife. Or a mother. Or a businesswoman. Or a farmer. Or an expert cannabis farmer. I'm a little bit of everything and that makes my roots stronger.

**TAKE CARE OF YOU:** Wherever I go, I work and I play. I'm tired at night. I feel a very healthy body, mind, and spirit. Yoga and meditation help keep my thoughts clear.

**HAVE A MOTTO:** Mine is "May my thoughts be clear; my heart be kind and my words be true. Do no harm. Take no shit!"

**JUST START:** I just did a 5K. People are like, "Franny, how did you do it?" My answer: "Easy, I just did it. One foot in front of the other. When you're in hell just go really fast."

**BE YOUR OWN FORCE/ WRITE YOUR OWN STORY:** This is the time when I get to write my own story. I don't want anyone writing it for me. I'm penning the next chapter with dirt on my hands and a smile on my face. Maybe you're just at step one, but that's just fine as wine.

Remember: "Out of the bud is how we bloom!"

# About Franny Tacy



**F**ranny is the first female hemp farmer in NC and has entered the scene with a force behind education and collaboration. The story begins at their farm in Asheville and now Franny is Co-CEO of their vertically integrated hemp business Franny's Farmacy. They grow, process, manufacture, and distribute their branded product lines to their dispensaries, wholesale and online customers in every state. Franny also participates in the hemp Research Trials with NC State and is a founder of the non-profit Women in Hemp non-profit.

Originally from Nashville, TN, Frances "Franny" Tacy was born to a banker (mother) and a cattle farmer (father). Franny moved out west to attend school and earned a Forestry degree from Northern Arizona University. While in school she went back to her farming roots and lived on a sustainable farm for a few years. This was 1 of 3 sustainable agricultural programs in the US at that time.

Farmer Franny is on a mission to share her hemp knowledge and is paving the way for farmers in her state and beyond. Look for her TedX talk, listen, and learn about the obstacles she faced growing a crop that is

federally illegal and how it's turning into a positive movement for "Women in Hemp," hemp growers, artisans, processors, and businesses with aligned "farmer-focused" values. Franny has opened multiple CBD Dispensaries, called Franny's Farmacy, and are now offering franchises. They are taking their hemp from plant to processing to product offering tinctures, topicals, smokeables, vape hardware, edibles, pet line, and more.

Seed to Shelf ~ Hemp and Health

~

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# Being Well On Purpose

*By Andrea Sallis*

## **PAIN OR PASSION**

**M**y journey with cannabis took on a whole new life when I became my mother's primary caregiver. Having resigned from my career in 2014 to care for mom, I watched her quality of life begin to decline fairly quickly. I recall friends asking about my mother's medical issues and I would share that “she had everything but cancer!”. I learned that people would ask about her diagnosis as a way to measure their own life experience and know they aren't alone. As I cared for my mom over the next few years, I came to realize that autoimmune deficiencies are peculiar and can cause such devastation to our bodies. I would tell people jokingly that “I'm not a doctor nor do I play one on tv”, but caring for a loved one prescribed 15 prescriptions and taking 26 pills a day, I often felt I was crossing into the medical field on some level every day! I quickly recognized that the rollercoaster we were riding on could not have been how mom envisioned spending her golden years. Our days were filled with the ups and downs of endless appointments, sorting pills, managing end-stage renal disease, heart failure, COPD, stubborn constipation, and no appetite.

It certainly sounds bleak. As caregivers, most of us did not raise our hands with enthusiasm and say, “I'll make the commitment to sacrifice and regularly put life on hold to ensure the most important people in our lives are cared for.” While there were daily struggles, I chose to do it with all the love I could muster. Less of me and more for mom. In an effort to give mom's everyday life the best quality, we chose to add cannabis. But of course, it is never that easy.

I have always been an advocate for our most underserved communities and have served as a board member for nonprofit organizations that focus on formerly incarcerated offenders' and community reentry programs.

More often than not, the ex-offender served time on drug charges. I have personally seen the impact of very skewed drug policies: unfair incarcerations, long sentences, targeted communities, and the collateral damage of broken families. My mother knew it too. How was I going to introduce this beautiful flower to her? It was a real covert operation; stealth in every sense imaginable. Mom was a faith-centered woman. One who overflowed with love and compassion for others. Taking care of my mother meant managing her daily meals, chores, being her chauffeur, and helping with daily hygiene.

My lovely mother was also a smoker. I was able to understand that the hand-to-mouth sensation of smoking gave mom a sense of relief, and for her was therapeutic. Besides, getting her to stop at this stage was pointless. Smoking cigarettes was one thing, but consuming cannabis as a conscious lifestyle choice was quite another. In Texas, there was no culture of “cannabis as medicine.”

One day Mom and I decided that she would not continue to take all of her prescribed medication. They simply were not helping. We agreed on the daily minimum: heart meds, hydrocodone, and nitroglycerin spray.

I have a culinary background and this is where it gets interesting. My mom happily enjoyed my cooking. So, I decided to get fancy with breakfast, lunch, and dinner, adding medical cannabis to her meals. Full disclosure: mom was not aware that I was microdosing her with infused buttered toast, sauces, and adding fresh cannabis in her smoothies. Within days, it seemed her appetite improved, her skin brightened, her energy restored, and her cigarette smoking decreased. I quietly continued this for about a year. Seeing mom like her old self; animated and loving was an amazing blessing.

The crucial time came to inform mom that I'd been adding small increments of, as she knows it, “marijuana,” to her diet and praying that she doesn't disown me. Putting it mildly, mom was shocked and she pressed all those “how dare you” buttons towards me. She was worried about overdosing, addiction, and possible drug interactions. I knelt down with mom, by her favorite chair, and gently shared how long she had been

consuming and how the medication had been administered. We also discussed what effects were observable to both of us. At that moment and with great pride and caution, mom asked me to stop.

To be honest, I was truly hurt. First, that she felt betrayed for not telling her when my intentions were only to help. Second, that I had to stop infusing her meals, even after the amazing results we had seen.

A few days later, Mom yelled for me. I rushed to her room to check on her. Mom calmly asked me about “the green stuff,” as she famously calls it. Mom revealed to me that she had wanted to try it, but had no idea how to ask about trying marijuana. Had we exhausted all options with her care? One of mom’s main concerns was if God would allow it for her. Is it possible that what the Creator provided to us for healing and comfort, is just a flower?

Mom continued to ask questions and I continued to provide her with quality answers. Mom wanted to know everything about cooking with cannabis. She was genuinely curious. I showed her cannabutter, oils, ground flower, and finally, the bud itself. She pointed out in astonishment: “I can go to jail for having this and it looks like oregano? This is what the fuss is about, this flower?” Mom realized she could not tell anyone what she was doing, which made no sense to her. At that moment, Mom reflected that as a southern grown woman of Faith in her 70s, she had been misled about marijuana her entire life.

Mom knew a little about the new business venture I was entertaining. I had entered the cannabis industry and was an original leader in “Women Grow”, a cannabis leadership organization. I was successful in bringing the first “Women Grow” chapter to Texas. Even with all of my tenacity toward a place in the industry, mom had never seen a bud before. What better way to introduce my lifestyle brand, “Being Well on Purpose” than having mom as my first client?

## **MAKING CANNABIS MY BUSINESS**

As mom’s primary caregiver, I accompanied her to medical appointments. One day sitting in the waiting room, the doctor strolls over to give an update on mom’s procedure. He was immediately distracted by the large

red marijuana leaf sticker on the outside of my laptop. He admitted intrigue and asked to learn more. He also shared that mom was doing fine. I proceeded with caution; sharing with him about my role with “Women Grow,” and how I brought its first chapter to Dallas, Texas. He was impressed with my accomplishment and began asking more questions. We continued our conversation with him saying that he wanted to know more. He shared that while he would not include cannabis treatment in his medical documentation if it was giving mom a better quality of life, he was in support. He further asked that I contact the nurse practitioner in his office and walk her through the process of finding cannabis for her daughter with epilepsy. Sharing that she was desperate, exhausted, and considering a move to Colorado to help her daughter. It was amazing to be having a healthy conversation about medical marijuana, in the hospital, with a physician who wanted more information about how Doctors can have open cannabis conversations with their patients.

Being my mother’s primary caregiver inspired me to start Healthway Education Systems and Healthway Wellness. Our vision is to bridge the gap between state agencies, medical regulating bodies, and the patients and people in between. Physicians have not been taught about the endocannabinoid system in school. Patients desire to be well on purpose and without the threat of going to jail. Both parties are fearful of the unknown. At Healthway Education Systems and Healthway Wellness, we offer cannabis certification programs to healthcare professionals, to people seeking employment in the cannabis industry, and to patients wanting to learn responsible consumption. One of the most trusted relationships there can be is one between a patient and their doctor. Patients and the medical community would rather bury their heads in the sand than speak openly about cannabis. Patients utilize it for various health reasons, from relaxation to pharmaceutical substitution, yet it is never discussed. I find myself advocating for both sides, my right to choose and the doctors not prepared to recommend. I wanted to know how business works and how change happens. What do you do when you haven't been invited to the tables where these conversations happen? You create your own table.

## **DOING THE WORK**

My courage in cannabis lives and breathes on its own now. I've had the honor to be part of countless firsts in this industry, including a feature, and the only Texan, in the documentary "Women of Weed." Our national community has become more relaxed regarding cannabidiol and tetrahydrocannabinol. To be truly beneficial, real cannabinoid therapy, we need them, and all the other 100+ molecules in this amazing plant.

It was my utmost pleasure caring for my mother before she passed. We taught each other so much. She and I were able to express our love for one another in a real, honest, and open way. My mommy became my biggest cheerleader on my journey with cannabis. Her support gave me the courage to be unashamed in what now is my career. I bring life through plant-based medicine. Never a sad day at work when the task is to introduce medical hemp and marijuana to first-time consumers.

What I impart to you is this; Our health is essential, and what we believe is too. I believe I can be well on purpose; in my mind, in my body, and in my soul, with cannabis. We were not told the truth about this incredible plant. If you will allow yourself to believe that cannabis can heal and can be a part of the greater good, the best is surely ahead for you.

# About Andrea Sallis



Andrea Sallis is the visionary officer of Healthway Education Systems and Be Well on Purpose, a lifestyle in cannabis. Her desire for clear cannabis conversations has led her to address the overwhelming need for healthcare education, responsible patient care, and the continued social impact of targeted communities in cannabis.

With Healthway, over the past five years, Ms. Sallis has assisted patients, healthcare professionals, and corporate America, to be more “Pro Patient.” People want to exhaust every option of wellness: including adding hemp and cannabis as part of the solution. Healthway provides a catalog of education modules from What Physicians Need to Know, Cannabis and Children, to Cannabis and Opioids and Autoimmune care with cannabis.

Andrea knows the business of cannabis and in Texas, formed the Texas Hemp Harvesters Association, a membership league, where the Future of Hemp is Now. Ms. Sallis works with licenses in multiple regions along with universities and colleges in the US to shape the supply chain and the innovation hemp and the new applications for this crop.

As far as we’ve come as a nation with more social acceptance of cannabis and hemp, Andrea has not forgotten “Why” cannabis chose her: to bridge the gap between cannabis, commerce, and community.

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[AndreaSallis.com](http://AndreaSallis.com)

[www.Healthwayeducation.com](http://www.Healthwayeducation.com)

[www.txhha.org](http://www.txhha.org)

# On Being Mary Jane: 50 Years Of An Amazing Little Plant

*By Mary Jane Borden*

**S**e habla español,” announced the fourth-grade teacher. “In this class, you’ll go by your Spanish name. Michael, you’ll be Miguel. Susie, you’ll be Susana. Mary Jane, you’ll be ... “ She paused, “um ... you’ll be ... um ... um ... Mariana.” But wait, I said, “Isn’t that Mary Ann? Shouldn’t my name be Maria Juana?”

Mary Jane is a fairly common name. Boxed candies and shoes for little girls share it, but so does cannabis, aka marijuana – as slang and a slam against Blacks, Hispanics, and other minorities. It’s been the riddle of my life.

As the only child of a civil engineer and his stay-at-home wife, I was born into a Welsh family tradition where Mary and Jane were the sole names for women. I grew up in the shadows of steel mills, coal mines, and the endemic poverty that decayed the Ohio River Valley in the age of social activism: the Vietnam War and the assassinations of three iconic U.S. leaders.

***But time moved on ...***

“You’re out, Mary Jane,” said my so-called sister. “You must leave the house by tomorrow.” Incensed, I replied, “That’s not right! There was no notice! No warning! It was just a small, dead plant. YOU pulled it out of the trash!”

Like many college students, I tried marijuana. A bag here, a bag there. When a seed sprouted in a house plant, I promptly plucked the shriveled sprig and placed it in the garbage where the nosy sorority sister stumbled on it.

Without recourse, I found myself a homeless college senior. Unable to

stay the night, I curled up in a lawn chair on the patio of a friend's apartment and contemplated my fate. I had joined the group hoping to find the feelings of sisterhood that I missed as a child. But my quest for family failed thanks to "Reefer Madness" over one little plant.

It was the mid-1970s, shortly after the enactment of the Controlled Substances Act (CSA) that classified cannabis as a "dangerous drug" and placed it in the most restrictive of five federal schedules. The severity of this law manifested from former President Richard Nixon's desire to disenfranchise Blacks and hippies, his perceived political enemies. This madness filtered down to a midwestern college sorority where it snared young people like me.

### ***But time moved on ...***

"Mary Jane? This is the personnel department. You're hired!" said the voice on the phone. I gleefully responded, "Yes, I'll take it!"

This freshly minted MBA had just landed her dream job with a major pharmaceutical company. The position? Marketing analyst for a line of cancer chemotherapy drugs. Good pay. Bucolic office. Free healthcare. A young upwardly mobile professional's jackpot!

It was now the mid-1980s, the dawn of the personal computer. These new office machines and their floppy disks enabled rapid reporting, perfect for analyzing the three factors that drug companies care about most: competition, market share, and percent change. Sales for the firm's flagship product, colloquially called the "Red Devil" due to its acute toxicity (it burns *everything* it touches), grew by the millions.

But there was an uneasy feeling to this growth. Vials, milligrams, and patients became widgets. One plus one. Two times two. Just black ink on white paper; Big Pharma at its finest. Lost were the humanity and suffering behind the shares and percentages.

My responsibilities grew into the management of a database containing 30,000+ cancer patients. The objective was to determine how many reached the Red Devil's maximum lifetime limit of 150 mg. Few appeared to make it that far. Why? I wondered. Short answer, they died. It was a

stunning revelation. A drug meant to cure actually did the opposite; via the numbers, I observed that firsthand.

The once bucolic office began to feel like a gilded dungeon. Ultimately, the Red Devil lost its patent and sales plummeted, making the firm ripe for acquisition. Nine years after I accepted my dream job, the company laid me off and left town.

***But time moved on ...***

“Mary Jane, you’ve gotta see this. It’s so sad ...,” lamented my friend, pointing toward the TV. “They look like drowned cats!” Sure enough, there, on the evening news, was a group of demonstrators, some in wheelchairs, huddled under the overhang of a downtown office building in a cold March rain protesting the pending repeal of SB 2. The image was heartrending.

Reefer Madness accelerated during the 1990s after the passage of nearly a dozen anti-cannabis laws, which affected everything from research to public housing, higher education, employment, licensure, and more. Mandatory minimum sentences magnified incarceration rates, while the federal budget ballooned, and police profited from asset forfeiture. By any standard, social injustice.

Two major developments proved pivotal. The first was the discovery of the endocannabinoid system that runs on chemicals similar to those in the cannabis plant. Present in all people, this system modulates bodily functions from pain to reproduction to appetite and even immune response. It explains why cannabis can be curative and medicinal.

The second was the emergence of the medical marijuana patient. Those newly enacted laws had the sick, dying, and disabled facing long prison sentences. Should these individuals appear before a judge, the logical plea seemed to be a defense of medical necessity: they needed cannabis medicinally to counter disabling medical conditions. That was the essence of SB 2. But, with a Reefer Madness mindset, the Ohio General Assembly repealed the defense and the protests ensued.

Therein, I found my calling: medical marijuana patient activism.

***But time moved on ...***

“Hey, Mary Jane – check the Ohio Attorney General’s website. We’re certified!!” proclaimed the organization’s president. I grinned, “We can now collect signatures!” This news launched a proverbial rocket ship.

Organizing activists and lobbying for legislation during the prior decade began to seem like an endless treadmill. Five bills were introduced over 10 years with barely a hearing to show for them. Tantalizingly, voters in several states like neighboring Michigan had passed medical marijuana ballot initiatives. It was 2012; Washington and Colorado voters had just legalized adult use. Could Ohio be next?

So, our group “hung out a shingle,” wrote ballot language, recruited volunteers, and filed the necessary paperwork. After two trial runs, one measure took off. It was short, sweet, poetic, and powerful. Given the endocannabinoid system, Ohioans have the *right* to use cannabis as medicine. That was its crux.

The OAG’s certification sparked a whirlwind of planning, petitions, circulators, meetings, events, debates, and databases. In a matter of months, our small group grew from a handful to over 8,000 volunteers segued into their respective counties and regions under the leadership of 88 “County Captains” and five Regional Managers. The media came calling almost daily. The project seemed to have everything, except the necessary funding ... in the neighborhood of \$20 million.

As the most well-funded ballot measures would learn, not even that much money was enough to ensure passage.

***But time moved on ...***

“Mr. Chairman and members of the Ohio Senate, my name is Mary Jane Borden. I am here today to testify as a proponent of medicinal marijuana in Ohio.”

There’s a weird dynamic in politics: legislators fear their constituents. While they claim to represent them in theory, lawmakers resent the public taking issues into their own hands and passing ballot initiatives to sidestep the legislative process. As activists have learned, the mere threat of the

ballot will spur action.

After two decades of legislative inaction and the threat of better-funded ballot measures, the Ohio General Assembly speedily enacted a medical cannabis program in 2016. Patients were no longer “drowned cats,” but finally, deserving citizens.

Several years passed before Ohio’s Medical Marijuana Control Program became fully functional. However, counts for 2021 currently stand at over 125,000 active patients, 27 licensed cultivators, and 57 operating dispensaries, with 73 more planned to open in the coming year. Since its inception, 62 thousand pounds of plant material have been produced for sales totaling over \$500 million.

As I harken back to the trashcan and the shriveled sprig, I smile. Is this what success looks like?

*But time moved on ...*

“Mary Jane, you have breast cancer,” said the surgical oncologist. “The mammogram showed a malignant lump,” Her assistant added, “It’s triple-negative. Chemo is your treatment option.” What? Had the world come full circle?

Triple-negative means that the tumor lacks certain hormonal proteins. Treatments based on them will fail, leaving doctors to recommend systemic chemotherapy agents like the Red Devil, the very same drug I analyzed 40 years earlier. I knew these agents far too well. A trend called “neoadjuvant” (that increases corporate market share) has these drugs given before surgery to supposedly shrink the tumor.

This dire diagnosis came amid another major medical crisis – COVID-19. For days on end, the twenty-four-hour news cycle repeated a litany of grim statistics. Hundreds of thousands were dead and even more gravely ill. Survival depended on immunity. What do anticancer drugs do? Suppress the immune system.

So, I took a road less traveled.

While I underwent surgery and radiation, I substituted cannabis for chemo, specifically Rick Simpson Oil (RSO). The name originates from a

Canadian man who used highly concentrated THC oil to heal skin cancer. It worked and he published his results. He never patented his product, nor trademarked the term. Still, RSO came to define highly concentrated oils of various THC ratios that are consumed orally and purchased from dispensaries.

The RSO worked well. Not only did the tumor disappear prior to surgery, but the surgical team listed cannabis in my discharge orders as a mandatory medicine. Given the severity of cancer, this was the best possible outcome. I recovered quickly and raked leaves one week later. I had zero symptoms, little pain, and no apparent side effects. One year later, the cancer is still gone, my immune system is intact, my health is good, and I evaded COVID-19.

Remarkable results like these have sparked substantial interest in the anticancer and antiviral properties of cannabis, with research into both growing exponentially over the last five years.

*But time moved on ...*

I'm older now. More than likely, the majority of my life is behind me. I'm closer to age 80 than 50. On this perch, I look back over the 50+ years since I left the Ohio River Valley, graduated from college, worked for Big Pharma, found my calling, fielded ballot issues, testified before the Ohio General Assembly, and survived cancer. Through it all, cannabis has been a constant friend.

I feel gratified to have played a part in taking the plant from verboten to ubiquitous, but more work remains to be done. Social inequalities still exist as does Reefer Madness. Legislators remain leery of the people. The Controlled Substances Act continues unchanged. Mary Jane is still slang for marijuana.

Unraveling the War on Drugs and righting 50 years of its madness requires a new generation of activism with the courage to endure rejection, attempt the impossible and take the road less traveled. Like me, they may well find their courage in cannabis.

Es increíble lo que una pequeña planta puede hacer.

(It's amazing what one little plant can do!)



# About Mary Jane Borden



**M**ary Jane Borden is an artist, author, advocate, and award-winning cannabis activist from Westerville, Ohio. She holds a B.A. from Otterbein University, an MBA from the University of Dayton, and the prestigious Accredited in Public Relations (APR) certification from the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA). Her vast and diverse background includes nine years as a pharmaceutical industry analyst of cancer chemotherapy drugs and ten years of online media activism to promote sensible drug policies. During her 40 years of involvement in marijuana policy, Ms. Borden has co-founded and led five cannabis-oriented groups; co-authored four proposed amendments to the Ohio Constitution; lobbied for six medical marijuana bills; composed 41 funded grants totaling \$1.3 million; written 50 articles for the Columbus Free Press; given hundreds of media interviews and testified before the Ohio House and Senate to encourage passage of Ohio’s medical cannabis law. She currently writes a monthly compilation of cannabis news under the moniker “Mary Jane’s Guide” and has launched the website and Facebook page CannabinArt to display her artwork and articles.

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# Spark Of Hope

*By Rebecca Finch*

Spring of 2010 was a very joyous time for our family. Two beautiful boys and one on his way. This was a time to enjoy life's blessings and look forward to the years ahead! Hello, my name is Rebecca Finch and I would like to take the time to share a heartfelt story with you. I pray this story will help you gain a spark of hope in your life.

On May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2010, Noah Joseph Finch was born at home, joining his two brothers, Josiah and Jedidiah. Noah was born a healthy baby boy. However, in the shadows, my husband's health was showing signs of concern. As a young couple, we didn't think too much of it at the time. We simply decided to seek medical help to resolve the issue. Joe underwent medical testing and we took to raising our small children. Through thick and thin, sickness and health, we knew staying together as a family and trusting in the Lord would guide us through whatever was to come.

By spring 2011, Joe started to have major complications with his health. He underwent more medical testing. On a happy note, our son Jedidiah turned 3! This day will forever remain bittersweet. While celebrating our baby boy's birthday, we received devastating news regarding my husband. The neurosurgeon sat us down to review Joe's MRI scans. "It's worse than cancer," the doctor explains. The MRI showed a view of my husband's brain, neck, and spine. Not just one or two tumors, but literally hundreds of tumors were invading my husband's body. One very large one, in particular, was compressed against his spinal cord and close to the main artery in his neck. This tumor had to be removed as soon as possible. Neurofibromatosis, or NF1, is the diagnosis given to Joe. This surgery was extremely dangerous and the beginning of many more high risk surgeries to come.

The Lord doesn't promise it will be easy, but He does promise to be with you! Going into my husband's first major surgery was very difficult,

as his wife and the mother of his children. The location of this tumor could cause Joe to be quadriplegic. The worst-case scenario being Joe may not survive at all. Joe was willing to take the chance, for his family, to get well again. Joe went into his first surgery like a champion he is. He was in complete peace. Our friends, family, and the church had gathered around in support. We were blessed to learn the tumor was cancer-free! We were beyond thankful. Through several more benign tumors and one sprout of cancer, Joe has been able to overcome the obstacles.

Once Joe recovered from his first major surgery, we decided to become proactive with our children's health. In order for my children to get the proper care they needed, we had to drive four hours downstate. In the Summer of 2011, we met a very special pediatric neurological specialist. During this initial visit and examination, we discovered two of our three babies were diagnosed with neurofibromatosis.

The children began a consistent schedule of MRIs, eye appointments, and examinations. Jedidiah began this journey at age three, little Noah age one. It's not an easy task watching your child get prepped for a procedure; then hold their hands while they drift off to sleep with anesthesia. My mind was filled with thoughts about what the future would hold, knowing their father has dealt with the same condition. Suffice it to say, Joe and I knew monitoring our boys' diagnosis was in the best interest of our children and their future.

Moving forward a few years. Jedidiah is now seven and Noah is five. We are still attending routine MRIs for the two boys. During an MRI checkup, it was discovered that Jedidiah had a glioma on his optic nerve pathway which needed to be monitored more closely. We were assured that this was fairly common with NF patients. Noah was stable with no reported concerns. Thankfully, as time progressed, we were able to witness a small miracle: Jedidiah's glioma had disappeared! We were beyond thankful!

As our three boys grew, so did our family. Joe and I welcomed an additional three littles to the world! Nariah, Nehemiah, and Elijah brought our family to eight! Nehemiah has also been diagnosed with NF1. As

dutiful parents, we continued our routine medical trips downstate.

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Do not lean on your own understanding.*

In the Spring of 2017, we discovered that Noah had a lump on the top of his head. An MRI showed enlarged ventricles in his brain and a small glioma near his optic pathway. As a result, Noah's specialty appointments became more frequent. During these years, Joe also continued to battle NF1, having several life-threatening surgeries. It was during these years that our family learned to take one day at a time and enjoy life's small blessings. Thankfully, we were able to homeschool all of our children, which made all the difference in tending to our family's health needs. I truly believe these experiences allowed us to grow as a family. Through the ups and downs of life, we grew stronger together.

During one of Noah's appointments, a new tumor was discovered on his brain. The tumor caused many complications: headaches, vomiting, and fatigue. We knew something wasn't quite right with our Noah. The specialist reassured me that he would be okay. He said that Noah's condition was "nothing that couldn't be fixed with chemotherapy."

Noah's doctors sat us down in a meeting and recommended a biopsy of Noah's tumor and weekly chemotherapy.

However, with everything that went on with Joe's condition and treatments, we didn't feel jumping into chemo was the best decision. Instead of committing to conventional medical protocol right away, we asked for more time to pray about how to proceed. Our specialist was very gracious and gave us three weeks.

Sit, pray, counsel with others, and pray some more. This is what we did. We also amplified our organic, non-gmo diet and canceled out as many chemicals as we could from our household.

Driving to Noah's next appointment, I remember praying that the tumor had shrunk! Unfortunately, this was not the case. The doctor again recommended chemotherapy and a biopsy of the tumor. Again, we asked for more time because we weren't confident this was the best avenue. Had

we allowed the doctors to do a biopsy of his tumor, they could have proven whether or not it was cancer. On the other hand, doing the biopsy could potentially cause a cancerous tumor to spread. I was not about to let that happen.

Refusing the Doctor's recommendation for biopsy and chemotherapy was a terrifying decision to make, not only for my Noah but also concerning my other children as well. I had heard that if a parent denies chemotherapy for their child, it could be considered a form of neglect, prompting child protective services to get involved. Not knowing if this was true or not, I was determined to proceed with finding another avenue for my son. I prayed the Lord would protect our family as a whole. The specialist again granted us three more weeks.

*Be still and know that I am God.*

This scripture was a steady reminder for me during this stage in our family's life. We were so fortunate to have the support of friends and family, reminding us to not worry; "God has got this."

In April 2018, a dear friend of mine referred us to "Mr. Joe" for an alternative treatment option. Mr. Joe and his family were, and still are a gift from God! His passion in life is to help cancer patients. He helps these people through medicinal cannabis. We now lovingly refer to "Mr. Joe" as "Uncle Joe."

I have to be honest; with my faith, I genuinely felt guilty even attempting to try this alternative treatment for my son. As a rule, we don't smoke or drink. Never in a million years would we have used cannabis recreationally! We had tried all the other holistic alternatives that we could think of and had researched for the immune system. We used organics, green teas, high doses of vitamin C, essential oils, turmeric, and even liquid O2! My husband and I looked at this as the final ultimatum: either chemo or cannabis. Lord knew we needed to do something. We chose to start treating Noah's condition with cannabis.

At Noah's next appointment with the specialist, I was very nervous. We had started the alternative treatments and would soon know the

outcome: good, bad, or nothing at all. Noah's MRI showed no change to the tumor. Not good news, but not necessarily bad news. His ventricles would need to continue to be monitored. We left this appointment with 3 weeks until his next MRI. We had three weeks to ramp up on cannabis treatments. I knew it was time to take the proper steps to get Noah, my eight-year-old, legal access to medical cannabis. If I was going to use this alternative treatment, I wanted to do it right.

Getting Noah legal access to cannabis was a long, grueling process! I drove out to my son's main pediatric doctor several times. He wanted to help, but the paperwork was written in terms that prevented him from being able to do so.

In all, we got denied twice in our quest to shrink Noah's tumor with cannabis. Thankfully, a local clinic helped us through the application process. As a mother, I felt much better using cannabis for my son when it was legal and legit.

By June 2018, Noah's treatments were going well. His little body was getting acclimated to the medication nicely. He even became more artistic! Noah's signature is creating crosses. Noah has loved sharing these crosses with his specialists and doctors.

Noah's next MRI showed that the tumor had taken on a slightly different form. It looked as if there was a ring around the outside of the brain mass. We had learned that this was a natural process with cannabis; it essentially eats away at the tumor. Seeing this was absolutely amazing! While the specialist was concerned the tumor hadn't shrunk in size, they did acknowledge that it had most definitely changed in form! A spark of hope!

Fast forward thirty days and we are heading to Noah's next MRI. I am my usual nervous wreck, anticipating the results of the MRI. Noah, on the other hand, is a champ!

In viewing Noah's MRI, the results show that the tumor had shrunk! The specialist reported that Noah's tumor had been collapsing!!! We also learned the fluid from the enlarged ventricles was less problematic than

before. Praise be to God! No more talk of chemo or any other medical procedures was recommended at the time! The specialist sent us on our way saying “keep on doing what you are doing.” We would continue with routine checkups and MRIs.

We continued to treat his condition with medical cannabis. Noah’s tumor continued to get smaller and smaller. Appointments were reduced to every two months, to every four months, to every six months, to once per year!

It is such a relief and blessing to witness something so devastating turn into something so special. I can’t imagine the outcome had we chosen the other option. How would our lives be different? Would Noah still be with us today? I am grateful to have chosen the path we took. It was a courageous step, but one with a beautiful story to share in the end.

Noah is now an 11-year-old young man full of life! He currently enjoys horseback riding, dancing, and practicing his guitar. He still shares the gospel wherever he goes. A life with purpose. Noah is just another beautiful soul and life saved with cannabis. We have prayed for his testimony to get out to help others in his shoes. I believe without a shadow of a doubt that cannabis was his avenue for healing. I pray that our story will be a spark of hope in your life. I pray that in our story, you might find your Courage in Cannabis.

# About Rebecca Finch



**R**ebecca Eve Finch is a wife, a mother of six, and a business owner. Rebecca has been serving in the medical community for over a decade. Her goal is to serve others and live out the Lord's purpose for her and her family.

Rebecca and her family reside in beautiful Traverse City Michigan. She and her husband each own their own business: Finch's Outdoor and Son Set Care LLC.

Since the young family had discovered the diagnosis of NF, they have learned to appreciate life and cherish the time they have with one another. Faith, support, medical, and medicinals have all contributed towards this family's continued time with one another. Rebecca hopes her family's story can contribute a spark of hope in the lives of others.

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# Alcoholism, Faith and Cannabis

*By Matthew Grandel*

It is with great pleasure that I share how I believe cannabis saved my life. I have many reasons for writing this chapter that I've decided to share with the world. Today, I am going to discuss a few of the important reasons. These experiences have been meaningful to me in the course of my lifetime. I've learned so much about this majestic plant over the years. I hope that by sharing my story, someone else who is suffering from alcoholism might be saved as well. I hope my story can give others comfort and understanding regarding this alternative medicine, this mystical ancient plant. Furthermore, I hope to be actively breaking down the wall of the stigma that looms over cannabis: that she is a dangerous and destructive drug with no medical value. This plant is a needed resource for our civilization. It is necessary for healing, comfort, cleaner energy, and agriculture. That is only to name a few of the plant's many potential resources. Most importantly and within the words of this chapter, I truly believe this plant saved my life.

In childhood, I discovered that there were these things called "drugs." I was taught to believe that ALL drugs were bad. As children, we don't typically learn about drugs on our own. We find out about them in different ways as we get older. The way I was introduced to the idea that drugs existed was through my family upbringing and grade school DARE program; the brainchild of Nancy Reagan and the Reagan administration.

In my family, alcohol was the main drug of choice and a huge factor for who I have become today. I witnessed firsthand alcohol's destruction of the health and LOVE of my household.

Before I was born, my father became disabled at 21 years old as the result of a terrible car accident. The accident was a result of his drinking. I was limited with what dad and I could do together due to his being physically disabled with permanent injuries.

My father was a man who followed the law. I believe he thought marijuana was a dangerous drug because it is a Schedule 1 drug by our federal government. He refused narcotics to manage his terrible pain. Unfortunately, I believe that it was the pain that destroyed my parents' marriage and ultimately killed my father. This had a huge impact on me as a child because I didn't understand at the time the damage abuse can do. I've learned now, and I am not embarrassed to say that I am a recovering alcoholic. I proudly say my sober date is April 25th, 2012. This was the day my dad passed away.

To be clear, my mother never used drugs or alcohol and was the one that kept our household moving along. My mother came from a farming family. My grandmother and grandfather owned a farm in Ravenna, Ohio, and grew produce for the local area. This is where I found my passion for the earth and agriculture. At a young age, I knew I wanted to follow in their footsteps and eventually become involved in horticulture.

Like many people, I first tried marijuana recreationally to get "high." I can remember like it was yesterday. I was a young, cocky 17 year old who sparked up my first joint behind a beverage store called Mike and Reggie's Beverage in Maple Heights. I was accompanied by two of my best friends at the time. I can recall how nervous I was. I had the thoughts, "What if this kills me?" and "Am I going to die doing this?" "What if the cops show up?" I will admit to it now that I was indeed scared to death to try it! As a young adolescent, I had a hard time finding my way when I started high school at Maple Heights High. Having just transferred schools, it wasn't easy being the new kid. I was not well-liked. I wanted out of school in my 9th-grade year. My mother, as wonderful as she is, believed in me and allowed me to excuse high school, to obtain my GED, and attend community college for Plant Science. This was the road I took. I started taking classes at night and took a full-time position at the local Petitti's Garden Center in Maple Heights during the day. Here I worked in the glasshouse for two years. After that, I made a move to a private landscaping firm named 4J Landscape for cultural work and installation. It was during this time and two weeks after my 21st birthday, that I was pulled over for DUI. This was a very embarrassing moment for me, I felt humiliated! I continued working with 4J Landscaping for the next five

years, before Incorporating my own business. All along the way, my drinking habits were progressing.

August 1, 2000, I started a business with a business partner. Together we formed an equal partnership doing landscape installation. I ran this business as Vice President for the next 14 years. We were very successful. As a young entrepreneur, I was young and wild. I could drink heavily at night and be ready to labor hard by 7 am the next day. It was quite often that I got drunk, but I wasn't the kind that drank in the morning. We ran a professional company. Though I knew a lot of guys that needed that beer to get going, that wasn't my style. I did have a pattern of drinking though as many drinkers do. I drank at night when I got home from work. Every night I consumed, on average, a 12 pack of beer, or a pint of liquor. Healthwise, I thought things were going great. I felt like I was on top of the world.

In 2003, I ran into a long-time childhood friend named Traci at a bar in Cleveland, Ohio. Shortly after reuniting, we started dating. It was about a year and a half later that we decided to get married in 2005. We were young and starting out. We bought our first home together and decided to start a family. I was still drinking every day. In 2006 sadly, soon before the birth of our first child, we unexpectedly lost our daughter. This was devastating to us!! No amount of words can tell you how we felt inside. The loss was a catalyst that fueled my drinking. I hid my pain and kept it inside, instead of getting the help I needed at the time. I drank instead. Unaware this choice was costing me my health. I was slowly damaging several areas of my body from consuming the alcohol. My wife and I moved on the best we could. Not too long after our baby girl died, we were successful in having our son, Ardin. He is now 13 years old and is an amazing young man who makes us proud!

It has been my experience over the years that people who really do not understand or agree with cannabis are missing out on the many health benefits this plant (as a whole plant) has to offer. My dad was one of those old school people that grew up during a time of strong prohibition regarding marijuana and was brainwashed by the propaganda "Marijuana Kills!"

One weekend, I stopped by dad's house to say hello. Knowing what kind of stubborn pain he was going through, I pulled out two joints and tried to give them to him. It didn't go so well. My dad said: "If you bring that shit over here again, you're no longer welcome in my home!" Then he asked me to leave, which I did. I couldn't believe that my own dad would disown me because of a plant. This is where I really knew that people needed to learn that this is a safe, natural, harmless, medicine that is mild in effects. I believe that this plant is beneficial to our bodies, and is here on earth by no mistake!

In 2008, while I was still drinking regularly, I started to have symptoms of developing health issues. I became very sick; vomiting, experiencing circulatory and stomach problems and had very high blood pressure. I ended up at the hospital. I wanted to stop drinking. I tried and failed, time after time. I attended AA and I even had a life coach. Nothing seemed to work for me. I wanted to quit drinking but just couldn't seem to do so.

I have always been a man of reverence and faith. I turned to my faith and I asked GOD for his GRACE to give me the strength to stop drinking. Well, that was the night of April 25th, 2012. It was 1am, I was at home drunk, grieving the sudden loss of my dad, just a few hours earlier. I had an intervention that night. I want the world to know! I prayed to GOD and asked him to help me to break my addiction to alcohol. I was out of options. I can remember smoking a joint, grieving, and praying. I had always used cannabis as a spiritual tool to ground me. GOD and the HOLY SPIRIT came to me that night. The room became windy. There was a force of energy in the room I could feel! I had goosebumps all over! THIS WAS GOD, and it was the ancient cannabis medicine that grounded me for that very experience. GOD said to me that night: "I give you the strength to let go of your alcoholism and to go forward with your life using my plants of this earth to heal from now forward!" The wind in the room went away and I could feel the energy force was gone. I knew the message I was to receive was that cannabis was here to heal. Not just cannabis but all plants have a purpose to heal His people and in many different ways. To give us comfort, and to sustain a better environment for us. To give a natural organic way of life that is less harmful to humans.

April 25, 2012, was the last time I drank alcohol. I use cannabis on occasion when needed to manage my pain from arthritis and several previous injuries. This experience has humbled me. It gave me thanks and allowed me to let go of the addiction and focus on what is important in life: Family, friends, and home. I learned from this experience that love starts inside first. I have learned that once you love yourself, you can share it outside with this big universe. Finally, I have learned to take the best possible care of my body.

Currently, I am still in landscape horticulture. Twenty-seven years later and I wouldn't have it any other way. I am a Cultural Horticulturist working in a government position. I am hopeful for the opportunity to enter into the cannabis space in the future as a grower. This Wonderful plant is a calling and is needed by many. I educate myself daily regarding cannabis and always seek to learn something new. We are living during a time of scientific study and discovery. It is these discoveries that excite and interest me and I encourage you to learn too.

In closing, let me leave you with this: Thank GOD for your blessings, love your body, and love others too.

# About Matthew Grandel



**M**atthew Grandel was born and raised in Cleveland, Ohio. I grew up in a Catholic household. Horticulture is my life calling. I Love GOD and nature and believe in karma. I believe what goes around comes around. My best life success is beating alcohol! I have overpowered the demons of alcohol with Cannabis. I was given back Life. I am a proud father. Always an entrepreneur. A visionary person. Open-minded. I live with Love and positivity and am blessed. I live with thanks to GOD. Cannabis science fascinates me. I love to learn and teach what I know.

~

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# What?!? I Have Cannabis Voice!

*By Edd-Lainia Etherly-Muhammad*

Yep, it is official. I am a weed head. I am a church-going, tax-paying, slightly conservative, mother, wife, sister, grandmother, educator, and weed head. I did not start out this way. In fact, I was never even interested in trying cannabis before adulthood. I thought cannabis was something that unambitious, stupid people did. Just being honest. I viewed it as a gateway drug that led people down the “road to drugs” to more addictive substances like cocaine and heroin. I have since grown up and learned I was completely WRONG! Coming from a family that has a history of addiction, I have always been very conscientious about what substances I put into my body. I never wanted to be controlled by addiction. What I did not realize, however, is that I was being controlled by ignorance.

Understand, I am not who you would look at and think – “hmm, I bet she uses weed.” That would probably be the furthest thought from your mind when you look at me. I went to private school my whole life, in fact, I graduated from an all-girls catholic college preparatory high school! We were not “those girls” and we did not do “those kinds of things!” Now I own a CBD retail store and educate others on the benefits of using cannabis!

My cannabis story started many years ago when I was taking a liturgical dance class. I was having a conversation with one of the ladies in class. We were talking about our controversial career choices. Mine is in the field of sexual health/enhancement education and hers is in the cannabis industry! OMG, What?!?! Did she say weed??? Yep, she had a dispensary and shared her story about her journey and how cannabis helped her manage her MS symptoms. I shared with her about my struggles with migraine pain and she told me that cannabis could help. I was curious but cautious. This was taboo but I wanted to know more. I went home and could not stop thinking about the conversation that had

transpired that day. I needed to know more. Understand that I had never tried cannabis. I was as green as green could be. So, my liturgical dance friend came by and educated me on the medical benefits of cannabis and how it could help with my migraine pain. I was amazed at how much it helped her and others. I really wanted this to be something that could help me, too. After all, my prescription migraine medicine was very costly and if this could help, then why not?

I started doing more research. The more I learned, the more my viewpoint on cannabis changed. The more testimonials I started to hear, the more I wanted to know. Why were we not being educated on the healing properties of this amazing plant? Once I gathered enough research, now it was time to talk to mom. My mom was a medical professional, and she was my in-house, go-to, medical advisor. I started sharing what I had been learning about cannabis with my mother. After a few weeks of me doing additional research and my mom doing research, it became clear that I needed to try this. I needed to see for myself if cannabis lived up to the hype. Still nervous about going down this road, I made an appointment for the evaluation, had my medical records sent over for review, and went in for my appointment. After a thorough review of my medical records and history, an examination, and an interview, I was approved to obtain a medical marijuana card! Yippee! I am legal now!

Understand that up until this point, I still had not actually tried cannabis. I was excited and nervous, all at the same time. Kind of like how you might feel going out on a first date with someone you do not know but have heard all these wonderful things about. Yep, I was about to go on my first date with cannabis. With my paperwork in hand, I was ready to walk into the dispensary and obtain marijuana for the first time in my life. I did not know what to expect but I did not expect to see what I saw! They had so many different things! It was like a cannabis candy shop! They had infused mac & cheese, brownies, ice cream, candy, peanut butter, popcorn, butter, BBQ sauce, oil, and of course actual weed! I was overwhelmed. The young man working there could tell I was a newbie and carefully answered my many questions. I made my selections, paid for my items,

and then I put everything in my trunk and nervously drove home.

That night I tried weed for the first time. I had a cream cheese infused brownie. It was good but I could taste the “weedy” flavor. I waited to see what would happen. I wondered what it would feel like. I had heard crazy stories growing up. I think I was expecting to see the paint drip off the walls or have the cat start talking or something crazy and weird like that! About an hour and a half later, it kicked in. My body started to tingle, and I felt really relaxed. My migraine pain went away and was replaced with extra special awareness in areas I was not expecting. That was a fun side effect. I was not expecting that, but absolutely not complaining! I slept like a baby that night. Woke up feeling refreshed and ready to take on the new day, pain-free!

Sounds great, right? I should be ready to share my wonderful life-changing experience with the world, right? Wrong! I was not ready to tell people that I was using weed. I mean what would they think of me? I am not that “kind of” person! I was worried about how people would look at me. What would they think about me? Many times, for some women, we feel as if we are constantly striving to be treated with respect and dignity. I was taught growing up that your reputation was everything! I was constantly told to never do anything that would give me a bad name. I struggled with trying to shake off the feelings of guilt and shame. I always felt “on guard” or “on alert”, ready to defend myself at a moment's notice, if someone found out – because I thought I had to somehow prove to people what I was doing was okay. I had to try to convince them that I was not a bad person or making a bad decision! It was exhausting feeling this way and it exacerbated my anxiety! This became a never-ending cycle of loving the relief I was experiencing, all the while still feeling guilt, shame, and anxiety because of it! Which of course led to more migraines! And the cycle continued! All this because of a plant! I was more comfortable explaining to a woman how her body works sexually and how to reclaim her sensuality than I was telling my closest friends that I use cannabis! I had not yet found my cannabis voice; I had not yet cultivated my courage in cannabis.

I like to cook and wanted to start making my own edibles and my friend who owned the dispensary volunteered to teach me how to make various canna items. The one drawback when cooking with cannabis is your house now smells like cannabis. So how am I supposed to make edibles for myself, and hide this from my children? After all, my husband and I have had the “don’t use drugs” talk with them. So now what am I supposed to say to them? “Oops, I was wrong.” Or “My bad. Now it’s okay to use weed?” Having that conversation and sharing with them that I was now using weed, was one of the hardest conversations I have had to have in my life! I did not want them to look down on me or think I was a bad person. I wanted them to still love and respect me. I needed them to understand why I was using it and what I had learned about it. I also needed them to understand that this does not mean they have my permission to hang out with their friends after school and get high. The talk with my children actually went better than expected. I recall feeling so glad when that talk was over!

Fast forward a few years... I discovered CBD!!! I thought this must be a Godsend. All the medicinal benefits of medical marijuana but without the high! Could this be any more perfect? Now I can use a cannabis product and instead of having to stay home or go to bed, I can continue through my day. I can function. This is true freedom for me!

Here is the problem that CBD solved for me. In addition to migraines, I also suffer from an anxiety disorder. Oftentimes, one will trigger or piggyback off the other. Understand, using marijuana helped tremendously with managing my migraines, however, the fear I had about what people would think and how they would look at me, or if I would get fired if my employer found out, continued to plague me. All these things STILL worried me, and these thoughts were constantly running in the back of my mind. It did not matter how educated I became on the topic; my upbringing and those viewpoints were so deeply ingrained in me. They strongly influenced how I felt about using cannabis, despite its helping manage my pain. Sometimes, I even felt guilty about using cannabis and the success I was experiencing with it. CBD helped me become “okay” with my

relationship with cannabis. Now I had something I could share with people, and it had no relation to getting high. It was about getting the help needed, and becoming healthier, not high. CBD allowed me the opportunity to feel better, be productive, and become pain-free. CBD lessened and freed me from the constraints of anxiety, helped me sleep better, and be clearer-headed and focused!

My mom reminded me about the Bible verse that says, “*The leaves of the trees are for healing the nations*” (Rev 22:2). In fact, we have that quote on our website ([www.MarlansMiracles.com](http://www.MarlansMiracles.com)). Mom told me, everything we need to heal ourselves and to stay healthy grows somewhere on this Earth. God gave us this plant for a reason and because man’s limited knowledge and prejudices have kept us from using this plant, it’s especially important to share my story and help others become more aware. I became more aware because someone was courageous enough to share their story with me. It is my duty to share my story with others. I have never been selfish, so why be selfish with this knowledge that could LITERALLY change the quality of someone’s life?

So, that is what I decided to do. I began sharing my experiences with my doctor, family, friends, etc. I now talk about how CBD and cannabis in general, have helped me with my anxiety and migraines, and how it helped my mom with her Parkinson’s symptoms. I am meeting people every day that have so many positive stories to share. I am also meeting people that can benefit from hearing these stories. My mom, Marlan, is no longer with us but as a tribute to her legacy, I opened a CBD store called Marlan’s Miracles. I stepped out on faith, not fear. I no longer hide who I am and what I am doing. Opening Marlan’s Miracles was my public declaration! My official “coming out” to the world! I have found my cannabis voice. I am out here sharing my story and journey with others. I am now experiencing courage in cannabis every single day.

# About Edd-Lainia Etherly-Muhammad



**E**dd-Lainia Etherly-Muhammad is a devoted wife, mother, confidant, and friend. She is a relationship and CBD coach and an educator by calling; an entrepreneur, interpreter, and author by profession; a business professional and consultant by experience; and a change agent and multi-denominational believer in God by purpose. Edd-Lainia is on a mission to enhance the lives of others and help people experience the best of themselves.

Edd-Lainia is the owner of Marlan's Miracles, LLC a health and wellness company whose primary focus is providing high-quality CBD products, resources, coaching, and education. She has an extensive and diverse background in business management, event planning, sexual education, and American Sign Language interpretation.

Edd-Lainia holds degrees in Business Management, Accounting, and ASL Interpretation and she is currently pursuing her Master of Science degree in Interpretation. In addition to being a student and helping others, Edd-Lainia enjoys spending time with her family and friends and giving back to her community. Edd-Lainia is available for coaching, questions,

interviews, and speaking engagements.

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# True Story: Pain in the Flesh

*By: Broderick Randle Jr.*

Towards the end of the eighties and on the evening of May 15, 1989, I came into the world. I was born and raised in Toledo, OH. Both parents of mine unknowingly were carriers of the Sickle Cell Trait. My parents married and had two children over time. My sister and I genetically inherited the blood disease, Sickle Cell Anemia SS. The discovery of our genetic birth condition became a sudden diagnosis for my sister and me. It took a little over a year after my sister was born, that my parents genuinely found out. The lack of awareness and proper education on Sickle Cell Disease within our community and amongst society truly began to show.

For better clarity and understanding, Sickle Cell Anemia is an inherited, genetic, red blood disorder. It can be extremely painful and may cause a crisis severe enough to warrant hospitalization. This is due to the lack of blood flow and oxygen in specific or sometimes multiple areas of the body. Additional factors to consider for those who are dealing with this hidden disability: Sickle Cell Anemia is an autoimmune disease that may also lead to abnormal fatigue from the Anemia. My sister and I spent a large portion of our childhood being treated in children's hospitals all over the Toledo area. No matter where we received treatment, the common go-to seemed to be IV fluids, strong sedative pain meds such as Dilaudid or morphine, given through an I.V. Not something I seek to experience very often. I still remember vividly the first instantaneous rush felt through the delivery of IV medicine. Over time, while growing up with Sickle Cell Anemia, my family had to learn to adapt in so many ways. From informing the school principals and front office to our teachers and staff members. We had to proactively warn and educate them on our condition and classroom needs. Mostly, our arranged accommodations were met and fully understood. The only congruent issue we continued to have were those concerning our peers. A lot of them couldn't quite understand why we may have been absent for multiple days or even weeks at a time. A

consequence of those happenings, and not often considered, were loss of friendships and poor academic performance.

As time went on, I continued developing as a young adult. I noticed a slight trend with the medical care my sister and I were receiving. It often seemed like a never-ending repetitive cycle. There were years of hospitalizations, blood transfusions, a varied amount of pain medicines, and major surgeries. Some form of high-dose medicine is pretty much guaranteed with every hospital visit.

In order to seem normal by any means possible during my high school years, I did my best to be involved in after-school clubs, activities, and sports. I truly enjoyed both the outdoors and fly-fishing clubs. I have a few friends still to this day from those times. Spending time outdoors is most certainly an enjoyable way to pass time. I was even able to work hard and earn a spot on the varsity tennis team. I had no prior experience playing, only pure determination. At the branch campus of the Ohio State University-Lima, I made a lot of genuine friendships and had great life experiences playing baseball for the Barons.

Despite efforts to “normalize” my life, Sickle Cell began to take its toll on my organs, tolerance, dependence, and overall quality of life! It wasn't until my early days of college that I began to explore a change in treatment. I was fully exposed to cannabis towards the end of my freshman year and that summer break. It started with an offering while hanging out with a solid group of friends.

After months of cannabis exploration, and a different direction in social activities, my journey to a better quality of life and wellness started to present itself. It was a complete three hundred and sixty degree turn before I started to notice changes in my health. Pain episodes were becoming less frequent and less severe over time. There was no way that I could mention using cannabis to my mother, grandparents, or doctors. This was due to society's negative stigma and our family's faith-based upbringing. I decided to keep it to myself for a while. I began paying attention to my sister and the handling of her illness during those times. It was almost the exact opposite. Her health began to worsen as more

hospitalizations and surgeries occurred. I would go back home for family visits as often as I could. It wasn't always easy to get a hold of my sick sister, a single mother. She spent the majority of her days working. It started to become clear and evident. The common use of varied painkillers for our disease had taken its toll on my sister's mental strength and some of her physical capabilities. This was truly a very sad situation to witness happening to my only sister.

I'm not a licensed physician or medical doctor. That said, it truly seems that by consistently using cannabis, I have been able to avoid a lot of hospitalizations. There began to be more positive outcomes in my life that were bigger than my secret cannabis use. My increased health and renewed strength made me realize that I could no longer keep cannabis a secret. It was time for me to speak up! I could no longer watch my sister, my mom, and my family go through such hard times with the traditional medication protocol.

I can't say that cannabis cured me of my Sickle Cell Anemia SS. I still have pain, ailments, and the occasional health crisis. I can say that it has provided me with a much better quality of life. Using cannabis as the primary treatment for Sickle Cell, I have more control over my body and am spared dependence on synthetic, potentially addictive prescription opioids. In addition to cannabis, I began to discover there are more natural, healthier approaches to battling Sickle Cell Anemia. Proper diet and enhanced lifestyle choices are important factors to overall health. As I entered adulthood, I continued further research on our condition, medical cannabis, and the laws. After an unforeseen major shoulder surgery, my college career came to a halt. Sickle Cell caused a lack of oxygen and blood flow to my right shoulder. The ball joint collapsed due to necrosis, which results in nagging pain. Post-surgery, I was forced to move back home due to health and financial reasons. However, I was determined to get back to school once my shoulder was all healed and ready to go. I would even go to meet the dean of admissions with my arm in full shoulder cast. I believed by going, it would help to show my determination to finish my bachelor's degree. Unfortunately, I was blocked at the

financial gates and have yet to be able to afford tuition to finish my senior year.

Throughout my surgery recovery and in place of the high-powered pills I was prescribed, my mother allowed me to use cannabis in the garage or car when possible. She wasn't quite 100% all for it at the time. However, she began to believe and see that it genuinely did help me in a positive way, Mom started to believe me as I continued to mention how it might help my sister with her symptoms and chronic opioid use and dependence.

After many trials and tribulations, I am here to say that my sister and I became registered Ohio medical cannabis patients. It isn't always easy being a part of this control program and its many restricting rules and complications. It's still genuinely tough to get myself, her, and others on a consistent plan of recovery. Most doctors will continue giving pain med prescriptions, yet refuse to support patients who want to reduce medications and explore other options. I've seen it all my life. I've personally been kicked out of my sister's medical appointments for simply asking to lower her pain medication. I truly believe this can be based on demographics, as well as the character of those physicians providing care.

I am still in disbelief that I've come this far to help my sister, family, and myself. That said, I have also come to the conclusion that this medical cannabis program isn't necessarily designed for the sick at all. From high cost, to lacking sufficient education, no social equity programs, and unfair business ownership practices, there continues to be much dissatisfaction to deal with than I would expect from a program concerning a medicinal plant with such infinite healing properties. That said, I know the only way to promote change is to be involved, to unite, to educate, and to act. I will continue to do just that.

I'd like to dedicate my courage in cannabis story to every SICKLE CELL WARRIOR who has ever walked this earth. I would also like to dedicate this story to my family; Claudette (mom), Robert (step-father), Lakesha (little sister), Terry (big brother), Broderick Sr (dad), Isaiah (little brother), Faith (niece), and my grandparents watching over from up above!

Finally, thank you Fred Beier, for being "A Man for Others".....TRUE

STORY.

# About Broderick Randle, Jr.



**B**roderick Randle is a legal medical patient with the qualifying condition, Sickle Cell Anemia SS. Broderick has worked in the cannabis industry in various settings, learning everything possible about the cannabis industry, advocacy, and patient care. Broderick recognizes the importance of advocacy and is a strong supporter of those fellow warriors who fight a somewhat hidden battle.

Broderick is the Business Development and Outreach Manager for Beneleaves; a friend and family-owned and licensed Cannabis processing business located in Columbus, OH that strives to create deep connections with Ohio patients. Beneleaves manufactures high-quality, cannabis-based medical alternatives that promote health and wellness. BeneLeaves makes vape cartridges, gummies, lotions, capsules, and even gluten-free cookies!

Broderick teaches an online cannabis course at the Cleveland School of Cannabis, CannaHub. He believes education is key and will directly affect the outcome of federal legalization.

Broderick is also recently a new board member of Cincinnati's Sickle

Cell Alliance Foundation which is managed by the president, Lisa Meatchem, and her friend, Sonya Moore. They strive to continuously connect, educate, and provide awareness to the surrounding sickle cell families or community members out there dealing with the painful, even fatal genetic blood disease. Who will all continue to fight for safe and fair access to medical cannabis and safer alternatives to help treat this genetic condition!

The importance of cannabis education is huge and in my opinion, very impactful. The more we know, the more we may finally be able to accept and normalize cannabis as medicine!

~

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FB: SickleCellAllianceFoundation; IG: scafcincy/; Twitter: @SCAFCincy

# Dutiful Daughter

By Dorothy Thigpen

**M**y usually reserved mother looked at me with a spark of righteous indignation and demurely said “I can smoke where I damn well please. I’m in my own home”.

*It was 2015 and the use of Medical Cannabis was still illegal in Ohio, but I had brought a requisite stash from my home in Brooklyn. Whenever I offered my mom the vape, I was concerned about the unmistakable, lingering odor of cannabis if any of the medical staff or my mom’s church friends made visits. (To be honest, it was my main concern). It made me remember worrying about its pungent aroma, when I was a teenager, sneaking a toke by the bathroom window, with my brother.*

*When I think about the legal availability and the stigma attached to the use of medical cannabis in Ohio, it is remarkable what a difference a couple of years make. In June 2016, H.B. 523 was signed into law. The first dispensary in Ohio opened in 2019. But I had begun using cannabis long before -- socially and medicinally for headaches, fibromyalgia and social anxiety.*

My mother was in her late 80’s when I moved back to Columbus, Ohio to be her full-time caregiver. I had been making frequent commutes from New York for more than a year. She was in the first stages of dementia and the doctor said that she was experiencing Transient Ischemic Attacks (TIA’s) in her brain. TIA’s are sometimes indiscernible and can last a few minutes or a few hours. They are a warning sign that a significant stroke event is imminent. Someone has a stroke every 40 seconds in the U.S. - [Aphasia.org](http://Aphasia.org)

But this was not the first time that my family had used cannabis as medicine, or that I assumed the caregiver role for Mom. As the only girl with four brothers, and more than ten years difference between myself and the youngest, my parents basically groomed me for the family caregiver

role.

But I digress. As I mentioned above, this was not the first time that my family had used cannabis for medicinal purposes...

When I was a freshman in college on summer break in the seventies, my mother started experiencing pain and swelling in her leg while on a trip to see relatives in Chicago. My father, a pharmacist in our African American community, insisted that she see a specialist after it persisted for a month. She agreed to minor exploratory surgery to remove a possible benign tumor. Thinking it would be routine, I took the day off and got to the hospital early in the morning to give my mom, my best friend, support, and encouragement. I told my dad and family that I'd give them updates.

After several hours of nervously waiting with my restless ten-year-old brother, a clearly shaken surgeon, who was a family friend, came out and informed me that my mother had Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma, and she should start chemotherapy and radiation immediately. It was as if all the air was sucked out of the room. How could that be? Her leg was just hurting. Her prognosis was not good. It was 1979 and the doctor gave her no longer than five years to live.

When Mom began aggressive radiation and chemotherapy, it robbed her of her vigor, her appetite, and her hair. She tried every conventional and alternative treatment that we could find. From prescription drugs and herbal remedies to a strict macrobiotic diet.

On one of Mom's chemo visits, her oncologist suggested that she have her college-age kids acquire some marijuana for her. It would help with nausea and unpleasant aftereffects of the treatments and improve her appetite. My brother and I enthusiastically obliged and eagerly showed her how to use a bong. After her first session, Mom went from gagging at the sight and smell of food to craving a Wendy's hamburger and fries. It was such a relief to see what the inhalation of this harmless plant did for my ailing mother. It alleviated the stress of fighting the brutal disease of cancer.

The five-year prognosis came and passed. Mom had subsequent health

challenges and cancer battles in the following decades, and she would sometimes turn to cannabis for relief. If it had not been for the stigma attached to the use of marijuana, I'm sure she would have used it more often.

*That was the first time I recognized the real value of cannabis as a medicine. That epiphany never strayed far from my consciousness, even when I was using it recreationally for my social anxiety and depression. Cannabis was an incredible and safe medical remedy for a variety of ailments!*

Many years later, and after my mother had conquered cancer, I moved to New York to work in independent film, for a non-profit media organization. A young neighbor moved into my building and took me further down the road in my cannabis journey, increasing my respect for medical marijuana. Eric, (not real name), had just moved into our brownstone in Brooklyn and the smell emanating from his apartment was a familiar and comforting one. It quickly transported me to my younger years, and I smiled when I'd pass his door. When we finally met, I realized that my neighbor was more than just a kid getting high. He was a knowledgeable, compassionate, advocate for cannabis and he introduced me to the idea of strains and their various characteristics.

At this point, I had witnessed the power of cannabis in countless instances with friends and in my own family. My brother, a software writer in NYC, successfully used cannabis to treat his debilitating Crohns disease. It was cannabis that helped him to work and live a normal functioning existence. I was really getting more intrigued with cannabis and its use for medical conditions. My initial college major was in pharmacy, so I had an ongoing interest in the use of natural plant medicine.

I was entering my 14<sup>th</sup> year as Executive Director of a nonprofit educational media organization and was contemplating my final career moves for retirement when I was informed about my mother's health issues. I had noticed her memory lapses becoming more frequent on my visits home. But I thought it was just from age and possibly grief since she

had been my deceased father's caregiver a few years earlier. I had taken a leave of absence to help her with setting up hospice at home and stayed until my father's death. In addition to Mom losing her husband of 56 years, her closest friend who she'd known before she married Dad, suddenly died from cancer, not long afterward.

My mom had dementia and diabetes with complications. She wanted to stay home, and we wanted her to stay at home. The brother who was available to share caregiver duties had died a few years prior, I was nominated to be her full-time caregiver. It was such a frustrating experience but rewarding to know I made a difference in my mother's last chapter here on earth. I feel it changed my personality and mindset significantly - both for good, but also for bad from the stress and fatigue factors. Although I will value that time forever, it was intense and disorienting. Sadly, my mother passed away 5 years ago. I am still unwrapping all the nuanced emotions.

When I realized the seriousness of her illness, I had to retire early, leave my home and my life in Brooklyn, NY and move back to Columbus, Ohio. A place where I thought I'd never live full-time again. I had been diagnosed with depression in my early twenties. I sank into a depression that was deeper than I had ever experienced, except for once before.

You see, three years before this, my brother with whom I shared my Brooklyn home when he was in town consulting for the State of NY, suddenly died in his sleep. James and I had always been close since childhood. We both were part of the LGBTQ community. Five months after my life partner, Akoma, had helped me arrange James' memorial in N.Y., she drowned while on vacation in Hawaii. Three months later, my dog died.

So, in less than one-year, my two closest confidantes were gone, and I was a single parent. Being left with an angry, grieving teenager was difficult, but one of my biggest blessings in life. As my therapist put it, "I lost my pack, but I was left with the pup". Still trying to process these significant losses and significant changes in my life, I felt I had to do what had to be done – care for my aging mother.

This time, I had cannabis in my health arsenal. I had many sleepless nights, as my mother developed Sundowners Syndrome, as many Dementia patients do. When my relatives gave me respite support, (which is an essential requirement for most caregivers), I would turn to cannabis after particularly stressful days and nights to relax my mind and body and usher me to sleep. For both mine and my mother's medical cannabis care, I used Indica for those sleep-challenged nights. I utilized sativa during the day to remain calm, but productive.

I felt graced by my mother's life, as well as her passing. Cannabis has been with us the entire journey, keeping us healthy and sane in uncertain times. My mother was told when she was fifty years old that she had five years to live. She lived another 40 years to be cared for by her dutiful daughter, in her very own home until the day she died. I look forward to a long and fulfilling life like hers, and hope if needed, that my caregivers will be even more knowledgeable about utilizing cannabis as a medicine.

# About Dorothy Thigen



Dorothy Thigpen worked for more than twenty years on independent media in NYC. She is a native of Columbus, Ohio, where she began her media career working at ACTV 21 cable access and with the National Black Programming Consortium. In New York, Dorothy was formerly the Director of Production Assistance at Women Make Movies, then became the Executive Director of Third World Newsreel (TWN), an alternative media arts organization, focusing on social justice media education, production, and distribution. In addition to being an Arts Administrator, Dorothy worked in various capacities of film and television production. Her career provided her the opportunity to work in the Middle East, Europe, and throughout the U.S. on independent documentaries. Dorothy is an avid advocate for Medical Cannabis and received a Cannabis Executive certificate from the Cleveland School of Cannabis.

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# Freedom Leaves: A Call to Action

*By AJ Warren*

**M**y name is AJ Warren, a single father and custodial parent of a beautiful little girl. I am currently a resident in Yellow Springs, Ohio, which is known for its natural resources, landscapes, and art! We are an artistic community driven by opportunities. We fight for just causes and also support our local village to the fullest because we are a community known for being configured a little differently. Yellow Springs was a temporary home for the amazing mother, woman, and advocate, Ms. Coretta-Scott King, who graduated from Antioch College, right here in Yellow Springs in 1951. Ever felt like the twilight zone was real? Well, Rod Sterling was also an alumnus of Antioch! Somewhat cool to think of, considering our small community only consists of a few thousand people. This quaint village has often been considered the place “where the hippies landed” after the 1960s. I think they landed everywhere personally, but the village does love tie-dye; I say this with brevity!

Considering such a unique place, I felt a duty to participate in the evolutionary process surrounding my home and those I care about. I proudly served as a three-year term commission member for the “Art and Culture Commission”. While participating in meetings, events, and more, I began to realize how meaningful it was to me to be a part of. I yearned to do more for my community. This desire has led me to where we are today. Having and living out courage in cannabis. My truth; ever humble and with other gathering souls, is a passion to end cannabis prohibition. This passion is strong and something I believe in wholeheartedly. Together, we must realize that the end of cannabis prohibition is what we, as a compassionate society, should be striving for until the mission is complete. Prohibition is sickening and has never worked. There is no reason to believe it ever will.

My entire life has been full of trials and tribulations. Undeniable

hardships and digging from trench to trench. I've dug myself out of many holes while losing everything I've held dear several times over. Most recently, I've taken significant losses in my family. Most notably, my last remaining parent, my mother. Before her passing, we experienced the loss of her sister as well as my closest uncle Berl. All had passed away within the same year. A short time later, Don; my cousin and best friend, passed away from melanoma at forty-three. My parents, my native uncle, Berl, and my confidant, Don, are my inspiration not only for this chapter but to see that cannabis prohibition is ended.

I hope to encourage the fight within you to fight for our future, and more importantly, our children's future. Too often, our society has been abrupt to rule out the importance of what is awaiting future generations. Will we continue to lock people away for non-violent drug offenses pertaining to cannabis? Are we going to continue down the path of extreme racism and try to justify violence against individuals for possessing cannabis? How many violent crimes have occurred on the basis of prohibitions that surround cannabis? This type of behavior has to stop.

I am proclaiming that no more should we accept such a fragile system between our medical and recreational states; we need to end prohibition in its entirety.

Since I was an infant, I've been very close to cannabis in some form or sort of fashion. Many items I was exposed to growing up were made with reusable hemp. My uncle was a free-spirited, fat joint smoking, cannabis lover who not only

valued the stigmatized aspects, but fully understood the benefits of hemp for our society.

My mother was a nurse for nearly 40 years, the majority of which was within hospitals, but she had a passion for home healthcare. She worked for many people; as well as owned her own practice at one point. She cared deeply about her patients and had the compassion to see that they received the care they deserved. In watching my mom helping her patients, I'd sometimes notice her rolling something or even packing homemade vaporizers created by my uncle using a soldering iron on a plank of wood,

with a high-temperature rated tube used as a mouthpiece similar to a hookah. This was the way at one point; much before the trendy devices and cartridges for concentrate existed.

My mom valued people in every city she worked in, especially for those facing the end of life. Her compassion and dedication were not only admirable but made me realize that cannabis may not always be “the answer” but it could be an answer. My father grew cannabis for not only his own personal consumption but also for his closest friends who had significant health issues. Chronic pain, PTSD, and epilepsy to name a few. There were such an array of other reasons. For someone like myself, even at 5 years old, I saw huge benefits in cannabis.

While most of the time, I was not present with my mom during her working hours, sometimes I would be. Luckily, I was with my mom one day because she was adamant that I meet her patient, a woman by the name of Sandy Allen. This introduction was another prolific moment in my life. Not only would I be meeting someone who loved cannabis, but she also was considered the world's tallest living woman. I was in absolute disbelief that morning when I was able to meet this “Gentle giant”. I would do so quietly, in the kitchen, waiting for my mom to finish rolling a joint prepared for Sandy. Each morning joint seemed to be the one thing that really helped her with the everyday pain she experienced from her height of 7'¼”. Sandy, a beautiful soul, traveled the world trying to inspire the youth to be kind to others and to ignite a fire within each other and our communities with kindness and service. Sandy believed we're all in this together. Sandy inspired me, without ever knowing. I was too young to express to her what meeting her really did to me. But each morning, before school, my mom and I would go down the road to an apartment on the east side of Indianapolis, where Sandy Allen lived. The area was specifically known for great poverty and absurdly high violent crime rates and we all lived there. Forced into our predicament, we tried to see the good and that is what drove my mom to work in healthcare, in her community, where she lived. Every morning, for years I watched my mother roll Sandy an enormous joint or two; sometimes four. Mom said it was because we were

living in a prohibited environment for cannabis. These joints once rolled and lit right off the stovetop by mom, who then approached Sandys bedside. Sandy would rip that joint and instantly you would see an irrefutable difference from literally night and day. Watching her towering frame rise out of bed with joy and admiration. She was always in such high spirits and this was retained in my head and will never leave.

Growing up, I personally saw and heard many instances where people have been imprisoned, or even killed over such a tiny amount of cannabis. Something wasn't right and I had to understand why.

From the beginning of cannabis prohibition, starting with Harry Anslinger, down to Bill Clinton's crime bill; prohibition just hasn't worked and doesn't appear it ever will.

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Here we are, in the 2020s, and just as a hundred years ago in the 1920s, we have some sort of prohibition regarding something commonly used in our society, but also something ingrained in our very own history.

Cannabis was known as a medicine much earlier than grandma's ole cough syrup. The prohibition of alcohol didn't work, and prohibiting cannabis any further won't work either. I view cannabis as a beautiful, finite resource we can use for so many different applications. It literally sickens me to think we're still allowing the "deciders" to decide what is right for us when we think of cannabis. I believe we should overgrow the nation and give this plant back to the people. Then we can try to determine how to market it, regulate it, etc. Cannabis prohibition is a blatant disregard to our well-being as human beings, especially for people of color.

The cannabis prohibition, from its inception, was and is solely based on racial discrimination by those who hate just to hate. They believe that somehow cannabis may do this, or may lead to that, all while arresting and devastating communities of color. Here we are today still fighting racism and prohibitions. This is the reason why we need to keep believing in change and actively pursuing all that comes with change. We need to build

up our communities together through educating on cannabis benefits in their entirety. For all those who have passion as well as compassion in their step; I salute you because we need you, but mainly we need each other. From our doctors to our teachers, we really do need unity and knowledge more than ever. We need courageous individuals to step out and guide others who seek remedy. We need to unite in our genuine pursuit of cannabis progression.

I am a member of a generation of people who were known to be the “go-getters” and “trendsetters.” I have a message to those still prohibiting a plant that has been known to help in treatments and prevention, but as a potential cure for a lot of issues within our own communities such as poverty and fatherless homes.

Why do the “powers that be” continue to perpetuate cannabis prohibition? I typically try to use more than one syllable when making a point, and mine is simple; the hate that you do is not enough for me, but soon you’ll make room for the kids that look up to me. I will motivate a generation to see a better future when speaking about cannabis freedom by any means necessary.

For the rest of us who are seeking a solution, it must start by working to release all non-violent cannabis prisoners. These cannabis convictions were removed from their records and reparations made to their communities. It is time to undo the unnecessary damage.

We also need to ensure the success of full-spectrum cannabis agriculture because this could be a salvation tactic utilized to replace many resources considered as scarce and that we use on a daily basis, such as biofuel. Can you think of anything more important than correcting our society’s wrongs, while being productive in both medicine and resource refinement in everyday living? Cannabis may not be the only answer, but it could be an answer.

In closing, I’ve watched far too many amazing individuals from Eddy Lepp, Marc Emery, and others commit their entire lives to fight to end cannabis prohibition. We must assume the torch and keep going until we cross the finish line. Let's rectify the

wrongs and ratify the rights of all people within these United States. I refuse to be another blind eye in society and I hope you will join me in ending the egregious laws that connect us state to state and across federal lands.

Imagine a beautiful new world where our homes, factories, and buildings are now being built with hemp sustained from our own gardens. Our prisons are reduced in population, allowing our communities to regain fathers and mothers. Just imagine the amazing opportunities that might be available for our children if we just gave this a chance. I was once a child with a bright imagination, but my reality showed me that life can be anything but imaginative at times. I hold onto experiences and memories because that is the value I perceive from life. I do imagine a world where cannabis can cure communities in so many ways. How we do this is through showing courage within this cannabis cause.

# About AJ Warren



**F**or over two decades, I've been an advocate for Cannabis. I am currently thirty-one years young, residing in Ohio. I have one child and I am a full-time custodial parent. I also work full-time as an engineer in the field of research and development. During the past year, I've assisted in the process and operating procedures to manufacture, recycle, and incorporate hemp as a viable material in our laboratory for the purpose of sustainability. Cannabis is my life, and I vow to keep fighting until real progress is made. When I'm not busy, I enjoy music as well as the arts. I've assisted in many different realms of the art world, mainly revolving around fundraising for causes such as community youth playgrounds and recreational parks. I love people and I want nothing more than a better

world.

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