

Cornelius, NC (Newsworthy.ai) Wednesday May 15, 2024 @ 10:15 AM Pacific —

The Last Prisoner Project (LPP), a non-profit focused on freeing non-violent cannabis prisoners, has a new ally in the premium retail chain Apotheca dispensary. The two share a mutual mandate for cannabis reform as well as for telling the truth.

“It sucks that there are people in prison for doing essentially what we do every day now,” said Lee VanTine, owner and CEO of Apotheca dispensary. “It feels good to be able to give back and help free people in prison who are innocent by today’s standards.”

There are other reasons why cannabis sentencing is to be reevaluated other than changing laws. Changing laws doesn’t mean changing sentences. And harsh prison sentencing has overwhelmingly affected people and communities of color, in staggering numbers.

A lot of this goes back to the Anslinger days when Reefer Madness was a thing,” said LPP Director of Advocacy Stephanie Shepard. “And it shows how bigotry is an inherent part of the history of cannabis misinformation and that’s lead to unjust convictions.”

Cannabis misconception comes from decades of prohibition. Like Shepard, many in the cannabis industry consider the entire ‘War on Drugs’ as based on bigotry and lies. Men like Henry Anslinger used racial stereotypes to ramrod anti-cannabis legislation through Congress.

The sensationalized Reefer Madness mentality of the time created a stigma against cannabis that persists to this day, contributing to an unjust system with unfair laws. Even with legalization, government demands and bureaucratic oversight have caused much needless suffering.

Unjust cannabis laws don’t just affect a single person,” said Shepard. “They destroy families and wreck whole communities. Keeping good men like Kevin Allen, Rudi Gamo and Ricardo Ashmeade from their families isn’t about safety or justice.”

Unjust cannabis laws also wreck the lives of good women, like Shepard. In 2010, she was convicted of conspiracy to distribute marijuana which got her a 10-year prison term. Today, she’s motivated by her experiences as a first-time, non-violent offender, in a for-profit prison system.

The Federal Bureau of Prisons did one last awful thing to Shepard- kept her from seeing her dying father. When he fell ill with cancer at 91, her special permission to visit fell short. Then, After serving nine years, she was placed on federal probation for an additional five

years.

Shepard now serves as an LPP director and sits on the organization's board. She passionately advocates for restorative justice, working to end suffering and systemic bigotry from the criminalization of cannabis, unnecessary pains which she knows too well.

Even with cannabis rescheduling, LPP still has a lot of work to do because the goal is DE-scheduling. And again, legalization alone doesn't change sentences.

"Apotheca's generous donation fuels [the LPP] mission, driving us closer to justice and freedom for unfairly imprisoned, nonviolent cannabis offenses," said Shepard. "Together we will right this wrong."

For more about the Last Prisoner Project, visit lastprisonerproject.org/takeaction.

For more about Apotheca, visit www.apotheca.org/giving.

For more about this release call Bart Benne at 828-575-7516 or email media@apotheca.org.



This press release is distributed by the [Newsworthy.ai™ Press Release Newswire](https://newsworthy.ai) - News Marketing Platform™. Reference URL for this press release is [here](#).